

Mobility Paths

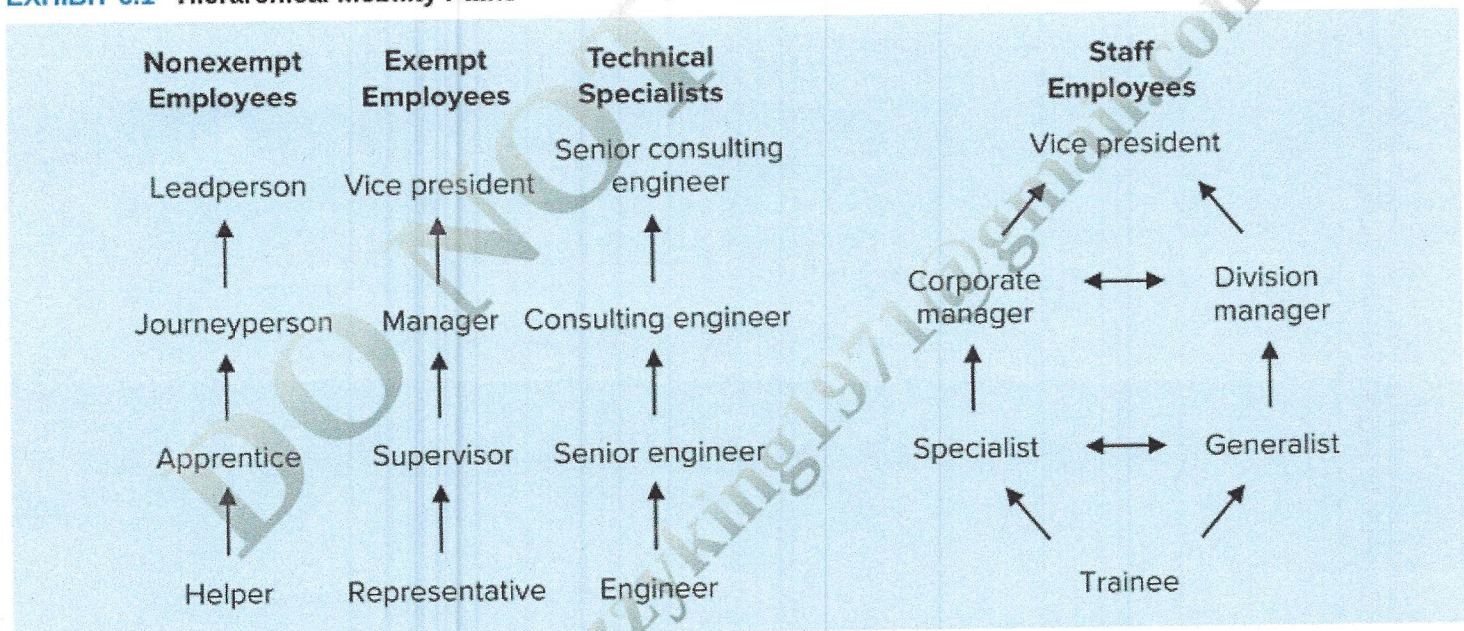
page 272

A mobility path consists of possible employee movements within the internal labor market structure. Mobility paths are determined by many factors, including KSAO requirements, workforce characteristics, organizational culture, and labor market characteristics. Mobility paths are of two types: hierarchical and alternative. Both types determine who is eligible for a new job in the organization.

Hierarchical Mobility Paths. Examples of hierarchical mobility paths are shown in Exhibit 6.1. As can be seen, the emphasis is primarily on upward mobility in the organization. Due to their upward nature, hierarchical mobility paths are often labeled "promotion ladders." This label implies that each job is a step toward the top of the organization. Employees often see upward promotions as prizes because of the promotions' desirable characteristics. Employees receive these prizes as they compete against one another for job vacancies. For example, a promotion might lead to a higher rate of pay, and a transfer may result in a move to a better work location. A great deal of research has been conducted on these types of "tournaments" for higher pay and promotions, with evidence clearly suggesting that individuals increase their effort when faced with the prospect of a large payoff.² However, this same research suggests that competition can lead to counterproductive behavior, like sabotaging other employees or turnover among those who do not receive promotions.

An exception to the primarily upward mobility in the promotion ladders in Exhibit 6.1 shows the lateral moves that sometimes occur for the staff member who has both generalist and specialist experience as well as corporate and division experience. This staff member is considered more well-rounded and better able to work within the total organization. Experience as a specialist gives the person familiarity with technical issues that arise. Experience as a generalist gives the employee a breadth of knowledge about many matters in the staffing function. Corporate experience provides a policy and planning perspective, whereas division experience provides greater insight into day-to-day operational matters.

EXHIBIT 6.1 Hierarchical Mobility Paths



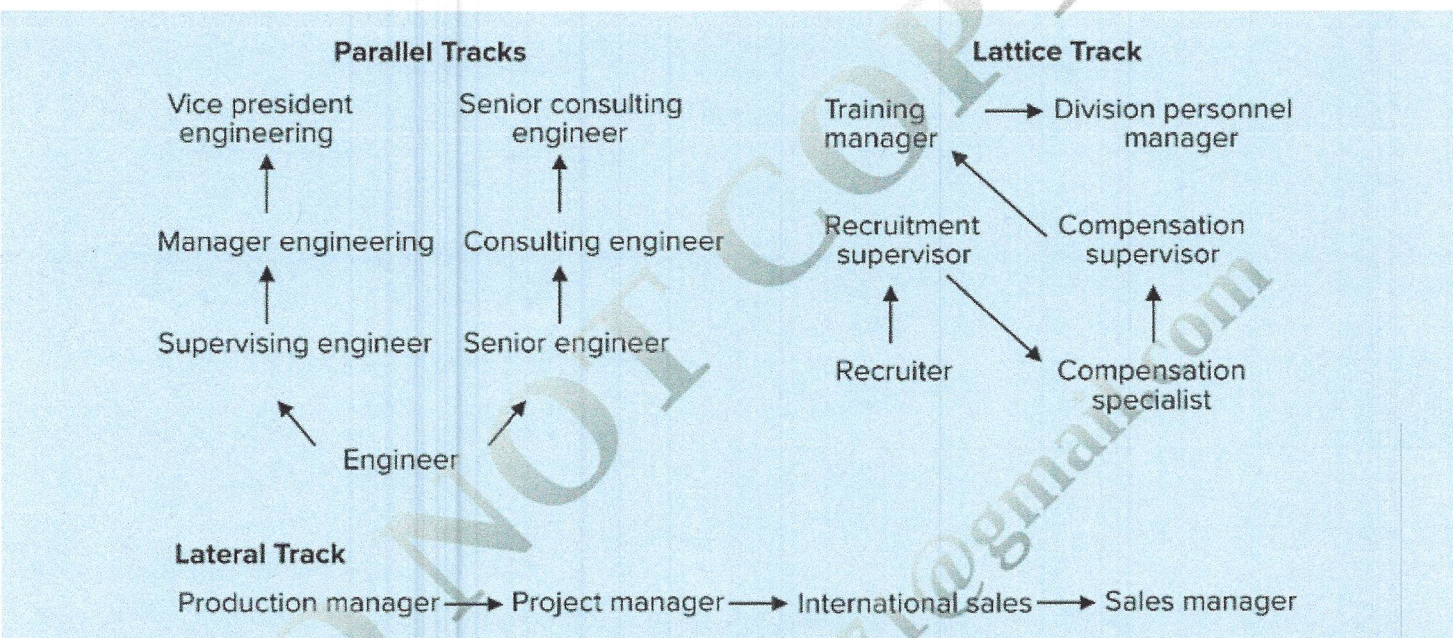
Hierarchical mobility paths make it very easy, from an administrative vantage point, to identify where to look for applicants in the organization. For promotion, one looks at the next level down in the organizational hierarchy, and for transfer, one looks over. Although such a system is straightforward to administer, it is not very flexible and may inhibit matching the best person to the job. For example, the best person for the job may be two levels down and in another division from the vacant job. It is very difficult to locate such a person under a hierarchical mobility path.

Alternative Mobility Paths. Examples of alternative mobility paths are shown in Exhibit 6.2. The emphasis here is on movement in the organization in any direction—up, down, and side to side. Employee movement is emphasized to ensure that each employee is continuously learning and that he or she can make the greatest contribution to the organization. This is in direct contrast to the hierarchical promotion ladder, where the goal is for each person to achieve a position with ever-higher status. Many organizations have shifted to alternative mobility paths for two reasons: (1) there is a need to be flexible given global and technological changes, and (2) slower organizational growth has made it necessary to find alternative ways to utilize employees' talents.

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EXHIBIT 6.2 Alternative Mobility Paths



Parallel tracks allow for employees to specialize in technical work or management work and advance within either. page 274 Historically, technical specialists had to shift away from technical work to managerial work if they wanted to receive higher-status job titles and pay. In other words, a technical specialist was a dead-end job. Under a parallel track system, however, job titles and salaries of technical specialists are elevated to be commensurate with their managerial counterparts.

With a lateral track system, there may be no upward mobility at all. The individual's greatest contribution to the organization may be to stay at a certain level for an extended period of time while serving in a variety of capacities, as shown in Exhibit 6.2.

A lattice mobility path has upward, lateral, and even downward movement. For example, a recruiter may be promoted to a recruitment supervisor position, but to continue to contribute to the organization, the person may need to take a downward step to become knowledgeable about all the technical details in compensation. After mastering these details, the person may then become a supervisor again, this time in the compensation area rather than in recruitment. The person may have experience in training from a previous organization and be ready to move to training manager without training experience internal to the organization. Finally, the person may make a lateral move to manage all the HR functions in a division (recruitment, compensation, and training) as a division personnel manager.

Some organizations have adopted a team-based structure, hoping to maximize the information flow, increase flexibility, and minimize boundaries among employees.³ These organizations may do away with formal job titles and ranks altogether, with workers being reassigned to different roles in various project teams as needed. Such a structure is generally found mainly in research and development environments. The role of internal recruitment in such organizations changes completely, as talent management is focused on pairing employee KSAOs with unique project demands that are constantly in flux. This means there is a dramatic increase in the need for assessment of employee KSAOs and collaboration with team leaders to reconfigure groups quickly and efficiently. Such team-focused arrangements can be highly motivational for highly skilled individuals who are self-directed and engaged in their profession.