

# 12 Simple Steps for Getting Started with Career Tracks

# Introduction

Career development is a top priority for today's employees.

- 90% of employees agree they would stay longer with an employer who invested in their growth, according to a [survey by LinkedIn](#).
- Our recent [Career Progression Survey](#) revealed that lack of opportunities for career progression was a top reason to quit (especially for younger workers).
- Employees with professional development opportunities are 15% more engaged and 34% more likely to stay with their employer, according to [research by BetterBuys](#).

But creating a growth-focused culture isn't only about offering internal promotions and professional skills development. Employees need to be able to clearly see how they can develop and what skills they need to build to get ahead within your organisation.

In other words, your employee retention and engagement rates depend on two factors: A robust learning and development program and a transparent, accessible job architecture.

Job architecture is the structure of roles, levels, hierarchies, and competencies that define how your employees work, develop, and interact. Think of it as the blueprint for career progression within your organisation.

At Lattice, we believe that **growth shouldn't be ambiguous** — it's one of our pillars of People success. That's why we designed this workbook to help you build a foundation for job architecture that makes the most sense for your organisation's needs.

By working through our suggested activities, you'll be able to:

- Evaluate your company's current career tracks
- Understand what a best practice career track system looks like
- Create a plan for updating and improving your career tracks

# Section 1: What Are Career Tracks, and Why Do They Matter?

Job architecture is made up of three components: levels, competencies, and career tracks.

**Career tracks** bring together the **competencies** that are needed at each **job level**. Career tracks help employees and managers understand exactly what your organisation expects for each role in the company, and exactly how to move up from one level to the next.

	Job Levels	Job Competencies	Career tracks
<b>Definition</b>	Job levels define the seniority of each role within an organisation.	Job competencies are the knowledge, behaviour, and skills that a particular role requires in your organisation.	Career tracks communicate the expectations of the competencies demonstrated by employees in each role and level within your organisation.
<b>Example</b>	Level 1: Software Engineer I  Level 2: Software Engineer II  Level 3: Lead Software Engineer	Ownership Problem solving Reliability Autonomy Product knowledge	<b>Software Engineer I/</b> Competency: Ownership  You effectively execute tasks as an individual, maintaining a high level of quality.  <b>Software Engineer II/</b> Competency: Ownership  You often own project-level goals involving multiple engineers.

Career tracks are fundamental to creating a fair and transparent organisational culture. When employees can see how they're likely to progress within your organisation, they're likely to be more engaged and effective in their current role — and more likely to stay with your company for longer. However, many HR teams struggle to create clear and well-defined career tracks, or to communicate those career tracks effectively with employees. As a result, many employees remain unclear on how they could move up within the organisation, and may well look for their next promotion elsewhere.

For a detailed guide to job architecture, see our article:

[What Is Job Architecture and Why Does It Matter?](#)

# Section 2: Evaluating Your Organisation's Needs

Before you get stuck into building or updating your company's career tracks, you need to understand where you should focus your attention.

## Step 1. Before you begin.

### 1. Does your organisation have well-defined competencies in place already?

YES/NO

- If you answered yes to this question, make sure you have your competencies guide to hand. You'll need it for the rest of this workbook.
- If you answered no to this question, you're not ready to start working on your career tracks yet. But not to worry — we've got you covered! You can find [templates for creating competencies](#) in our library.

### 2. Does your organisation have clear job levels yet?

YES/NO

- If you answered yes to this question, make a note of how many levels you have for each role, function, or team. This will help you as you start to build out your career track framework.
- If you answered no to this question, you may have a [flat organisational structure](#). Career tracks can still be very helpful here — even if you don't have a traditional career ladder, your employees still need to know what to do to increase their responsibilities or earn a pay rise.
- If you do have job levels, but don't have those well-defined yet, you'll need to get that part done before you create career tracks. Because career tracks are essentially a matrix of competencies and job levels, you'll need both to create or update your career tracks. For more resources on job levels, download our ebook, [The Ultimate Guide to Employee Development](#).

## Step 2. Evaluate your current career tracks.

So, you've got your job levels and your competencies ready to go. Great! Now let's take a look at your current career tracks, and see how well they measure up.

### 3. Do you already have career tracks in your organisation?

YES/NO

If you answered YES, go to Question 4. If you answered NO, skip to Question 6.

### 4. How well are your current career tracks performing?

Rate your organisation's current career tracks on a scale of 1 to 5.

(1=Not at all 3=Neutral 5=Yes, definitely)

Every employee knows what their career track looks like.	
Every employee can access their career track easily.	
We use our career tracks to provide individual development plans for every employee.	
Our career tracks can scale easily as our company grows.	
Our career tracks are objective and easy to measure.	
Our career tracks are useful for both employees and managers.	
Our career tracks reflect our company values and mission.	

5. Look at your answers to the question above. How would improving your career tracks make a measurable impact on your organisation?

**6. How would creating career tracks help your organisation?**

Rate each of these benefits of career tracks on a scale of 1 to 5.  
(1=Not important 3=Somewhat important 5=Critically important)

Enabling professional development	
Enhancing organisational culture	
Making informed recruiting decisions	
Providing roadmaps for employees	
Contextualising performance reviews	
Supporting retention of top talent	

7. Look at your answer to the question above. Which is the most important benefit for your organisation? How does it fit into your wider company goals?

**8. Where in the career track creation process are you today?**

(Circle one of the following options)

<b>Awareness</b>	First time learning about career tracks
<b>Planning</b>	Identifying organisational priorities for career development strategy
<b>Development</b>	Working with your team and managers across the company to create career tracks
<b>Training</b>	Introducing career tracks to managers and training them to discuss with employees
<b>Implementing</b>	Distributing career tracks to employees and instructing them how to understand, access, and use career tracks in development conversations
<b>Measuring</b>	Collecting feedback and evaluating the success of current career tracks to make edits in the future



# Section 3: How to Build Career Tracks

## What makes an effective career track?

Just the act of having career tracks doesn't mean they are applicable or effective for your organisation. Career tracks are only useful if they are:

### Foundational

Your career tracks are the foundation of your performance management strategy. Career tracks should be used to map out the potential roles and the skills, knowledge, competencies, experience, and personal characteristics required for each job level as an employee moves up the corporate ladder.

### Meaningful

Your career tracks must be easy for your employees and managers to understand. Avoid any HR jargon, and keep the wording of your career tracks closely aligned to your company values and competencies. Employees must be able to understand what they need to do to move up in your organisation.

### Transparent

Career tracks are only meaningful if your employees can use them to plan out their future in your organisation. A good career track system should facilitate clear alignment throughout your company, from the People team to line managers to employees.

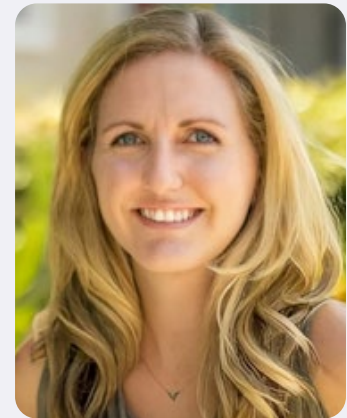
### Growth-oriented

Career tracks should help to create an environment of growth. If each step seems unachievable, or if career tracks aren't designed to be appealing to your employees, then they won't help you encourage employee engagement or performance.

### Measurable

A good career track system should feed into your performance management strategy. Employees, managers, and HR professionals should all be able to measure an employee's performance and skills against their current career stage, and easily identify when an employee has the potential to move up to a new stage or take on a different role.

“Even when I’ve worked in progressive organizations that value career development, we never had a tool that makes it easy to facilitate development plans in line with career tracks. Lattice Grow is the missing piece to holistic talent management.”



**Nicole Hopkins** - Director of People, Webflow

### 9. Time to practice!

Here’s a simplified example of a career track:

Competencies	Software Engineer I	Software Engineer II	Principal Engineer
<b>Ownership</b>	<p>You effectively execute tasks as an individual, maintaining a high level of quality.</p> <p>You set and meet timeline expectations for your work.</p>	<p>You often own project level goals involving multiple engineers.</p> <p>You break down ambiguous tasks into clear milestones to ensure progress can be measured.</p>	<p>You transcend organizational boundaries and proactively identify the best ways to drive business value.</p> <p>You work in close partnership with senior leadership to influence the overall direction of engineering.</p>

Using this format, think about your current team. Taking a single competency as an example, try recreating the structure above. Remember, each competency should have an associated skill or behaviour that would be demonstrated by someone at each job level. Keep the wording simple and concrete — write out exactly how the person shows a particular competency during their day-to-day work.

10. Using your current team as an example, fill in the boxes for competencies at different levels across your career track.

Competencies	Level 1: Title	Level 2: Title	Level 3: Title
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>

11. Review the table you made for Exercise 10. Consider the following questions:

Was it easy or difficult to complete the table?

What made it easy? What made it difficult?

Was it a useful exercise? Do you have more of an idea of your own career track? Why/why not?

What benefits do you think career tracks will have for your organisation?

## Resources

This exercise should give you a handle on the basic process of creating a career track system. If you'd like to look at some examples of real career tracks created by leading companies, check out our [Career Track Template](#) library. You can download these templates for free, customise them for your organisation, and guide your employees to success.

For more ideas about meaningful career tracks, check out these additional resources:

[What Is Career Pathing?](#)

[Are You Overlooking Individual Contributor Career Paths?](#)

[What Is A 'Career Path Ratio?'](#)

[The Comprehensive Guide to HR Career Paths](#)

## Section 4: Time to Take Action

Now that you understand the fundamentals of building career tracks, you're ready to start building a project roadmap to implement career tracks for your organisation.

Remember the table you filled in back in Question 8? Now it's time to move from where you are right now to where you want to be.

**12: Fill out the table below to make your path forward clearer for you and your team.**

Stage	Purpose	Next Action Checklist for People Teams	Principal Engineer
<b>Awareness</b>	Learning about career tracks	<p>Complete this worksheet.</p> <p>Communicate your findings to your team.</p> <p>Create a short slide deck on the ROI of career tracks to secure management buy-in.</p> <p>List out potential pitfalls.</p> <p>Identify and communicate with internal project champions.</p>	<p>Who owns this stage?</p> <p>When will it start?</p> <p>When will it be finished?</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>

<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<p>Identifying organisational priorities for career development strategy</p>	<p>Meet with project stakeholders (HR leaders, business leaders, line managers, project champions).</p> <p>Create a master list of key project objectives.</p> <p>Identify how you will measure your results.</p> <p>Define how you will provide access to career tracks to managers, employees, and HR leaders.</p> <p>Decide how you will integrate career tracks into the employee journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment</li> <li>Onboarding</li> <li>Performance</li> <li>Compensation</li> <li>Succession</li> </ul>	<p>Who owns this stage?</p> <p>When will it start?</p> <p>When will it be finished?</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>
<p><b>Development</b></p>	<p>Working with your team and managers across the company to create career tracks</p>	<p>Make a list of who to involve and when.</p> <p>Design and roll out a survey to gain understanding about roles/specialisations needed in each team.</p> <p>Create a preliminary career track structure for each team and review with key stakeholders.</p> <p>Integrate feedback to create a roll-out-ready version of career tracks.</p> <p>Create a communication plan to introduce your new career track system to employees.</p>	<p>Who owns this stage?</p> <p>When will it start?</p> <p>When will it be finished?</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>

<b>Training</b>	<p>Introducing career tracks to managers and training them to discuss with employees</p>	<p>Prepare and deliver a workshop to introduce managers to career tracks. Include:</p> <p>Why career tracks are important</p> <p>How to discuss career tracks with employees</p> <p>Troubleshooting issues with career tracks</p>	<p>Who owns this stage?</p> <p>When will it start?</p> <p>When will it be finished?</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Distributing career tracks to employees and instructing them how to understand, access, and use career tracks in development conversations</p>	<p>Audit existing platforms and solutions that you could use to distribute career tracks.</p> <p>Select an appropriate solution.</p> <p>Create a learning resource for employees to explain the new career track system.</p> <p>Schedule an all-hands ask-me-anything workshop for all employees to address questions and concerns about career tracks.</p> <p>Schedule manager-led workshops with each team to address individual team questions.</p> <p>Roll out your new career tracks system to a single team to iron out any teething troubles.</p> <p>Roll out your new career tracks system across your organisation.</p>	<p>Who owns this stage?</p> <p>When will it start?</p> <p>When will it be finished?</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>

<b>Measuring</b>	<p>Collecting feedback and evaluating the success of current career tracks to make edits in the future</p>	<p>Review project KPIs and measure against existing benchmarks.</p> <p>Develop and send out a short employee pulse poll within 2 weeks of roll-out to gather initial responses to career tracks.</p> <p>Develop and send out an employee survey to gain full insight into employee responses to your career track system</p> <p>Summarise and share employee feedback with all employees, and (if relevant) outline how you will address any issues or complaints about the new system.</p> <p>Monitor KPIs over time and use feedback and data to optimise and improve your career track system.</p>	<p>Who owns this stage?</p> <p>When will it start?</p> <p>When will it be finished?</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>
------------------	--	---	--

Congratulations! You have created career tracks — the best way to build a more engaging, more motivating, and more transparent employee development programme. We hope that this workbook has helped you understand the importance of career tracks, how to build best-practice career pathways, and how to develop and roll out a new career track system for your workforce.



# Great Career Track Systems Need the Right Tools



“Our team members are talking about growth and development much more consistently with their managers and even in department meetings. It’s spread, and it’s shifted our culture.”

**Julia Kanezis** - Director of People Experience, TopSpot

Many companies use simple spreadsheets to manage their career tracks. This can be fine when you’re a tiny startup, but does not really address the needs of a growing business. Career planning is a crucial component of your talent management program, and every employee needs to be able to access their career track and measure their own progress.

Managers also need a solution that will let them develop individual progress plans for every member of their team.

A static spreadsheet simply won’t be able to support the needs of your growing workforce.

Lattice Grow can help. Our dynamic employee development tools enable people-centric organisations to:

- Create and share **competency matrices**, so every employee knows the skills and behaviours they should focus on.
- Develop **career tracks** that are easy for employees and managers to access.
- Turn managers into career coaches with **integrated 1:1s**.
- Empower employees to own their development with **individual development plans**.

Curious how our platform works? [Schedule a free demo with one of our experts.](#)