



Recommendations: Employee Advancement

Although shelters have varying organizational structures, most experience a lack of promotional opportunities for their staff. Stunted employee growth and lack of clear career progression can relate to turnover and dissatisfaction. To keep shelter staff engaged, focus on perceptions of advancement, even if staff members are not able to transition to management or supervisory positions.

Best Practices

1) Advertise Open Positions Internally

One way to increase perceptions of advancement is to advertise open positions internally. Excluding your own employees from consideration of new job openings is a surefire way to make advancement opportunities appear limited or nonexistent. Consider implementing programs to train interested employees to fill vacant or soon-to-be vacant positions. These programs could take the form of job rotations (see below), on-the-job training, or even workshops led by management or staff trainers.

2) Job Rotations

Job rotations can instill a better sense of investment in and opportunities for your employees. Rotate employees through different positions on a two-week basis so they can train and learn more about what each job does. Other rotation schedules could occur monthly, based on workflow (e.g. employees could shift to adoption rotations during peak adoption “seasons”), or even on specific days of the week or month. Ultimately, the rotation schedule should work for the employees and *never* create an additional hassle. Create a “full experience” job rotation as a capstone, so that employees can participate in every aspect of a shelter function, like adoption. Rounding out skill sets by job rotations will help employees think of their jobs as careers with opportunities for growth AND provides the skills for advancement within the organization.

3) Create Tiered Jobs

Create “tiered” or multi-level jobs within the same pay grade to create advancement opportunities. For example, new employees may start at Vet Assistant I, then advance to Vet Assistant II upon reaching performance, training, and education goals, and Vet Assistant III may become available after additional experience, etc. Advancing through the ranks of a given position may foster a sense of achievement. Consider assigning additional responsibilities like more challenging tasks or even “better” or more enjoyable tasks to higher-level employees. Each level can come with modest pay

grade increases or other recognitions. Even when substantial pay grade increases are not an option, a small, token boost in pay within the same pay range can help make advancement feel like a greater accomplishment. As an alternative to pay increases, consider associating other benefits like additional breaks, paid-time-off, or even a pizza party or other social event to recognize the employee's advancement.

Tie these job levels to the “big picture”. Employees who advance in level can be invited to participate in special committees or taskforces to address issues within the organization (such as the committee outlined above), giving such employees a greater sense of power, meaning, and voice within the organization. Use the additional responsibilities and levels within jobs to prepare employees for later promotions and provide clear ideas of how employees can advance through their careers. Employees who reach the highest level or tier for their job could take on training responsibilities. Note that many organizations provide a small per-hour pay incentive for non-management employees who train other employees.

4) Career Planning

Talk to your employees about their career aspirations—do they want to train for a different position, advance to leadership, or are they satisfied with their current position? To aid in the discussion of staff members' career aspirations, use the career planning template (see Appendix A below). This will give managers a sense of their employees' career plans and developmental goals.

Conclusion & Additional Resources

Improving employee advancement opportunities in shelters can help avoid employee turnover and dissatisfaction. Try out some of these tips to help improve advancement opportunities at your shelter.

For more tips, look into the following resources:

- **Developing Employee Career Paths:** <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/developingemployeecareerpathsandladders.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1aEyL9wciCWEbFchUYHymhUD6L39da4F5szDy5Lfeyf1zV-qm17JPmYng>
- **Managing Promotions Effectively:** <https://hbr.org/2018/01/how-you-promote-people-can-make-or-break-company-culture>

Appendix A

Career Planning Template

Current position:

Number of years/months in position:

Previous position:

Number of years/months in position:

Specialty skills, abilities, areas:

Where do you see yourself in three years?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

What is your ultimate career goal?

To reach your ultimate career goal, what additional experiences, training, or skills do you think you need?