YOUR GUIDE TO BECOMING A

DESTINATION EMPLOYER



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There are some destinations that always appear on people's bucket lists – from vibrant cities like Paris and New York, to sun-drenched islands in the Caribbean. Just as these places hold a magical allure for tourists, there are companies that also consistently attract, and retain, the brightest people: They are known as destination employers.

In this guide, you will find out how to set your company apart from your competitors and become the place people want to stay, grow and recommend to others.

Just

believe their firm excels at cultivating and monitoring long-term relationships with future talent.



Nearly a quarter of business leaders think their company is 'weak' at understanding emerging skills and critical capability gaps.

51%

A company's own employees can deliver high calibre candidates, with 51% of organisations citing referrals as one of their top three recruitment channels.

As the war for talent rages, it's no surprise that companies want to achieve 'destination' status, since this normally equates to continuity for customers, an increase in associated brand value, positive referrals, staff productivity and ultimately, profit growth.

With employees now expecting rewards that go beyond a generous salary, and who are not afraid to move if a better offer arises, businesses must work harder than ever to recruit and develop talented individuals over the long-term.

There is no well-trodden route to becoming the ultimate destination, rather than simply a stop-off point in the employee journey. Success is built on how well a company can position itself – not just to consumers, but also to its existing and future workforce. As technology enables HR professionals to move away from transactional services, they now have an opportunity to shape what the destination looks like, both internally and externally. Harnessing their expertise in human capital, they will lead the way in creating a roadmap that aligns company and employee goals through systems of meaningful rewards.





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When you arrive in a destination, you need time to get your bearings, and employment is no different. On top of all the practical information you give to a new starter, like when lunch breaks are or how to answer the phone, you should also sit down and help them to map out where they want to go and what they hope to do along the way.

No business, in any sector, can operate without the skills and knowledge of its workforce. Even entry-level jobs depend on a supply of labour from people who are willing to turn up every day and put in the hours. When it comes to recruiting at the highest level, and where specialist skills are required, firms spend a great deal of time securing the right candidate.

Engagement does not begin on the employee's first day, but from the moment they visit your website, follow you on social media or see a job advert. By the time someone comes in for an interview, they will already have built a picture of your business in their mind, no doubt thinking about what you can offer compared to your rivals. Anyone who makes it to this stage is normally a serious contender for the job and the last thing you want is for a star candidate to choose another firm over your own. Forging strong relationships right from the start, and building on them during the onboarding process, will help grow satisfaction and reduce the flight risk in those crucial first weeks.

Colleagues remain a major motivator for as many as 41% of employees ¹, meaning the sooner a member of staff can be integrated in the team, the better it is for performance.

As part of the onboarding journey, HR departments and managers should work closely with the new starter to help them map out the next phase in their career. Allowing them to languish in a role that offers few opportunities is not an option.

Right from the start, companies need to think about:

What tools and knowledge does the employee need to perform well?



What are their motivations, beliefs and values



How often do their priorities change?

WHERE TO START

The journey

Imagine the company is a train, whose journey is longer than an individual's career. There will be some who stay on it for many years, while others jump on and off in a relatively short period of time. In the driving seat, there must be a skilled driver – or leader – to keep it on course, along with a team of support staff who are able to engage all who travel onboard.

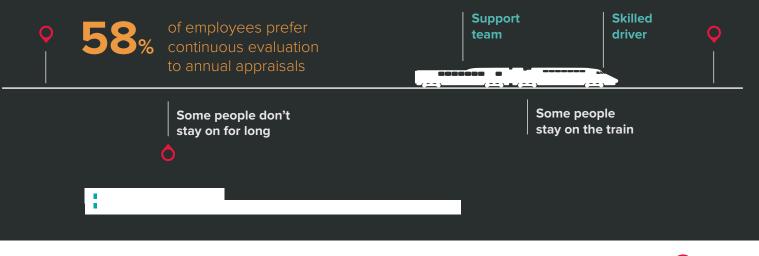
When you consider 79% of workers rate job satisfaction over money as a prime motivator, it is little wonder that employers are building people experiences (PX) into their strategies.

Delivering positive customer experiences (CX) through streamlined processes is a common characteristic, and it has become a growing trend in business too. Driven largely by individuals, rather than senior managers, companies are increasingly introducing systems that simplify everyday tasks. After all, an employee who is comfortable booking rail or plane tickets via their mobile will have no problem booking annual leave using a self-service application at work.

A people-centric approach also facilitates continual development, whether this is further training or the chance to work on new and exciting projects with other teams. Like many journeys, the route may not be linear. Colleagues can work with other departments, for just a short period of time, or move sideways into a different specialism rather than straight up the career ladder.

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Career Train



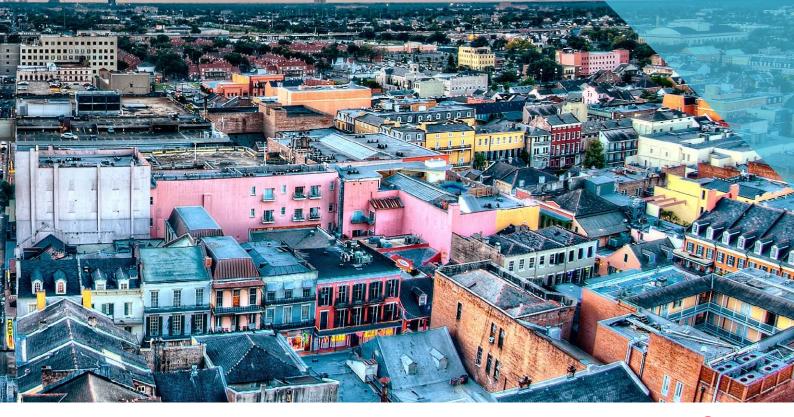


INFORMATION ALOUR FINGERTIPS



Technology is being led by individuals, with the majority of workers now comfortable using a range of applications.

Advances in technology, particularly mobile, have made it easier to navigate our way around a holiday destination, helping us to find the hotel, check out reviews and discover hidden gems along the way. Technology is enhancing employee experiences too by empowering them to take ownership of their career path.



By not fully embracing technology, particularly when it comes to mobile, businesses are missing out on opportunities to recruit new talent and engage with their existing teams.



Digital pioneers

As mentioned before, it is individuals, rather than companies, that lead the way when it comes to adoption of new technologies. A study from Deloitte shows that businesses have been lagging behind individuals since the 1970s – and this gap has only increased in recent years.³ We know from our own experience that if, say a social media platform meets our needs, we will embrace it quickly. Businesses, on the other hand, make commercially-driven decisions that involve longer and more rigorous risk assessments.

Businesses have now reached the stage where technology is no longer a barrier for engagement among the workforce. Most employees don't think twice about logging into a staff account to manage documents, training materials and requests for time off in the same way they would renew a passport online. Technology, particularly cloud-based software, has become an enabler for collaboration and more informed decision-making thanks to the in-depth analytics it provides.

Mobile technology

Increased network coverage and more powerful smartphones mean people can now carry out more tasks on the go via a mobile device, with businesses currently behind the curve.

Up to 89% of jobseekers now use a mobile phone as their primary tool, yet just 60% of recruiters have a mobile-friendly careers site. On top of this, only 20% of organisations deploy HR solutions to mobile at all.⁴

These figures illustrate the lost opportunities companies regularly encounter when building effective teams. It is not difficult to imagine the numbers of talented people who do not apply for a job because they were unable to do so on a mobile, nor the employees who feel frustrated that they cannot access HR services in a way that feels simple and intuitive.

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Nothing compares to immersing yourself in the rich history and culture of a town or city as you discover the sights and speak to the locals. Cultural identities, made up of people, language, art, food and buildings, grow organically over time – however, tourist boards and town planners usually have a hand in shaping our perceptions of them.

Workplace culture also evolves naturally, but it's the responsibility of HR departments and senior managers to continually develop positive environments and strong communications.

The employer brand proposition

As mentioned previously, positioning the business is the first step in becoming a destination employer. The likes of Google or Facebook receive millions of job applications each year because they are strong consumer brands that clearly set out career progression opportunities.

Other firms may struggle to reach these dizzy heights, but there is no reason why they can't become the ultimate place to work in their industry, rather than continually losing talented staff members to competitors.

Just as all successful marketing campaigns hinge on a strong brand proposition, vision and values, so too does HR activity. Setting out precisely what a company stands for is primarily a function of marketing teams – but HR professionals are the ones leading this change, bringing real value to the company through talent acquisition, onboarding and retention. Recruitment, for instance, has become far more sophisticated than posting a job advert and hoping that someone responds. Securing the best candidates may be a long process involving a combination of outreach on LinkedIn, incentivising referrals from colleagues in the team and building a talent pool of candidates to keep engaged until a suitable job opportunity arises

Remember too that people are attracted to a company for reasons other than the salary and even personal development. A social media post showing the team enjoying lunch together or taking part in a charity event could be what sparks interest in a company whose values mirror their own.





Workplace culture

'A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people'

- Ghandi

A strong culture evolves over time and senior management teams usually have a hand in shaping it. When developing HR strategies, it is essential that all processes enhance workplace life and ensure it is a rewarding place to be. Incentives, like free breakfasts or a shiny office space, can certainly motivate a workforce in the short-term, though it could be viewed as superficial if they do not feel supported or rewarded in other ways.

Strong performance within a company usually owes a great deal to the qualities of its leaders, yet research from Deloitte indicates that traditional models of management are failing to keep pace, particularly when it comes to innovative thinking in the digital world.¹ A major issue is that companies are more complex than they have ever been. Along with permanent team members, a manager may have to co-ordinate a hybrid workforce of contractors, freelancers and temporary staff.

Ensuring they deliver high standards is one thing, but in a flexible jobs market there's every chance they could work for the business again, either as a supplier or permanent member of staff. They could also move on to a competitor firm, so instilling positive perceptions is as relevant for contingent workers as permanent staff.

Checklist: What to take away

Define what becoming a destination employer means for you and make sure it is communicated across the board.

As part of this, pay close attention to your employer brand proposition and work across different departments to develop marketing campaigns and outreach opportunities.

Fostering a sense of belonging is essential in a hybrid workforce, so pay close attention to contingent employees as well as permanent workers. Something as simple as including them in team activities or communications can help them feel valued and more likely to perform well.





#1 Snapshot from . . . Talon Outdoor

In just one year, media agency Talon Outdoor has risen up the ranks of the Sunday Times' Best Small Companies to Work For list to take top spot. Not only is it described as an exciting and energetic place to work, it also offers a wide range of employee incentives, like an early finish on Fridays and flexible working. The company's commitment to fundraising for good causes is also a key motivator, continually bringing people together and improving morale.



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Our holiday memories are filled with the people who made it that bit more special, from the waiter at your favourite restaurant to a tour guide who brought the city alive. Within any business, employees arrive via different routes, each one bringing different skills, experience and personality to the team. Understanding their background and employment journey enables managers and HR to work more effectively with them.



A 2017 survey by careers service Prospects found that 48%⁶ of young people had taken an unpaid internship and half of those said they wanted the experience to align with their career aspirations.

Internships and apprentices

Destination employers understand the contribution work experience students or those on an internship play in company life.

Rather than just asking them to make cups of tea, think about what they can bring to the team. Chances are they will relish the responsibility they are given and the company could be rewarded with an influx of applications from bright young graduates.

Taking on a school leaver as an apprentice may require the employer to offer more support, but it is also a valuable opportunity to nurture raw talent, creating a loyal and productive member of the team.

Line managers

Often the link between HR departments and employees, line managers are responsible for implementing strategies on the ground. The relationship a staff member has with their line manager will shape their perceptions of the company – so much so that it can account for up to 70%¹ variability in engagement.

Given the importance of this relationship, line managers should be carefully selected, developed and, of course, managed on an ongoing basis. As well as being approachable, they must build trust among the team through honesty, transparency, integrity and a desire to act in people's best interests.

Hierarchies exist in almost every workplace and they are positive motivators for people to advance their career. The trick is to draw even the most junior staff member into the company's strategic narrative, so they understand the value of their contribution.

Graduates

While overall UCAS applications were down by 5% this year compared to last, this was largely down to a decline in the number of mature students. ¹University remains a popular route for many 18-yearolds and the aspirations they take into their first job will undoubtedly be shaped by their experience of higher education.

By the time they begin employment, graduates could find themselves working alongside people who have moved up the ranks following an apprenticeship and/or undertaken professional qualifications as opposed to a degree.

The needs of a university leaver may be different to others in the team, so HR teams should work closely with them and their managers to ensure they are immersed in the company culture and do not become disillusioned if they perceive a lack of career opportunity.

Visible leaders

Senior management teams are often guilty of poor communications, particularly after a new-starter has settled into their role. Nobody expects the CEO to be monitoring their every move, but equally they do not like feeling ignored. Celebrating a job well done, or helping them to resolve a problem, demonstrates the kind of qualities most employees value highly.

Social occasions, like a team night out or staff lunch, can help managers find out more about their team in a more relaxed environment. Colleagues might be reluctant to open up in the office, but take them off-site and they could be more willing to give feedback or advice that can help build understanding. Asking them for their perspective is another way to keep your finger on the pulse, while also empowering them to bring about real change.

WHO YOU'LL MEET ALONG THE WAY

Mentors

Some managers are afraid to open up to their team in case it undermines their professional standing. Yet human relationships are what keep a business running smoothly – and strong bonds are created when people share both their triumphs and failures. Admitting to the mistakes they have made in the early stages of their career, or sharing their insecurities, means that younger employees can better relate to managers and will repay them with hard work.

Again, communication is paramount, so letting people know little things like when they have reached a business objective or the CEO has praised a department can have a much greater impact than you think.

Mentoring opens up a conversation and increases job satisfaction and fulfillment for both parties. Aside from the usual office issues, it also enables people to find out about how different people in the company have arrived at their position, what hurdles they faced and what their values are. All these feed into the positive working cultures that so many firms are trying to achieve.



Bad bosses can lead to resignations

No company wants their prized team members to quit – and it seems like even more of a blow if the reason they do so is because of a fraught, or even toxic, relationship with their boss. A survey from Glassdoor showed that almost 20% of workers had left a job because they didn't approve of their line manager or boss. The fall-out from this, of course, can be damaging for the company's reputation especially if the disgruntled former employee tells colleagues about their poor experiences. But by identifying these grievances, action can be taken, for example providing management training or mentoring that gives team leaders relevant skills.

Checklist: What to take away

Consider the diverse needs of the workforce, tailoring your engagement and development tactics to each individual.

Regular communication and feedback from team members should be used
 to guide HR strategies and build positive relationships between employees and their managers.

Invest in training for your managers to help them become great leaders. Strong engagement at this level filters down to other workers, creating tight-knit and productive teams.



com

#2 Snapshot from . . . 4Com

0845 345 3300

For business communications specialist 4Com, incentives like a breakfast bar and salad lunches are supported by a strong sense of family and pride within the workplace. Employees value the fact that they can have fun with their colleagues, without compromising professionalism. Strong community involvement and fundraising activities have only served to enhance employee satisfaction at the firm, which is rated first in the Sunday Times' 100 Best Companies to Work For list.



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Who doesn't love a top tip from a local when they go on holiday? Language barriers can prevent you from communicating effectively with people in the destination, but learn just a few words and you'll be amazed at the kind of insights and positive responses you'll get. The same is true of an office, where communication, collaboration and engagement are the building blocks of strong relationships between colleagues and greater loyalty to the company.



of business leaders say that agility and collaboration is critical to success, but almost a fifth said their company was not agile.



Communication and engagement

Destination employers understand the importance of communicating with their workforce – whether it is through mentoring sessions, team socials, company emails, pulse surveys or social media. Knowing what someone's goals and concerns are, when their birthday is and what they like to do at the weekend helps them feel part of the corporate family, bolstering their loyalty and respect for managerial decisions.

That said, successful managers try to involve the workforce in decision-making wherever possible, showing them that their input is valued. It's not a case of paying lip service to what junior staff members offer, but seriously considering the strengths and skills they have to offer.

Giving teams all the information they need to do their job well and ensuring they're aware of any changes means they tend to be more open about discussing their own achievements, frustrations or plans. Without adequate communication channels, a minor problem can soon escalate into something more serious.

Collaboration

For star candidates, the question of what company they want to work **for** has been replaced with the one they want to work **with**. It's a two-way relationship, however too many companies are failing to embrace the diverse skill sets in their teams.





Ongoing learning

There have never been more avenues for employees to learn new skills and gain qualifications. The plethora of open access online courses and training programmes from professional bodies, not to mention industry-specific meet-ups and events, give people the tools they need to move up the career ladder. The skills they gain benefit not only the company, but also the individual who plays an active role in their progression.

Ready-to-consume content, like webinars, offers teams an opportunity to quickly acquire skills and knowledge, without formal teaching. But does this mean that employers should not invest in traditional training programmes or deliver their own in-house? In most cases, a balance needs to be struck. Content from other sources may not be aligned to company objectives, unlike custom materials that can be tailored to its needs. Many are also moving towards formal learning, giving employees the chance to embark on personal development plans and/or undertake qualifications relevant to their role.

Understanding what kind of teaching an employee responds well to will also drive this decision and is something that can be uncovered during regular mentoring sessions. Feedback from them highlights whether they prefer distance learning or seminars and workshops, whether they want to take exams and what they want to learn, for example management tactics or product knowledge. Gaining a formal qualification is a key driver for some, but others will say it's about accessing training materials around their day job.

Checklist: What to take away

Keep everyone in the company informed through regular communications.Employees want to know the latest news and, of course, be the first to hear about the later internal promotions and training opportunities.

Think broadly about the skills people can bring to a team or project, nomatter what their position is in the business.

Invest in learning for all employees, whether it is internal training sessions,the chance to take formal qualifications or making use of online resources.

♦ Sytner Group

#3 Snapshot from . . . Sytner Group

As if being surrounded by Jaguars and Rolls Royces all day wasn't enough of an incentive, this Leicesterbased firm really goes the extra mile when it comes to engagement. Employees said that their career ambitions are always supported with opportunities to learn new skills and rise through the ranks. Over the years, training and development courses have been improved, thanks to the strong partnership between the commercial, learning and HR departments. Its success in growing individuals in line with the business is one of the reasons why the number of voluntary leavers stands at just 15%.







Image: Second systemImage: Second sy



of employees said job satisfaction was second place after money.

The best summer holidays leave you with memories that last through the gloomy winter months. One of the reasons we love holidays so much is that, for a short period of time, our stress levels are down and we are able to indulge our passions, whether it be food, walking or simply reading a book by the pool.

Employers can also take positive steps to improve team experiences through HR strategies. Flexible working and benefits packages are two examples, but perhaps the biggest shift we have seen is the growing commitment to employee wellbeing and mental health.



80%

of HR professionals said wellbeing was a priority for their department

Top companies are aware that wellbeing and mental health are inextricably linked to engagement and productivity. Employees who are frustrated, stressed and anxious are unlikely to perform well in their role. There are countless reasons for this, although common reasons include problems at home, not getting on with colleagues, being over-worked, poor progression and low salary.

All-too-often, people are reluctant to discuss their problems with their manager or HR department. It might be that they feel uncomfortable talking about personal matters at work or fear that their job would be under threat if it looked like they weren't coping. But with almost half of workers1 admitting they know someone who has given up work because of stress, it's clear that businesses are paying a heavy price for poor wellbeing strategies.

45%

Less than 45% of companies have a wellbeing strategy in place.

Workplace initiatives like yoga and mindfulness sessions for team members have become increasingly prevalent in the last few years – and when implemented correctly, these can be useful tools in improving satisfaction and wellbeing. But this shouldn't be a box-ticking exercise or an add-on that makes the company appear supportive from the outside, but does little to address the real issues.

Now, more than ever, HR professionals have the opportunity to drive forward wellbeing initiatives within companies, boosting engagement and improving churn rates. Data generated from employee surveys and one-to-ones provide clear insights into how both individuals and the workforce as a whole feel.

Knowing that someone is going through a divorce or is unhappy because they did not get a promotion, for example, opens up a conversation and helps the employee, HR department and line manager decide what steps to take next. Identifying even minor frustrations can reduce the chances of someone later resigning.



Mental health

According to the charity Mind, as many as one in four people will experience a mental health issue every year and this can severely impact on their work life, particularly if they need to take time off.

The ongoing stigma around conditions like depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety can mean people are reluctant to open up to their employers, perhaps believing that it will negatively affect their career opportunities. It's essential to create a culture of openness surrounding mental health issues but remember there are no quickwins. Destination employers are known for offering supportive working environments that continually espond to the needs of their teams, evolving their policies over time.

The facts

2 %

14%

30%

More than one in five (**21%**) of employees agreed that they had called in sick to avoid work when asked how workplace stress had affected them.

14% had resigned from a job and **42%** had considered resigning when asked about how workplace stress impacted them.

30% of staff disagreed with the statement: "I would feel able to talk openly with my line manager if I was feeling stressed."

56% of employers said they would like to do more to improve staff wellbeing, but don't feel they have the right training and guidance.



Work life balance: Top 10 tips

- **1.** Ensure people receive regular reminders about work-life balance and the impact it can have on their health. Over time, this will become embedded in the company ethos.
- 2. Develop support networks that empower employees to talk openly about what is causing them stress and create a robust system that enables them to receive the support they need.
- **3.** Promote a culture of transparency about workloads and what to do if someone feels they are working too many hours.
- **4.** Enlist an expert to provide training in mental health and employee wellbeing for managers.
- **5.** Audit working environments to identify elements of practice, policy or culture that may be detrimental to a healthy work-life balance.
- 6. Think creatively about building agile teams that 'work smarter not harder'.
- **7.** Regularly monitor and evaluate policies against performance indicators such as sickness, absence and improvements in staff satisfaction.
- 8. Enable staff to access counselling and support services during working hours as they would for other personal appointments.
- **9.** Encourage activities that promote better mental health, for example lunchtime exercise or relaxation classes.
- **10.** Switch off the mobile and laptop. People who are continually logged on to their work emails are unlikely to feel refreshed when they come into the office.



The second state of the se

As well as using our handy guide on your journey to becoming a destination employer, it always helps to see what others in the industry have to say. Below is a round-up of recommended resources that promise to challenge your thinking and set you off on the road to successful employee engagement.

Rewriting the rules for the digital age: 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends

This in-depth report examines the disruptive power of digital technology within HR, arguing the pressing commercial need for innovative leadership models. It suggests taking a holistic approach to engagement, urging HR professionals to elevate positive employee experiences and align it with all aspects of the business.

Glassdoor

A little like TripAdvisor, Glassdoor's platform allows employees to say what they really think about a company – and in some cases, it's the first interaction a jobseeker will have with the brand. Monitoring what people say anonymously helps HR departments identify potential issues that could put off a potential recruit or cause existing employees to leave.



The Sunday Times Best 100 Companies

See how other companies are setting the standard in the annual The Sunday Times Best 100 Companies list. Drawing on feedback from employees, this report considers factors such as wellbeing, leadership and salary in picking out the country's leading firms. Take a look at what they are doing and think about how you can introduce similar policies in your workplace.

Enagage for Success

This voluntary movement champions employee engagement by connecting industry experts, setting out the innovative strategies and providing practical tips. As well as offering a wealth of resources, you can also attend local events to discuss current trends and share advice or volunteer to host your own.



Access Group

Established in 1993, Access Group develops cloud-based software that enables employers to put their teams at the heart of the business. By integrating and streamlining processes such as talent management, development and payroll, HR departments can improve engagement and performance across teams. Our website also includes resources such as reports, latest industry news and case studies.

www.theaccessgroup.com



WeThrive

A specialist in employment engagement software, WeThrive generates reports showing how employees feel through regular anonymous surveys and real-time reports. It is designed to promote a culture of high performance, using employee data to deliver tailored development plans.

Peakon

Another employee engagement platform aimed at HR professionals, managers and c-suite. Its website includes a blog that covers current issues in the sector, along with a series of management guides.





YOUR GUIDE TO BECOMING A



Bon voyage: Next steps in your journey

By now you should have a good idea of what a destination employer looks like and the steps you could take to move from offering 'just a job' to a lasting and meaningful career. A large part of this comes down to how you present the company to the outside world – is it the sort of place that people feel proud and excited to be associated with?

While employee longevity is an admirable goal, we've come a long way from the days of people spending their entire career in one job. The trick is to create agile workforces who remain excited and engaged for as long as possible through continual support and development. Now, more than ever, technology is delivering seamless experiences, putting employees in control of their future. It's up to HR departments and line managers to provide the right opportunities at the right time so that people can fulfill the ambitions and potential they have.

Ready to fly?

As you head off on this journey, remember to keep a clear idea of why you are embarking on it in the first place. Celebrate milestones along the way, whether it is improved employee satisfaction levels or higher retention rates, and make sure you continually assess policies to find out what's working most effectively. By actively engaging with and investing in your most valuable resource – i.e. people – you can help your company satisfy even the wanderlust of even the most intrepid career travellers.







About the author: **Tony Gale**

An industry expert in people management solutions and services, Tony has more than 33 years' experience in the HR sector. He joined HCM technology specialist Access Group in 2015 and, together with his team, works with more than 10,000 businesses and not-for-profit organisations to deliver HR and talent management software solutions.

His career has seen him hold a number of high profile roles, including HR leader for Cadbury / Premier Brands and People Team Director Europe at Microsoft Business Solutions.



Access Group's client portfolio includes major UK firms such as Pizza Express, Center Parcs and Securitas

For more details visit: www.theaccessgroup.com/hr