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by David Cooper
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THE GREAT RE-ARCHITECTURE:

How Companies Are Building
New Workflow Designs
That Drive Higher Results



I'm a big fan of everybody winning – company leadership, boards, employees, customers, business partners, suppliers... everybody. Workflows are one of the few things in business where improving them creates compounding wins across every stakeholder group.

It's a grave understatement to say that workflows are just internal mechanics. In fact, workflow design is the fundamental operating system of a business. It shapes how fast teams and businesses move and how reliably they deliver. This is one reason today's companies are building new workflow designs.

Here's another reason, and it's a big one...

Workflows are no longer just internal

Asynchronous productivity and hybrid cohesion are essential in today's decentralized workforce. Team members aren't working in the same places or on the same schedules.

Consequently, instead of relying on meetings and real-time responses from team members and decision makers, workflows must be restructured so that your people can contribute independently but in total alignment across time zones and varying locations – without slowing down progress.



Here's how modern workflows lift business operations

Leaders have clear visibility and make better decisions: Inefficient workflows hide problems until they blow up. Redesigning them gives leaders what they need, and that's real-time clarity:

- Leaders can see where work stands, what's working, and where things are getting stuck.
- More strategic thinking through visibility means there are fewer fires to put out.
- Decisions are faster and made with greater confidence.

Employees experience less friction and gain greater focus: This is where the biggest day-to-day impact and payoff show up in redesigned workflows:

- Modern workflows reduce avoidable meetings, duplicate work, and time wasted navigating chaos.
- Handoffs are smooth and employees have clear expectations.
- Time is naturally created to perform more meaningful work.

Customers enjoy faster, more consistent experiences: If internal

Redesigning chaotic workflows eliminates costly ripple effects across the supply chain.

processes are messy, the customer experience will be, too. Modern workflows mitigate that risk:

- Customers immediately see and feel workflow quality improvements.
- They receive faster response times and fewer errors and miscommunications.
- The delivery of products, services, and support is far more consistent and reliable.

Business partnerships grow stronger through straightforward collaboration: Business partners don't like having to assume how things work at a company. Solid workflows remove the guesswork:

- Collaboration becomes predictable, resulting in less back-and-forth and fewer delays.
- Trust in the relationship builds

because work gets completed as expected.

- Organized workflows make a company a more reliable partner.

Suppliers coordinate and perform better with fewer disruptions: Suppliers rely on clarity and timing from customers. Redesigning chaotic workflows eliminates costly ripple effects across the supply chain:

- Suppliers are able to meet expectations with accurate forecasts and orders.
- Modern workflows reduce last-minute changes that clog pipelines and cause delays.
- Stronger company-supplier

enterprise. They begin by making two distinct clarifications:

- They determine which work is core to the business.
- They determine which tasks can flex across teams, locations, and time zones.

Once these distinctions become clear, companies then redesign team structures and collaboration tools around that split. I'll get into greater detail below.

The goal: The overarching goal of workflow redesign is to make decision-making, collaboration, and information flow faster, easier, and more accurately,

new workflow implementation and sustainable operations.

Changing organizational structure to deliver simplified workflows

A common pattern among companies undertaking workflow redesign is to reorganize work around decision paths and desired outcomes – instead of around the work and tasks of isolated departments.

For example, a team responsible for launching a new product or service maps the launch by

involving all internal decision makers in the process, from marketing to sales, legal, and operations. While the launch team is responsible for managing the rollout, decisions are made through full, open collaboration across all relevant teams to approve positioning, pricing, legal review, inventory, and timing of the launch.



relationships grow out of consistency.

How are companies tackling workflow evolution?

Companies are redesigning workflows by moving away from rigid job silos to more adaptive, inclusive, and data-accessible operating models across the

even when employees and teams are not in the same place at the same time.

While every business and operating model is different, there are fundamental steps involved in redesigning workflows. Following are those central considerations and actions to ensure successful

In hybrid and remote settings, companies are also using hub-and-spoke or team-based models so that groups involved in heavy collaboration can coordinate in-office days and avoid splintered communications across teams. Some firms keep a small central team focused on strategy and a few

core capabilities, while execution is handed off to business units or product teams that are closer to the work on a daily basis.

Establishing core vs. flexible roles within the company

The act of distinguishing core vs. flexible roles is necessary in workflow redesign because it clarifies which responsibilities, or jobs, must have stable ownership and which ones can shift with demand. This makes workflow design more efficient and adaptable, and it's essential to changing the organizational structure defined above.

The core vs. flexible distinction among roles usually starts with role analysis. Companies typically classify jobs by whether they require focus work that relies on the employee's judgment, expertise, and sustained attention, and whether jobs involve interaction with customers, equipment, or regulatory responsibilities.

Core roles tend to stay anchored to mission-critical expertise, decision rights, or the dependence of working on-site, while flexible roles can shift between remote, hybrid, or shared staffing models. Knowing these distinctions lets

Digital whiteboards and shared virtual workspaces are becoming digital hubs where teams can collaborate synchronously or asynchronously on the same projects – without having to be in the same place at the same time.

organizations protect essential functions without locking every job function into the same staffing class and making it difficult to create a new organizational structure.

Adopting collaboration tools for independent work and unified execution

To bridge physical and digital divides among employees and teams, companies are investing in a stack (a set of connected tools and systems) that covers shared storage, real-time messaging, asynchronous communication, task tracking, and visual collaboration.

Digital whiteboards and shared virtual workspaces are becoming digital hubs where teams can collaborate synchronously or asynchronously on the same projects – without having to be in the same place at the same time. Many organizations are also adding more robust video conferencing, cloud docs, and workflow tools

so that remote and in-office employees have access to the same information, developments, and progress in real time.

The best redesigns treat the office as a collaboration

asset rather than the default workplace, with adaptive spaces for teamwork, focus, and client interaction. The bigger idea is to make location less important than access to the right people, the right context, and the right tools at the right time.

The right combination of tools, systems, and workflows make organizations and their teams more agile, while reducing friction created by distance or lack of access to shared platforms and workspaces.

Start reaching for higher results today

Your workflow design is the true operating system of your business.

If it's clear, work will flow.
If it's structured, your people will align.
If it's flexible, your teams will adapt.

Relationships with all of your constituents, internally and externally, will grow stronger – and everybody will win.

Reach out to [The Cooper Group, Inc.](https://www.coopergroup.net) for assistance in creating a strategy that's tailored to your specific business and operating model. We'll help you get your workflow redesign and a supportive organizational structure in shape for success in 2026 and far beyond.



Retention by Design:

Use Personalized Development to Future-Proof Key Talent

by David Cooper
CEO / Principal Strategist
The Cooper Group

For years, we've seen this adage creep into countless conversations about talent retention: "People don't leave bad jobs. They leave bad bosses." There's some truth to that, but heads up: It pales in comparison to a new reality that's emerging in today's competitive hiring market.

The new reality is this: "Employees don't leave companies. They leave stagnation." This development has become so pronounced and critical that an evolution is needed in how companies define and deliver opportunities for professional development.

Employers are working harder than ever to attract top talent – including luring people away from their competitors. But leaders who operationalize the mindset of 'Retention by Design' don't just



retain key talent; they build top-tier performers faster than competitors can find, attract, and onboard them.

The evidence is clear for today's executives and HR leaders

Investing in professional development for employees is no longer just a talent retention lever.

It's now treated as a primary driver of employee engagement, internal mobility, and workforce stability in an uncertain and highly competitive labor market.

Just as important, investing in professional development drives business performance when companies create opportunities that

align with their long-term strategic needs.

This article explores the mindsets of today's workforce and offers business leaders meaningful ways to embed personalized professional development into work design and career building across the organization.

Professional growth is a top reason people stay in their jobs – or leave

Recent [research](#) on talent retention among job seekers shows a clear pattern: Beyond benefits, career growth opportunities strongly influence loyalty to a job and employer.

Over half of survey respondents said they are more likely to stay when employers provide professional development and upskilling (57.4%) and clear advancement paths (54.8%), emphasizing that retention is tied to visible growth potential within a company.

Meanwhile, research shows that lack of growth opportunities is a leading reason employees quit. This is a shift from prior years when insufficient compensation was a dominant factor in choosing to leave.

It's important to note that many employees stay in their jobs due to economic uncertainties, rather than loyalty to a company or job. I bring this up for two reasons. One is to acknowledge that low turnover doesn't always equate to satisfied employees. And two, I want to emphasize that professional development can absolutely convert these employees into committed, engaged, long-term staffers.

What does all of this mean for today's leaders? If employees can't see opportunity for forward motion in their jobs and careers, they interpret it as stagnation. And stagnation leads to disengaged, underperforming teams and the departure of valuable employees.

Career development is still under-supported – despite executive buy-in

LinkedIn's most recent [Workplace Learning Report](#) reveals how the competitive advantage in talent retention and recruiting is no longer whether a company invests in professional development, but rather how effectively it is operationalized at scale within the organization.

From the report:

- Asked to choose the top three barriers standing in the way of career development, respondents say a lack of time and resources is a glaring pain point: 50% say managers lack proper support; 45% say employees lack support; and 33% say talent teams themselves lack support.
- But only 11% of survey respondents cite "leadership doesn't value career development" as one of their top three barriers. Clearly, most leadership teams are not standing in the way of career development, but they are also not addressing the systemic challenges to allow managers, employees, and talent teams to properly prioritize it.

In other words, the intent is there but the execution is failing. However, many companies are getting it right.

Professional development is no longer about career growth over the long-term. It's about employability right now.

Learning is now tied directly to adaptability, expectations, and retention

Today's workforce views learning, development, upskilling, and growth opportunities as essential to staying relevant in a fast-changing business world. More specifically, professional development is no longer about career growth over the long-term. It's about employability right now.

Companies that recognize this shift in the minds of today's talent understand two things:

- For the company: Professional development is a risk mitigation strategy, not just a talent perk.
- For the workforce: Career growth is not just a differentiator. It's a baseline expectation.

Old vs. new thinking about professional development

Earlier, I noted that evolution is needed in how companies define and deliver professional development. Here's the evolution that business and HR leaders need to pay attention to today:

THE OLD MODEL:

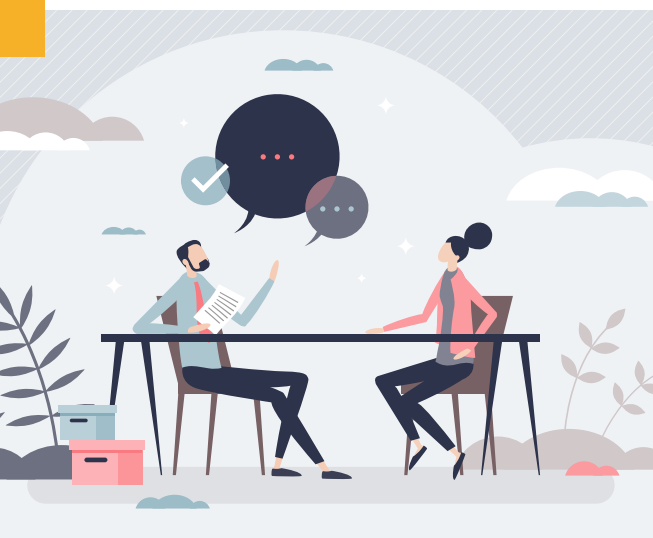
- Professional development was used as an employee engagement tool.
- Training was an HR learning and development responsibility.
- Talent retention was tied to

compensation and company culture.

THE CURRENT MODEL:

- Professional development is a core talent retention driver and workforce strategy.
- Learning is continuous, personalized, and skill based.
- Talent retention is tied to professional growth, internal mobility, purpose, and company culture.

Organizations that win in talent retention don't just offer development:



- They make it **visible** to employees by creating clear pathways to advancement.
- They make it **accessible** to employees by embedding development into their work.
- They make it **relevant** and personal to employees by aligning development to future skills.

7 steps to development visibility, accessibility, and relevance

Leading organizations are moving beyond traditional, static career ladders to dynamic, data-driven

talent ecosystems. The most effective strategies combine personalization, internal mobility, and workforce planning into one integrated, company-wide system.

In addition to giving top talent opportunity and strong reasons to stay, everything is designed to build skills ahead of business demand, instead of reacting to it.

1 MAKE THE SHIFT FROM A JOB-BASED TO A SKILL-BASED TALENT MODEL

Top companies are organizing work, development, and careers around skills, not job titles. Here are examples of what that looks like in practice, and actions you can take to make them work for your organization and personalize them for your people.

- Use competency frameworks to figure out what skills your people already have and use AI-driven analyses to determine what skills you'll need next.
- Personalization and internal mobility can only scale through a skills-

based talent architecture, so it's essential to create transparent skill-to-role pathways. This allows your employees to see exactly what's required for them to move into lateral and future roles.

- Treat skills as a shared language across your HR department, manager network, and all employees.

2 BUILD INTERNAL TALENT MARKETPLACES THAT ARE POWERED BY AI

Smart firms make personalization operational by deploying

internal platforms that match employees with advancement and development opportunities in real time. For example, AI can recommend roles, projects, mentors, and learning paths that are based on an employee's skills and personal career aspirations.

All employees are able to explore lateral moves, gigs, stretch assignments, and promotions within the organization, and the platform continuously updates career pathways as business needs evolve.

Here's a real-world example: Companies like Salesforce are using AI career agents to suggest roles and training, dramatically increasing internal hiring and reskilling adoption rates.

3 REPLACE THE CAREER LADDER WITH CAREER LATTICES AND GIG-BASED MOBILITY

Modern career paths are no longer linear – and internal mobility is no longer vertical. Both are multidirectional today. This is why retention-minded companies are enabling employees to take advantage of lateral moves, cross-functional rotations, and short-term internal gigs.

Introducing project-based sprints allows employees to contribute outside their core roles – and learn. It also normalizes a try-before-you-move experience, which reduces risk for employees and managers alike.

This is the lattice approach and here's what it does:

- It quickly expands your employees' breadth of skills.
- It helps you retain and spread institutional knowledge across the organization.

- It increases agility in deploying talent when new demands arise.

4 INTEGRATE CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN WORKFLOWS AND MANAGER ACCOUNTABILITY

High-performing organizations make professional development a key part of their managers' jobs – not a side program that can be neglected. The result is a company culture that does not constrain internal mobility or employee learning and development.

- Career conversations and self-assessments are embedded into regular employee check-ins.
- Managers are required to actively support employee development and growth.
- Leadership KPIs are tied to talent development and talent success.
- Managers are rewarded for developing and releasing talent to other areas of the organization.

5 ALIGN MOBILITY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTLY TO STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

The most advanced companies reverse-engineer employee career pathways from the business strategy. In other words, the talent strategy is a forward-looking supply chain of skills built ahead of demand.

By aligning internal mobility and development with strategic workforce planning, your company can be proactive instead of reactive, enabling you to:

- Identify future capabilities that are tied to your growth priorities, such as AI, digital, or new markets.
- Build targeted development

pathways to cultivate those skills internally.

- Use internal mobility to deploy talent into strategic initiatives before gaps emerge.

6 USE DATA AND ANALYTICS TO CONSTANTLY REFINE EMPLOYEE CAREER PATHWAYS

Creating career pathways means building a living, breathing system that grows and evolves, not a static framework. Since personalization can only improve when it's measurable and adaptive, it's important to track internal mobility rates, skill progression, and pathway effectiveness.

Measure outcomes and use those insights to continually improve career pathways:

- Retention: Measure turnover rates among employees before and after mobility moves.
- Skills: Measure capability growth in priority areas.
- Cost: Measure time-to-fill open roles and savings achieved in the hiring process.

7 STANDARDIZE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Transparency is the defining feature of effective professional development programs. Visibility drives employee participation – and participation drives top talent retention. Providing open access to roles, gigs, and development opportunities increases equity, engagement, job fill rates, and talent retention.

The companies getting this right are shifting career development from a static

HR process into a dynamic, internal, AI-enabled talent marketplace that's aligned with the core business strategy and democratized internally for the benefit of all employees. The shift delivers three strategic outcomes:

- Retention: People see a future internally – and stay.
- Agility: Skills easily migrate to where they're needed – fast.
- Capability Building: The workforce evolves ahead of company and market demands.

Get expert guidance to foolproof your strategy and future-proof key talent

If you're interested in a cost-free consultation on how to integrate professional development, mobility, and strategy to build career pathways that will help retain key talent, contact [The Cooper Group](#) today.



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