



# Fuel50 Global Talent Mobility Best Practice Research

Driving Employee Engagement Through  
Career Development

Part 6/6



Fuel50 conducted best practices research on current talent mobility experiences, best-in-class talent mobility, and the imperatives for talent mobility in the future across high-performing organizations around the world.

This report is the sixth and final part of a six-part series detailing the key findings from our research study and extensive analysis of workforce and talent mobility trends.

The goals of the study were as follows:

- To understand current trends in internal talent mobility and workforce reskilling across the globe
- To learn what best-in-class career growth and talent mobility looks like today
- To ascertain the key imperatives for talent mobility in the coming decade

Read more about our research design and audience [here](#).



# Driving Employee Engagement Through Career Development



Amidst a global talent shortage and a fiercely competitive job market, it is crucial to understand what makes employees engaged and want to stay in organizations today.

Employees leave organizations when they do not see a developmental path, and they go to organizations where they can see a clear future.<sup>1</sup> People want visibility to internal opportunities for career development, and many are ready and willing to jump ship to gain it.

One of the pivotal retention factors is whether an organization prioritizes employee learning, career development, and growth. If an employee believes that their organization prioritizes, values, and rewards learning, then they are far more likely to stay.

**Now more than ever, employees are looking for opportunities to grow their careers with help from their employers.** And with employees voicing higher levels of anxiety around job security due to rising automation and technology, in many ways, it is hardly surprising that those organizations prioritizing employee career development stand a better chance at engaging and retaining talent.

The Fuel50 Global Talent Mobility Benchmarking Study asked HR Leaders and Employees from over 200 organizations across the globe a series of questions to explore the learning climate in their organizations. Some powerful trends emerged from our findings.

## The business impact of offering employees career development

The most prevalent trait of organizations classified as “HR Best in Class” was their prioritization of and active involvement in employee development. Implementing “HR Best in Class” practices (like placing strategic organizational importance on employee

development, leaders taking an active role in developing others, and leaders being given tools and resources to support employee development) leads to increased business performance.

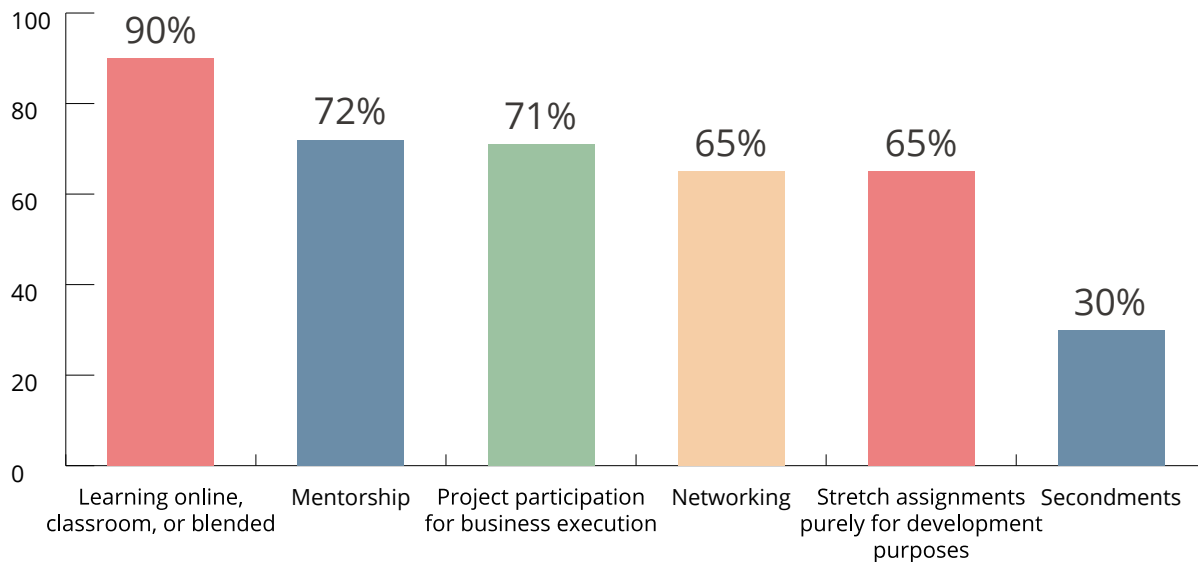
Our research confirmed the most engaged employees were from organizations that:

- **Prioritized career development** – reskilling, upskilling, and initiatives to improve capabilities across the workforce.
- **Gave employees access to career resources and learning** – including incentives for acquiring and developing new skills, can create career journeys, map to future opportunities, and understand skills gaps.
- **Provided access to learning opportunities** where employees feel part of an open learning culture surrounded by valuable experiences.

“ If an employee believes their organization prioritizes, values, and rewards learning, then they will stay.



## What Development Opportunities are Organizations Giving People?



Source: Fuel50, Global Talent Mobility Best Practice Research

The most common Learning and Development offered to employees is online, classroom, and blended learning, followed by mentorship and project participation – with the intention of business execution (71%) rather than a stretch assignment for the purpose of development alone (65%).

45% of respondents said the training and development completed at their organization is not mandated, meaning employees are encouraged and given the autonomy to complete training and development aligned to their personal development needs and career aspirations.

In terms of how much organizations are spending on employee development, 50% of HR Leaders said their per employee career development spend was below USD \$1K (or between 0-3% of salary). Notably, only a third of respondents believe their organization invests adequately in employee development, with 35% stating that their organization should be investing more.

**70% of HR Leaders said that developing the skills and capabilities of their employees is important to their organization’s strategy**, and over half of HR Leaders said that their organization provides development to all its employees. However, despite this, only 41% are confident that they have sufficient internal talent to achieve their organizations strategic objectives.



## Perceived opportunities for employees within organizations today

**A shocking 50% of employees said it is easier to find a new job outside of their organization than inside.** This was supported by HR Leaders, with only 1 in 3 saying that employees at their organization were actively exploring career paths internally and only half agreeing that employees have easy access to information on open positions. When asked whether it was easy for employees to move into new positions or opportunities within the organization, only 1 in 3 HR leaders agreed.

Our research has confirmed there is significant room for improvement when it comes to employee development, talent visibility, and internal recruitment.

If an employee believes their organization prioritizes, values, and rewards learning, they are more likely to have high levels of engagement. This, in turn, drives retention and enhanced organizational performance.

In other words, there are clear bottom-line business benefits for those organizations with effective employee career development strategies in place.

## The Benefits of Employee Career Development



Source: Built In, 6 Reasons Why Employee Development is Key

“ When companies offer comprehensive training programs, they enjoy a 24 percent higher profit margin and have 218 percent higher income per employee than companies without formalized training, according to Forbes.<sup>2</sup>

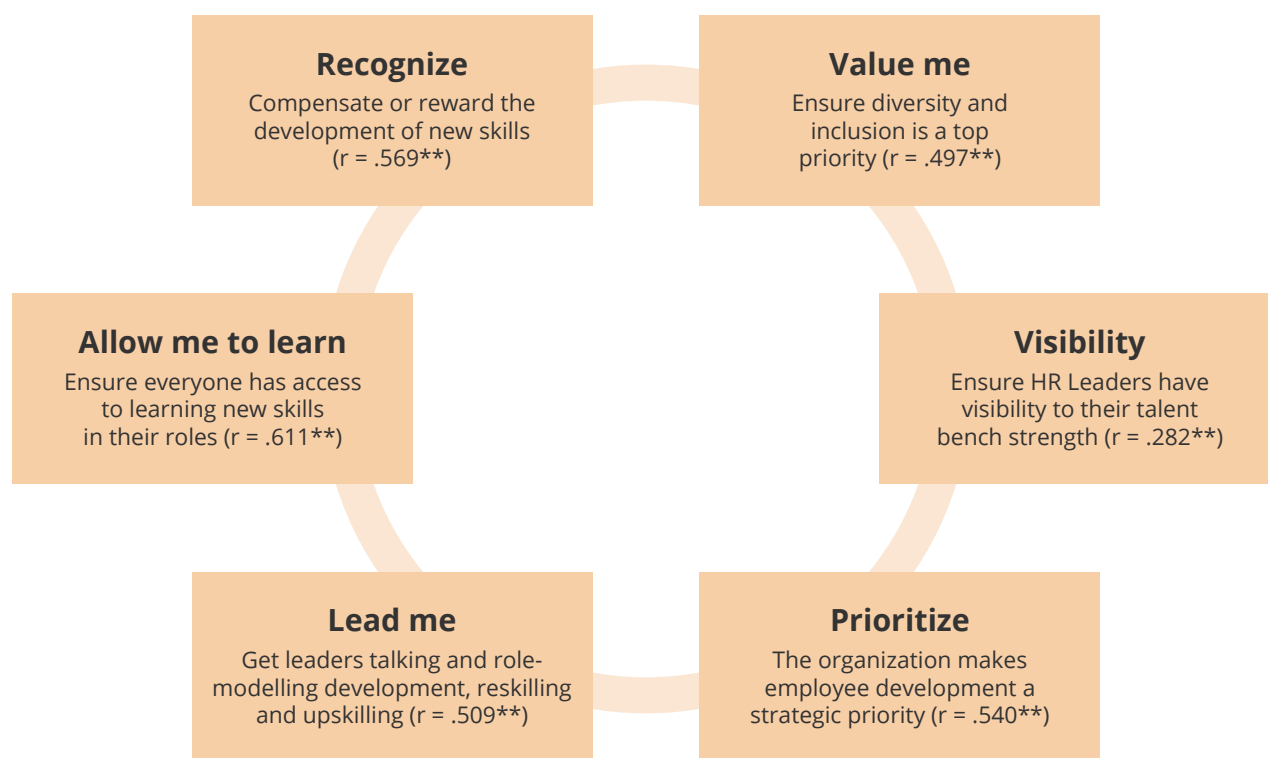
As highlighted by an article published on Talent Management, “75 percent of employers believe career development drives employee engagement and employers with engaged workers report 2.5x higher revenue growth. But only four in 10 employers think their current approach to career development and talent mobility is having a positive effect on employee engagement levels.”<sup>3</sup>



## Fuel50's Engagement through Development Model

Based on comprehensive data analysis, Fuel50 has developed the 'Engagement through Development' model. This highlights six key levers to driving employee engagement through career development.

### Six Key Levers to Driving Employee Engagement



Source: Fuel50, Global Talent Mobility Best Practice Research

Here is a more detailed breakdown of those six key levers for driving employee engagement through career development, complete with supporting evidence from our research.

# 1. Value Me

People want to feel connected, valued, and as though they belong. They want to be able to present their authentic selves at work.

**Fostering an innovative and inclusive company culture that encourages gender diverse teams at all levels, and spotlights role models for women and underrepresented minorities, is a crucial component of this.**

We were encouraged to find that 80% said enhancing and improving their DE&I practices is one of their organization's strategic goals and 70% of HR Leaders have recruitment goals for hiring a more diverse employee population.

However, our findings show that there is still a lot of work to be done to increase levels of representation of both females and employees from diverse backgrounds, particularly at the Management level and above. 1 in 2 said they need to improve their representation of employees from diverse backgrounds at the Management level. This figure climbed to 70% at Senior Management and Executive levels.

## Recommended Solution

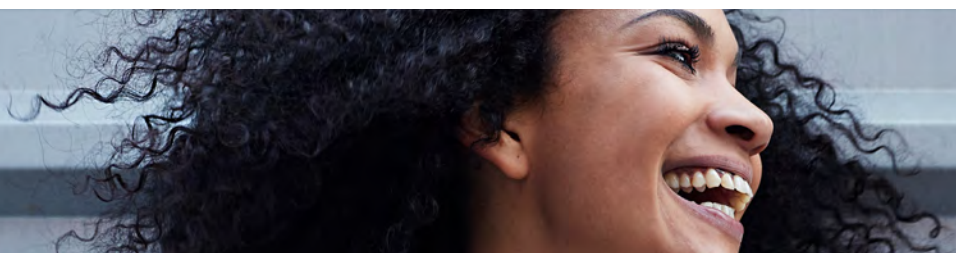
Ensure diversity and inclusion is a top priority. For large-scale enterprises, transformation can take a long time. And value realization can take even longer. However, thinking micro allows an organization to deconstruct larger transformation into several smaller initiatives that each have a well-defined objective and outcome.<sup>4</sup>

Leaders play an important role in enhancing levels of diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations. Where leaders are more inclusive, the levels of diversity, equity, and inclusion are higher.

Place strategic importance on employee development and support your people by empowering leaders to take an active role in developing others. Prioritize internal talent mobility by having an active view of your employees and building levels of diversity from the inside rather than recruiting externally – this drives success.

It is commitments like these that will continue to positively impact the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion and drive employee engagement.

“**Prioritize internal talent mobility by having an active view of your employees and building levels of diversity from the inside rather than recruiting externally – this drives success.**”





## 2. Visibility and ease of internal movement

There was only 29% agreement from HR Leaders that employees at their organization were actively exploring career paths internally. Meanwhile, 50% of employees said it's easier to find a new job outside their organization than inside.

**Despite over 75% of organizations having strategic HR priorities aimed at understanding, building, and mobilizing their talent, only 43% of HR Leaders have visibility to their talent bench strength across the organization (rising slightly to 47% for critical roles).**

Our research found that those organizations with HR teams that had visibility to talent across their organization, possessing tools and technology to help them build talent pipelines, were more likely to have:

- Higher internal mobility
- Higher employee productivity
- Higher training and development spend
- Lower voluntary attrition
- Lower recruitment costs
- Lower unfilled positions

Best-in-class organizations are investing more in training and development to achieve these gains.

## Recommended Solution

Organizations should consider how they are communicating open roles and opportunities internally. They should also contemplate whether their organizational culture supports internal movements, whether leaders are supporting their people to develop, and whether employees are enabled to explore internal career opportunities.

**Providing visibility to employees' capabilities and skills gives HR Leaders and teams the ability to approach employees about open positions. The benefits of this include reduced recruitment costs and increased time to productivity, while increasing talent retention and engagement.**

Future-ready organizations are leveraging technology — such as artificial intelligence — to create talent marketplaces that focus on employee connectivity and make a significant impact in the transformation of a workplace. This technology really helps open doors for not only employees, but for the HR teams who are tasked with recruiting and retaining the best teams possible.

Fuel50's talent marketplace solution gives people the clarity and visibility they crave – connecting them to internal opportunities, development gigs and projects, and coaches and mentors, all based on their unique career DNA, values, skills, talents, and goals. All whilst giving HR powerful workforce data to make strategic business decisions. Fuel50 enables you to harness next-gen workforce data, power internal talent mobility, drive workforce agility, and future-proof your organization.



### 3. Prioritize employee development as a strategic priority

Prioritizing and investing in employee development is strongly correlated with best-in-class organizational performance ( $r=.264^{**}$ ), as well as enabling leaders to support employee development ( $r=.301^{**}$ ).

An overwhelming majority of respondents confirmed that employee development is a strategic priority for their organizations. And 63% of respondents said that their organization views the development of employee skills and capabilities as an important element of their overall business strategy.

We also learnt that employee reskilling and skill building is a strategic HR priority for 80% of responding organizations within the next two years.

“ Employee reskilling and skill building is a strategic HR priority for 80% of responding organizations within the next two years.

## Recommended Solution

If employee development is a strategic priority, then extra effort needs to be taken to actively communicate that the development of employee skills and capabilities is an important element of your organization's overall strategy. This should involve the organization's senior leaders talking openly about reskilling, upskilling, or improving capabilities in the workforce. And leaders across the business must demonstrate that they are taking action to support this.

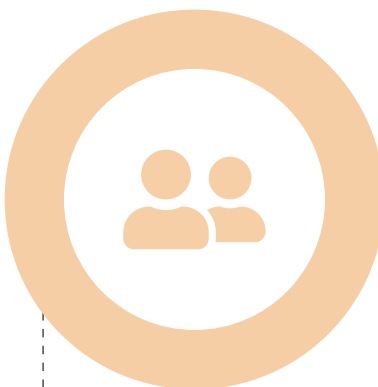
Another evolving trend emerged from our research with close to 70% of respondents using project work for employee development. The feedback loop that takes place after a project or gig, for the skills and contributions that that person has made, becomes a kind of virtuous gain cycle. It is a success spiral for the individual and for the business – a learning loop. As a result, there is the opportunity for both employee career development and overall workforce agility, as there are more people ready, skilled, and able to support with rapidly changing business demands.

## Support Your Leaders to Unlock Increased Business Performance



### • Step 1

Give leaders career development tools and resources.



### • Step 2

See an increase in leader career developmental behaviors.



### • Outcome

Increased organizational performance and HR Best in Class.

Source: Fuel50, Global Talent Mobility Best Practice Research

## 4. Lead Me

**Active leadership involvement in employee development leads to increased business performance.** Top business performance organizations said their leaders are paving the way when it comes to learning and development. Their leaders are equipped to address the developmental needs of their team and they have the means to deliver learning and development opportunities to all their employees.

Our findings confirm that employee development is perceived as a partnership between the employee, the leader, and the organization. It was encouraging to learn that 70% of respondents said the senior leaders in their organization talk about reskilling, upskilling, or improving capabilities in their workforce. But simply talking about reskilling isn't enough. Leaders need to be taking action to support their people.

83% of employees said they take the initiative to seek out development opportunities and learning experiences themselves. Yet 30% rely on recommendations from their leader, HR, or an internal champion for training or development.

### Recommended Solution

Give your leaders access to talent resources and encourage leadership behaviors that support learning and development. These include:

1. Create a learning culture.
2. Be fair and focus on diversity & inclusion.
3. Provide guidance and direction.
4. Assign learning and development.

## Leadership Behaviors Needed to Drive Business Performance



### Create a learning culture

- Lead by example and be seen to be developing yourself. Currently only 1 in 3 leaders are doing this.
- Encourage internal mobility. 41% of leaders are currently doing this.
- Ensure the organization's strategic vision and priorities are reflected and embedded in opportunities made available to employees. 43% of leaders are currently doing this.



### Be fair and focus on diversity & inclusion

- Distribute projects and learning opportunities in a fair and transparent manner. Currently only 1 in 3 leaders are doing this.
- Actively address diversity risk factors within their team. This is one of the lowest observed leadership behaviors from our study, with only 23% of leaders reporting currently doing this.



### Provide guidance and direction

- Support people in making better, smarter investments in themselves. Half of all leaders are currently doing this.
- Identify appropriate ways to address the developmental needs of your team. 1 in 3 leaders are currently doing this.



### Assign learning and development

- Assign training & development to your team. 41% of leaders are currently doing this.
- Provide stretch assignments that allow team members to grow their strengths. 42% of leaders are currently doing this.
- Draw relevant internal opportunities to the attention of their team members. 37% of leaders are currently doing this.

Source: Fuel50, Global Talent Mobility Best Practice Research



## 5. Allow me to learn

**If you only have the time and resources to focus on one lever to drive employee engagement, this is it. We found the strongest relationship between employee engagement and creating a working environment where employees could and were encouraged to learn.**

70% of employee respondents said they continue to learn valuable skills and have valuable experiences in their current job. However, employees also need to be given access to learning and development opportunities.

Only 1 in 3 HR Leaders said their employees can see, explore, select, and act upon desirable development opportunities. When we asked employees the same question, only 50% of respondents said they have the right tools to easily explore learning and development opportunities.

Visibility and accessibility to learning and development opportunities across organizations needs improvement. For maximum bottom-line business benefit, levels of visibility and accessibility to learning and development opportunities across organizations must be high.



**Only 1 in 3 HR Leaders said their employees can see, explore, select, and act upon desirable development opportunities. When we asked employees the same question, only 50% of respondents said they have the right tools to easily explore learning and development opportunities.**

### Recommended Solution

Organizations need to focus on creating a learning culture – a working environment that catalyzes innovation, prioritizes knowledge acquisition, and values the application of knowledge to achieve company-wide goals. Employees should be provided with valuable learning experiences in their current job and encouraged to learn and develop new skills.

An article published by the Harvard Business Review,<sup>5</sup> written by Josh Bersin and Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, presents the following four tips for building a learning culture within your organization:

1. Reward continuous learning.
2. Give meaningful and constructive feedback.
3. Leaders lead by example.
4. Hire curious people.

Our research has revealed employees need to feel as though they are in a working environment that contributes to their ability to find another job internally or externally with ease. With a learning culture, employees are more receptive to change, more engaged with training initiatives, perform better, are happier, more productive, and, as a result, help improve the bottom line.<sup>6</sup>



## 6. Recognize my efforts

Across both HR Leader and Employee respondents, it was evident that very little recognition is currently given to either employees or leaders for the development of new skills. Only 22% of employees said that they are compensated or rewarded for acquiring and developing new skills. HR Leaders validated this, with only 21% saying that their organizations actively compensate or reward the acquisition or development of new skills.

### Recommended Solution

Humans have a fundamental need for recognition, and, in the context of work, it is recognition that confirms to an employee their work is valued by others. When employees feel that they and their work are valued, their satisfaction and productivity levels rise, and they become more motivated to maintain or improve their contributions.<sup>7</sup> With learning being such a critical component to organizational success, recognizing, and rewarding learning is critical for embedding this behavior and supporting the development and maintenance of a learning culture.

Organizations can recognize learning in many ways.<sup>8</sup> Recognition could come in the form of soft rewards like publicly praising an individual's learning success or providing badges and other virtual rewards for learning. Alternatively, it could come in the form of hard rewards like financial incentives. Either way, recognizing learning efforts doesn't need to be expensive, organizations just need to start providing some form of reward to support their people's learning efforts.

**Since very few organizations are currently rewarding the acquisition or development of new skills, this could be a quick win for many.**

## **Career development is integral to employee engagement, attraction, and retention**

The most engaged employees are from organizations that prioritize career development, give employees access to career resources and learning, and provide access to learning opportunities. If an employee believes their organization prioritizes, values, and rewards learning, then they are significantly more likely to stay. Now more than ever, driving employee engagement through career development is crucial for organizations seeking to attract and retain talent.

Prioritizing and investing in employee development is strongly correlated with best-in-class organizational performance. According to our research, best-in-class organizations are investing more in training and development to achieve powerful bottom-line business gains. However, across the board there is room for improvement when it comes to spending on career development.

**Employees are looking for different things from the relationship with their employer or organization than they were in the past. It is vital that businesses understand exactly what those things are and adapt to meet expectations.**

An article by Harvard Business Review highlights, “As your organization considers opportunities to upskill your employees, empowerment, engagement, and planning are critical. Listening to your employees needs and wants, then acting on them, will position you for future success.”<sup>9</sup>

Personalization is key in this increasingly competitive environment. Add value to your employees by tailoring work conditions to their individual needs, preferences, and talents. At the same time, provide meaningful internal career development opportunities that are matched to their unique career DNA to allow employees to strengthen their ‘career capital’ and deepen their commitment to their role.

As revealed by [Fuel50’s research on employee engagement and retention](#),<sup>10</sup> offering personalized career development ensures a broad talent base with increased confidence and the ability to add value, while enabling you to build an organization where people want to work because they have visibility and access to opportunities to gain valuable skills and experience to support their future.

Ultimately, give your people the tools they need to start their personal career development journey with you, and you will drive employee engagement, boost retention, and future-proof your organization.

## About the Authors



### **Anne Fulton - Research Director**

Founder & CEO of Fuel50

*Master of Social Sciences - Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
(First Class Honours)*

Anne Fulton the author of *The Career Engagement Game* (a blueprint for workforce agility), worked 20 years as an Organizational Psychologist, and is currently founder and CEO of Fuel50. Josh Bersin, Global HR Industry Analyst, describes Fuel50 as the leader in its thinking, conceptualization, and execution of the Talent Marketplace. Anne is recognized as a talent futurist, with her team supporting some of the world's leading organizations and brands like United Nations, Verizon, HPE, Coca-Cola and CVS, and many more who are innovating on the employee career experience. Anne is a true thought-leader in the HR space - and has been described by SIOP as "one of the best keynotes I have heard over the last three decades of attending conferences in our field."



### **Marija Potter - Research Leader**

SVP of Workforce Design

*Master of Arts - Industrial/Organizational Psychology (Honours)  
Industrial & Organizational Psychologist, New Zealand Psychologists Board*

Marija is an Industrial/Organizational Psychologist and leads Fuel50's team of Workforce Architects. Marija is responsible for Fuel50's career architecture design approaches, and ensuring they drive business outcomes. Marija supports across Fuel50's clients, leading the design and delivery of career architecture. Marija's experience spans over 15 years of high impact consulting working in organizations such as IBM (London & Auckland), Kenexa, Imperial Tobacco and more. Marija is a sought-after speaker in the well-being, career management and organizational change space.

## Research Design

Fuel50's Global Talent Mobility Best Practice Research was conducted to understand current talent mobility practices, best-in-class talent mobility, and the imperatives for talent mobility in the future across high-performing organizations around the world. We invited both HR Leaders and Employees to complete the survey via social media posts, direct email reach outs to Fuel50's valued community of clients and thought leaders, and by asking attendees at our virtual FuelX Conference in April 2021 to respond.

Within the sample of HR Leader respondents, the largest proportion worked for organizations within the industries of Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (25%), followed by Finance & Insurance (9%). 37% of the HR Leaders were from organizations with over 10,000 employees. The majority of respondents organizations had a presence in North America (74%), followed by Europe (44%) and Asia (42%).

Within the sample of Employee respondents, 41% have been in paid, full-time employment for over 20 years, with 35% identifying as being in an Individual Contributor/Specialist role and 29% as a Senior Specialist. Most respondents (41%) worked in the industries of Professionals, Scientific, and Technical Services.

More than half (53%) of the sample were in North America, with the remainder located in Australasia (Australia and New Zealand) 17%, Europe 11%, Asia 11%, and the rest of the world 9%. [Click here for more details on the research design.](#)





## References

- <sup>1</sup> Gallup. How to Stop Your Managers From Talent Hoarding.  
<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/263558/stop-managers-talent-hoarding.aspx>
- <sup>2</sup> Built in. 6 Reasons Why Employee Development Is Key.  
<https://builtin.com/company-culture/employee-development>
- <sup>3</sup> Talent Management. 'My talent sees no future here': Identifying and eliminating barriers to mobility.  
<https://www.talentmgt.com/articles/2022/02/02/my-talent-sees-no-future-here-identifying-and-eliminating-barriers-to-mobility/>
- <sup>4</sup> Harvard Business Review. Break Down Change Management into Small Steps.  
<https://hbr.org/2021/05/break-down-change-management-into-small-steps>
- <sup>5</sup> Harvard Business Review. 4 Ways to Create a Learning Culture on Your Team.  
<https://hbr.org/2018/07/4-ways-to-create-a-learning-culture-on-your-team>
- <sup>6</sup> Learnlight. Ready to Create a Learning Culture in Your Organization?  
<https://www.learnlight.com/en/articles/ready-to-create-a-learning-culture-in-your-organization/>
- <sup>7</sup> Cutting Edge PR. Employee recognition is important: Here's how to do it well.  
<https://cuttingedgepr.com/employee-recognition-important/>
- <sup>8</sup> eLearning Industry. Creating A Culture Of Learning.  
<https://elearningindustry.com/ways-creating-learning-culture>
- <sup>9</sup> Harvard Business Review. How to Build a Successful Upskilling Program.  
<https://hbr.org/2022/01/how-to-build-a-successful-upskilling-program>
- <sup>10</sup> Fuel50. Hold On Tight: Talent Retention.  
<https://www.fuel50.com/resources/hold-on-tight-talent-retention/>

## Thank You

This report is the sixth of a six-part series detailing the key findings from our research study and our extensive analysis of workforce and talent mobility trends.

We would love to hear from you. If you have any questions, suggestions, or feedback, please contact us at [hello@fuel50.com](mailto:hello@fuel50.com).

We look forward to sharing more learning with you!

**Fuel50 is the AI Opportunity Marketplace solution that delivers internal talent mobility and workforce reskilling.**

With hyper-personalized AI and a deeply embedded commitment to diversity and inclusion, Fuel50 activates your talent. Fuel50's ethical AI matches your people to opportunities in real-time, automatically maps your workforce architecture, and provides deep data insights for predictive talent and workforce planning.

Over 70 organizations around the globe saw immediate impact since deploying Fuel50, with up to 65% increase in lateral movement, 35% increase in internal recruitment, and 60% reduction in employee churn.

Fuel50 powers the workforce of the future.

Learn more: [www.fuel50.com](http://www.fuel50.com)

