

The Real Value of Job Rotation Programs

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Several years ago my son Jonathan was fortunate to land a summer internship with GE Power in Greenville, South Carolina. He worked hard, made some very good connections and achieved the performance objectives that were established by his manager.

At the end of the internship he interviewed for a permanent position at GE and was ultimately selected for the prestigious Financial Management Program (FMP) at GE. The FMP is a two-year early career development program that entails 4 rotations in different business units, lasting 6 months each. He lived in 4 cities over the two-year period and his final rotation assignment was with the Investor Relations Department at the Boston headquarters. He graduated from the program in 2020 and now works as a Senior Finance Manager at GE in Boston.

Job rotation programs have been in existence for many years, and have served as a proven path for accelerated career growth at numerous Fortune 500 companies. In fact, countless current business executives are graduates of such programs, and readily credit their success to the invaluable experience they gained from their participation in Job Rotation Programs.

What does Job Rotation entail?

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) defines job rotation as follows: “Job rotation is the systematic movement of employees from one job to another within the organization to achieve various human resource objectives, such as orienting new employees, training employees, enhancing career development, and preventing job boredom or burnout.”

Importantly, it is worth noting that the process serves both management and the employee since it helps management to discover the talent potential of employees, while it assists the employee in his / her career development. Both objectives are critical reasons to explore the benefits that accrue from a Job Rotation Program.

What are the benefits of a Job Rotation Program?

Companies create Job Rotation Programs for a myriad of reasons, including to promote the sustainability of the organization, retain high potential employees and perpetuate a preferred corporate culture.

Among the most important benefits of a Job Rotation Program, are the following:

- **Career Development** – it is normally part of a Management or Leadership Development Program that is designed to accelerate career development for individuals who display both high performance and high potential during a summer internship
- **Succession Planning** – it is a critical component of succession planning in the company since it helps to develop a pool of candidates who can be placed in a mid-level or senior-level position when someone retires or leaves the firm
- **Creating Job Fit** – it supports the effort to place employees in the most advantageous role at the company where they will be able to maximize their skill set to excel and add value to the organization
- **Operational Awareness** – it exposes employees to various functional areas and operations so they understand the firm's business model, including how each department contributes to organizational objectives
- **Networking** – it provides program participants with an opportunity to develop invaluable connections throughout the enterprise, who can serve as great resources when the Team is tasked with solving complex business problems
- **Motivating Performance** – it gives employees an opportunity to experience different types of jobs to keep them engaged and motivated to perform well in their functional area, thus reducing the chance of boredom or monotony in their role at the firm

What are the best practices for creating a Job Rotation Program?

Once it has been decided that a Job Rotation Program is worth implementing, the firm must decide how best to create the program so that it achieves the intended objectives.

Based upon my personal experience creating successful mentoring and high potential programs, this is the process that I recommend for developing a Job Rotation Program:

- First and foremost, generate a clear strategy and purpose for the program, involving a diverse Team of organizational members who are invested in the initiative – including the Executive Management Team
- Second, create a structure or framework for the program that includes the duration of the program, the criteria for selecting candidates to participate in the program, and other important facets of the program
- Third, construct a project plan that supports the achievement of program objectives and includes an approach for implementing the plan
- Fourth, develop an oversight committee of individuals who will provide direction and leadership, as well as monitor progress in meeting the program objectives
- Fifth, provide instruction and guidance to all program participants so they fully comprehend the objectives and expectations of the program
- Sixth, consider a pilot program for the first cohort of participants so the program's effectiveness can be evaluated prior to rolling it out to the wider audience of employees

- Finally, once the initial participants graduate from the program, conduct an after action review, and market its success across the organization to build excitement and an awareness of the program's objectives and actual outcomes

Conclusion

Today, the best firms include Job Rotation Programs in their arsenal of professional development tools to achieve a wide array of corporate objectives. In particular, rotation programs typically play an integral role in both Management and Leadership Development Programs, based upon their proven success in developing the future Leaders of the organization.

In light of the tangible value of Job Rotation Programs, what is preventing you from implementing such a program at your firm so you can reap the individual and organizational benefits?