

The New Rules of Talent: Why Loyalty and Mobility Must Be Redefined

The relationship between employer and employee has quietly changed hands. For a long time, organisations set the terms of a career: Employees were hired in a specific country and function, and progression happened according to a structure the organisation controlled. There was an assumed loyalty between an employer and an employee, whereby both parties were committed to a long-term career within the organisation.

That assumption no longer holds. Companies frequently restructure and reorganise their workforce, in response to intense competitive pressures, constant economic uncertainties, and high shareholder expectations. Even employees with long tenure with the organisation feel increasingly insecure in their jobs.

At the same time, employers are also fighting another battle, focused on attracting and retaining the best talent, where the landscape is rapidly changing.

Today, the best employees and candidates run the process. A strong candidate may be weighing two or three competing offers at once. Employees are much more aware of their potential worth, which is no longer constrained by internal salary bands. Compensation and benefits, which used to be closely guarded secrets, are now visible online, shared in casual conversations, and sometimes built into regulation itself.

On the demand side, good candidates with an online profile can showcase their experience to employers and executive search firms around the world, not just in their home market. In fact, some of



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the strongest candidates are no longer looking at all. They are being approached, often by organisations that saw value in them before they saw it in themselves. As a result, job switching of good employees is accelerating, pushing wages upward as competitors bid for the same shrinking pool of proven talent.

This shift forces a difficult but necessary question for any employer: what does employee loyalty actually mean in this environment, and can it still be assumed?

Loyalty, if it exists at all, must now be earned continuously, through visible investment in the individual, through flexibility in how careers are shaped, and through a genuine sense that career and salary progression are still possible within the same organisation. An employee who feels their career and compensation has stalled has very little reason to remain, regardless of how long they have already been with the organisation.

This is where the idea of an Employee Value Proposition becomes useful, not as a marketing phrase, but as a working model of why someone would choose to join, grow with, and ultimately remain within an organisation. At its core sit two reinforcing elements: rewards (i.e. total compensation, benefits, culture, and working conditions),

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and career opportunities, meaning the real prospect of progression and greater responsibility over time. These two elements are clearly correlates, as career growth implies some degree of progression in rewards too.

Underneath that value proposition sit the mechanisms that actually deliver it. Learning and development builds capability to progress into new roles, enhancing future employability and rewards. International mobility extends career opportunities beyond the domestic market entirely, adding exposure, cross-cultural experience, and a richer set of rewards than any single country could offer alone. Crucially, these three enablers do not operate in isolation. They form a virtuous cycle, where development leads to career mobility, while mobility itself can have a developmental value, making the individual more capable and the organisation better able to address its current and future talent needs around the world.

Many organisations still manage Talent, Rewards and Global Mobility separately, often in different departments and different metrics of success, even though they are three expressions of the same underlying challenge. The importance of integrating these three areas into a holistic strategy is not abstract. Such an integrated value proposition is more likely to attract high-potential employees and retain them once they are already proficient in their roles and therefore most attractive to competitors.

The next 2 articles in this series look at how that system can be built. The next article examines mobility itself in more detail, exploring the different forms it can take and why it deserves to be treated as a deliberate talent strategy rather than an occasional exception.

The final article turns to the infrastructure question directly: what it takes, structurally and financially, to give talent genuine freedom to move across borders and business units, and what an organisation should seriously consider before attempting it.