



# REVITALIZING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

*at the Blue Med Group*

August  
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# Dedications

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## Heather Greenfield

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# Executive Summary

## 01

The Global Learning and Leadership Development team at the Blue Med Group (pseudonym), a medical technology company that employs approximately 95,000 staff members in more than 150 countries, sought our help in reviewing their existing online career development portal's effectiveness. With this in mind, our work addressed the following project questions:

01. How does the Blue Med Group's current online career development portal impact its employees' professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and internal upward mobility?
02. How, if at all, do employees' outcomes vary based on gender, country of work, and functional area?

We framed our research in pragmatist epistemology, and we reviewed extant career development literature and frameworks, including Patton and McMahon's (2007) Systems Theory Framework of Career Development. We used our literature review to create an 18-item survey to assess the Blue Med Group employees' use of the online career development portal and its potential impact on their professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning,

pathing, and internal upward mobility. The survey also included an open-ended question, “What resources do you not have that would be helpful in your career development at your company?” We discovered the following:

- ➔ The online career development portal had a small, positive impact on employees overall.
- ➔ Using the career development portal significantly impacted the employees’ professional development, employee engagement, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility.
- ➔ Portal use did not significantly impact the employees’ factor scores regarding recognition or retention.
- ➔ There were no statistically significant differences in outcomes based on the employees’ genders or functional areas.
- ➔ Employees’ outcomes had statistically significant differences based on their countries of work across four of the five factors.

Based on our research, we provide the following recommendations to the Blue Med Group:

1. Increase overall professional development by offering additional training opportunities, allowing dedicated time for career development, and modifying the existing online career development portal for easier navigation.
2. Increase employee engagement by making Human Resources more accessible, gamifying training opportunities, creating employee spotlights, and using incentives or contests to incentivize portal engagement.
3. Increase recognition by offering badges, certificates of completion, and an honor roll.
4. Increase retention by offering job shadowing and rotation opportunities, clarifying and expanding tuition reimbursement programs, and offering retention bonuses and service awards to show appreciation for longer-tenured staff.
5. Increase career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility by creating and communicating career lattices, providing access to mentoring and career coaching, advertising internal opportunities in a centralized location, and creating individual development plans using the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development.

By putting these recommendations into action, we are confident that the Blue Med Group will be able to alter the existing online career development portal to meet the needs of all of its employees worldwide. Importantly, the Blue Med Group will be able to increase opportunities for its employees’ professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and upward mobility.



# Introduction

## 02

The Blue Med Group (pseudonym) is one of the world's largest global healthcare organizations. Headquartered in Europe with its operational headquarters in the United States, it employs over 95,000 employees across more than 150 countries worldwide. At its operational headquarters, a Human Resources (HR) team called the Global Learning and Leadership Development Team is responsible for all learning and development programs offered worldwide.

In 2020, a new CEO joined the organization during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of his first initiatives included a cultural transformation for the entire Blue Med Group organization to become bolder, more ambitious, and more competitive in its markets. To support this transformation, he tasked the Global Learning and Leadership Development team with examining their existing training and development programs to ensure they were in alignment with the cultural change. The Blue Med Group's current online career development portal has been in existence since 2015. Although an essential component of the company's overall talent development strategy, it was not considered a high-priority project for the team to review as an early part of the transformation unless they could gain assistance through outside resources.





# Organizational Context

03

The Blue Med Group specializes in medical services, technology, and solutions. Its primary customers include hospitals, clinics, third-party healthcare providers, distributors, and other institutions. In 2020, its products and therapies served over 72 million patients globally. Two brothers-in-law founded the company in the late 1940s as a repair shop for medical equipment. In the late 1950s, they progressed to modifying others' designs to create new medical technology, and in the 1960s, they expanded operations and grew into an international organization. In the 1970s, they began publicly trading stock on the New York Stock Exchange and, by the mid-1980s, had grown to be one of the largest publicly held Fortune 500 companies in America. Since then, the company began acquiring and selling medical devices built by other companies and has expanded globally through several acquisitions of its medical technology competitors. Today, the Blue Med Group ranks as one of the world's top medical device companies with almost 50,000 patents, an annual operating income of around \$5 billion, yearly revenue of approximately \$30 billion, and over \$90 billion in assets.



The Blue Med Group has four central business units divided by the devices and therapies that each team develops, manufactures, and sells. They treat more than 25 chronic diseases, including but not limited to heart failure, diabetes, chronic pain, Parkinson's, obesity, Down syndrome, and some spinal diseases. The Blue Med Group serves healthcare professionals, patients, and caregivers, and its mission is to enhance people's lives by improving healthcare to reestablish complete health for all. To fulfill this mission, the company's employees include around 2,000 clinicians and 10,000 scientists and engineers. Additionally, it spends over \$2 billion in research and development per year. As with many organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Blue Med Group. Still, the organization remains focused on the future and is committed to optimizing innovations in the field through growing in emerging markets, assessing and improving research and development, and making continued breakthroughs in the medical industry.



*The Blue Med Group's mission is to enhance people's lives by improving healthcare to reestablish complete health for all.*



# Problem of Practice

## 04

The Blue Med Group believes its employees are one of its most valuable assets. Its mission emphasizes ensuring the recognition of each individual's personal worth to the organization. It developed an organization-wide online career development portal to support its employees' career growth. Its chief human resources officer (CHRO) designed the portal to create a clear road map for individuals to identify their career aspirations, set short- and long-term goals, and learn what tools and resources are available. The CHRO intended for the framework to help Blue Med Group's employees further their careers within the organization.

The staff members in the HR department have been receiving anecdotal feedback from current staff that the career development framework is not resonating with them. Employees express a lack of understanding of the process and purpose of the existing career development platform. They also note that the terminology is too complex and needs to be simplified. Key concepts need to be better defined or put in layman's terms. Additionally, the CHRO designed the current framework for employees who would work at the Blue Med Group for their entire careers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020) reveals the median number of years employees across all wage and salary groups have been with their employers is 4.1 years. This statistic indicates that Blue Med Group employees' expected tenures may not align with current industry norms. Lastly, although the original intention was for all employees to use the existing career development framework, the



direct labor employees, who represent over one-third of the organization, cannot currently access or use the portal.

Failing to effectively plan a career development portal that works well within an organization and for the employees that it serves can lead to higher turnover rates, lower employee morale, and decreased productivity (Chron.com, 2021). These undesired effects can significantly harm employees, their organizations, and their economies. Employees who do not have a useful career development portal may feel a lack of control over their work, feel taken for granted, believe they are mistreated, and experience a breakdown of community, which are all burnout triggers (Maslach, 1997). Burnout and mental health challenges in the workplace are increasing, with 75% of workers who responded to a study by Mental Health America noting they have experienced burnout and 40% of the respondents saying they experienced this state during the COVID-19 pandemic (Reynolds, 2020). This syndrome and its associated chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, digestive problems, heart disease, memory and concentration impairment, sleep issues, and weight gain (Mayo Clinic, 2021). At a company level, employee burnout can cost employers their talent and between “\$125 billion and \$190 billion every year in healthcare costs,” with workplace stress accounting for 8% of U.S. healthcare spending overall (Borysenko, 2019, para. 5). Additionally, the Gallup (2017) State of the American Workplace report “estimates that actively disengaged employees cost the United States \$483 billion to \$605 billion each year in lost productivity” (p. 19). The report also notes that “the largest companies in the U.S. have the lowest levels of engagement” (Gallup, 2017, p. 186). Given the size of the Blue Med Group, it may behoove its stakeholders to promote employee engagement through its career development portal.

The stakeholders in human resources are aware that they need to refine the current career development portal. They also realize that the COVID-19 pandemic may impact the organization’s culture and employees’ needs in the future. Overall, they would like the career development portal to provide a clear roadmap for individuals to grow, whether that leads them into new positions at Blue Med Group or outside of the organization.

# Literature Review

## 05

This literature review provides readers with a broad understanding of career development, the benefits of career development, key elements that influence career development, and various career development frameworks.

### Career Development

Career development is a complex, dynamic, and ever-changing phenomenon. Researchers note that even the word “career” is “richly ambiguous” (Watts, 2015, p. 31) and is “a term of multi-layered richness and ambiguity” (Young & Collin, 2000, p. 1), due in part to the wide variety of careers in which people engage for varying time periods within their contexts. Young, Marshall, and Valach (2007) note, “Even within English-speaking, Western industrialized countries such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, the word career has a range of meanings” (p. 7). Cultural, political, and environmental dimensions interacting through globalization have made careers and career development less straightforward, and globalization emphasizes the need for increased cultural sensitivity regarding careers and career development (Young, Marshall, & Valach, 2007).

A career is not simply the act of choosing a major, degree, field, a person changes, so does their career, and this development takes place in a particular context: their organizations, communities, countries, cultures, and societies. People, their careers, and their career development depend upon the opportunities and challenges they face, including economic, educational, geographical, historical, physical, psychological, political, and sociological factors (Gunz, 2009). These factors make career development quite complex. Accordingly, McMahon and Arthur (2019) emphasize that career development is a “multifaceted phenomena that recognizes the inseparability of work and life” (p. 5). Wolfe and Kolb (1980) further stress that:



*Career development involves one’s whole life, not just occupation. As such, it concerns the whole person... More than that, it concerns him or her in the ever-changing context of his or her life. The environmental pressures and constraints, the bonds that tie him or her to significant others, responsibilities to children and aging parents, the total structure of one’s circumstances are also factors that must be understood and reckoned with. In these terms, career development and personal development converge. Self and circumstances – evolving, changing, unfolding in mutual interaction – constitute the focus and drama of career development (pp. 1–2).*

Career theories and career development theories emerged as ways of understanding and simplifying these complexities. However, due to the many variables that influence a person’s career development, many theories focus on one or two influences. Additionally, multiple philosophical traditions underpin each theory. Career development as a field originated in various strands of literature, including “vocational guidance, differential psychology, interactionist sociology, and life course development” (McCash et al., 2021, p. 6). While it is challenging to integrate segmented, divergent career development theories, several theorists integrate and synthesize various threads, perspectives, and approaches (e.g., Arthur et al., 1989; Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018; Patton & McMahon, 1998).

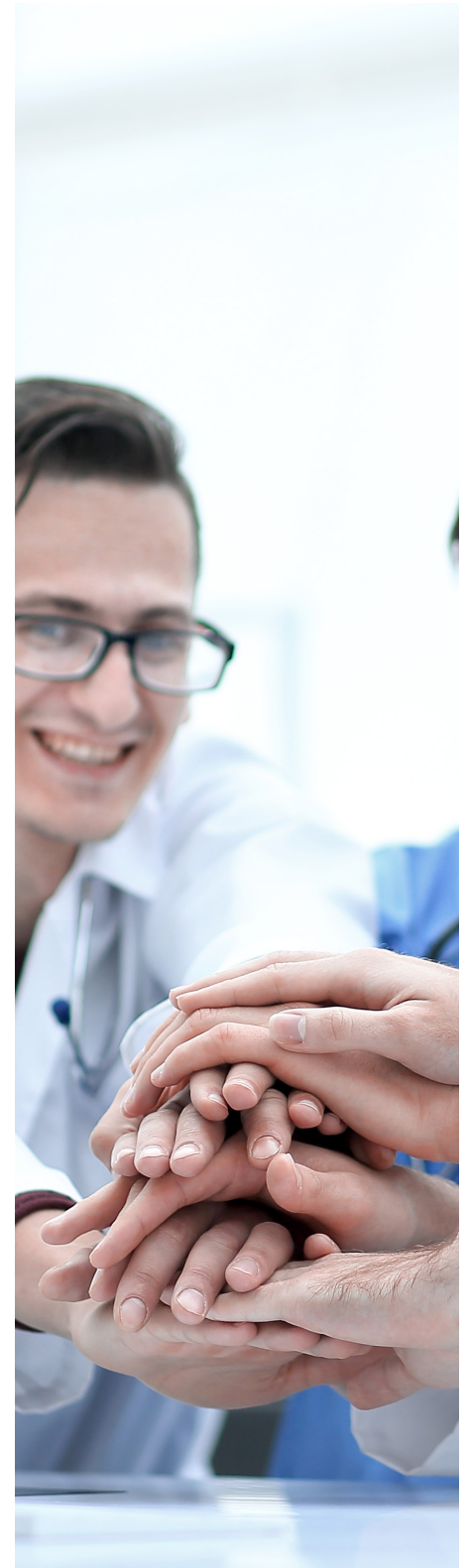
Traditional positivist approaches that assume a single objective truth do not align with the reality of how people engage in the current labor market worldwide. Constructivist approaches, which maintain that individuals construct their realities as they interact with the world around them, influence many 21st century theories, but these constructions may not be fit for understanding how groups of people engage in a global organization. Post-positivist ontologies assert that social reality can be measured and known. However, since experiences and lives of



groups of people can change quickly (e.g., due to the COVID-19 pandemic, war, climate change, automation), we instead frame this research in the pragmatist epistemology (e.g., Dewey, 1933; Rorty, 1999). The pragmatist epistemology focuses not on a particular worldview or perspective, which could vary in different disciplines, countries, or studies, but is instead a methodology that assesses our work in terms of its practical application in addressing the career development needs for employees at the Blue Med Group worldwide.

Career development originated “as a helping profession designed to assist individuals with work and learning decisions,” primarily in Western countries (McMahon & Arthur, 2019, p. 3). As rapid economic development and social changes including immigration, industrialization, urbanization, and associated increases in social inequality occurred in the mid- to late-1800s, the first documented career guidance efforts came in the form of placement and assistance programs that were “committed to achieving socially just employment outcomes for individuals who may have been disenfranchised as a result of such changes” (McMahon & Arthur, 2019, p. 3). In 1909, Parsons provided one of the earliest career development theories, grounded in logical positivist and constructivist philosophical worldviews, that continues to serve as a foundation for and have a lasting impact on career development, particularly among trait-and-factor and person-environment fit approaches to career development (McMahon & Arthur, 2019, p. 6).

The emergence and expansion of career counseling in the United States tend to occur during times of extensive societal reform (Brewer, 1942, as cited in Pope, 2000, p. 194). Consequently, Brewer (1919) describes vocational guidance as an “agent of culture,” a “moral force,” and a “civic force” (p. viii). Although the United States originally used the term “vocational guidance,” which was also largely used worldwide toward the genesis of the guidance movement, the terms “career counseling” and “career development” became commonplace in the 1950s (Pope, 2000, p. 195). Career development became the established term in 1985 when the







National Vocational Guidance Association, the “first, longest running, and preeminent career development association in the world,” was renamed to become the National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2022, para. 1).

Looking beyond the context of the United States., Watts (1996) defines three reasons for examining career guidance systems in countries other than one’s own: for “cultural relativity” to examine taken-for-granted norms and expectations; to engage in “policy borrowing” for adapting other countries’ practices into your situation; and to encourage “international cooperation” in our globalized economy (p. 234). Investigating these systems in other countries reveals their values around education and training in relation to their economic system, social and political constructs, and cultural factors in relationships between individuals, their families, and their societies (Watts, 1996, p. 234).

In Japan, for example, traditional organizations can be slow to promote their employees (Hoang, 2012). Japanese employers base promotions and salaries on the employees’ length of service to the organization, and employers expect employees to commit to one company for their entire employment lifetime (Zeng, 2021). Human resources departments determine where to assign employees, and employees have little say in their career assignments (Kopp, 2013). In contrast, in China, employees are less focused on loyalty to one organization and more focused on how their work aligns with their personal values (Wang & Zhang, 2010). Employees will leave an organization if they do not see the potential for their career growth and promotion opportunities (Hu, Weng, & Yang, 2008). Globally, the collection of terms in the field of career development (e.g., career[s] guidance, career psychology, vocational guidance, vocational psychology) may “reflect disciplinary allegiances and the time and place in history when they were introduced” (McMahon & Arthur, 2019, p. 6).

In the context of this research, we define career development as an integrated, active process in which individuals, their managers, and their organizations participate within the systems and structures that constrain and afford opportunities for learning, growth, and progression in their working lives. This conceptualization of career development is intentionally inclusive of all persons, including their identities, classes, positions, statuses, and contexts.

As Tony Watts notes in the Oxford Handbook of Career Development (2021), career development is crucial because it impacts us on an individual level, organizational level, and societal level:



*Career development matters. It matters to individuals because it significantly determines their sense of identity, the fulfillment and wellbeing they derive from their learning and work, and the contributions they make to the societies of which they are part. It matters to learning and work organizations because it significantly determines the extent to which they harness and foster the talents and motivations of their students and workers. It matters to societies because it significantly determines the extent to which they optimize the human resources of their citizens and their sense of social justice. (p. xiii)*

With this importance in mind, we examine the benefits of career development, the key elements that impact career development, and the changing nature of career development to better understand and interpret influential foundational and contemporary theoretical career development frameworks.



# The Benefits of Career Development

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) reports that the average worker has 12.4 jobs between the ages of 18 and 54. To counteract this job-hopping, organizations need to foster an atmosphere where staff members can recognize opportunities to grow and develop their careers within the organization (Fors Marsh Group, 2017). Gallup, Inc. recognizes that organizations that strategically invest in “employee development report 11% greater profitability and are twice as likely to retain their employees” (Desimone, 2019, para. 3). One of the critical pieces of an effective employee development program is the organization’s career development framework. Career development frameworks are shown to create positive economic outcomes at the individual level (e.g., reduction in economic inactivity due to job finding, increased wages), employer level (e.g., increased productivity, reduced staff turnover), and state level (e.g., increased labor market participation, decreased unemployment, reduced skill shortages, increased gross domestic product) (Percy & Dodd, 2021). When organizations develop and implement the proper career development framework, they can see benefits for their employees and their managers, customers, and shareholders.

## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

A career development framework can benefit employees by explaining the requirements for their current and future roles as well as the requirements for them to progress in their careers (Mercer, 2018). Career development frameworks can help employees learn what opportunities exist within the organization, assess how their current skill sets compare to the skill sets required for other positions they may be interested in, gain access to resources, and improve and grow in their selected areas. Career development frameworks also create a process for meaningful conversations to happen between the employee and their manager or mentors regarding their career journey (Bopp et al., 2009). These conversations can help with brainstorming potential career paths and foster a discussion around where the organization is heading and what jobs might be in demand in the future. Additionally, career development frameworks can help employees have higher levels of engagement and contribution to their organization (Percy & Dodd, 2021). Employees are more likely to be loyal and work hard for an organization if they feel like the organization will help to shape their career (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).



## MANAGER BENEFITS

Mercer's (2015) Career Frameworks in Talent Management study found that "76% of organizations using career frameworks indicated that their investment has paid off by providing enhanced productivity and talent development" (p. 2). Career development frameworks create a process to help managers guide their employees throughout their careers at the organization. By following the process, managers can increase their employee's productivity and tenure. Career development frameworks are valuable retention tools that help save managers time and money, reduce attrition, and increase employee and client satisfaction (Bopp et al., 2009; O'Donnell, 2018).

Additionally, by following the same career development framework process with all employees, managers can gain insight into where skills gaps are today and predict what they will be in the future based on their own staff members' desired development. These insights allow managers to predict future staffing needs more accurately and proactively train or hire personnel to meet those needs (Bopp et al., 2009). Mercer (2018) notes that a successful career development framework leads to a more effective workforce, improved employee engagement, productivity and retention, greater performance, better talent development, more effective resource alignment, and agility (p. 24).

## CUSTOMER BENEFITS

Effective career development can produce better results for customers (Chinn, 2021). Employees who interact with customers play a critical role in ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to the organization's bottom line (Jackson & Sirianni, 2009). When employers allow employees to take advantage of a successfully implemented career development process, clients can benefit from interacting with employees who are happy, highly skilled, and capable of meeting their needs. Employees are also more likely to recommend superior and more cost-effective solutions to fulfill their clients' needs (Bopp et al., 2009). Additionally, customers can continue working with and build relationships with the same employees due to lower turnover, improving employee-customer interactions (Jackson & Sirianni, 2009).

## SHAREHOLDER BENEFITS

When an organization invests in its employees with an effective career development framework, it communicates to its shareholders that the company believes it is important to invest in its workforce. As Bopp et al. (2009)

note, “an investment in career development leads to a more skilled workforce, which in turn, yields to a higher quality service or product. This strengthens the company’s market image and increases shareholder value” (p. 50). Organizations that increase their training and development expenses by as little as \$680 per employee can generate a 6% higher stakeholder return than those that do not (Rizkalla, 2014).

## Key Elements Impacting Career Development

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Many factors impact a person’s career development (e.g., Collin, 2009; McMahon & Arthur, 2019; Parsons, 1909; Wolfe & Kolb, 1980). These include cultural, economic, societal, political, and personal factors (Gunz, 2009). Cultural factors can involve how individualist or collectivist the culture is and the gender biases, customs, and traditions affecting career choice and growth in a particular culture or environment. Economic factors may lead people to choose specific fields due to the wages and salary the career may provide. The job market and employment rates may also impact how people’s careers develop. Societal factors involve the value associated with work, work ethic, and expectations for career development. Politics internal and external to the organization may also impact career development.

Several studies and theories focus on the personal factors that impact career development. Personal factors that are enmeshed with and impact career choices and career development include, but are not limited to, race and ethnicity (e.g., Fouad & Byars-Winstom, 2005; Helms & Piper, 1994), nationality (Roberts, 2009), socioeconomic status and class (e.g., Heppner & Scott, 2004; Roberts, 2009), (dis)ability status, gender identity and expression (Gottfredson, 2002), sexual orientation (Fassinger, 1995), cultural traditions, and social norms (Gottfredson, 2002) as well as their talents, interests, knowledge, values, and skills (e.g., Brown, 1996; Colozzi, 2003; Hall, 1996; Holland, 1997). A person’s sense of self (e.g., Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Savickas et al., 2009), self-efficacy (e.g., Betz & Hackett, 1983; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), adaptability and resilience (e.g., Bimrose & Hearne, 2012; Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), and mindset qualities such as hope and optimism (e.g., Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Hirschi, 2012; Snyder, 2002) also impact their career development. Further impacted are their social, cultural, and human capital (Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2011) and their social relationships with others (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004). Additionally, several theorists describe the impact of chance events on career development (e.g., Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999; Pryor & Bright, 2003).

While there are clearly many elements that can combine to form a comprehensive career development program, we focus our research on professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility. Below, we define each of these key elements of career development to better understand the value they each add to an overall career development strategy.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is any type of learning or development activity related to an individual's work (Mizell & Learning Forward, 2010). A wide variety of professions and organizations value professional development, and in some cases, professions require maintaining certification credentials for employees to retain their positions (Sayles, 2021). Generally, professional development aims to create customized goals for the individual to help them grow in their current position, be prepared to move to another position, remain current with the latest trends and innovations, or be promoted. The essential elements of professional development include a vision of what success looks like, awareness of what skills are necessary to reach their vision, some type of formal or informal assessments to measure progress, and an individual development plan for how to reach their vision (University of California, San Francisco, 2014). Offering professional development shows employees that their employer cares about their development while also helping to retain, reenergize, build confidence, and develop future leaders (Kaplan, 2022).

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is the extent to which employees are satisfied with their work, take pride in working for their employer, and believe that their employer values the skills and knowledge they bring to the table (Vance, 2006). Organizations that do not prioritize career development are putting their employees' engagement at risk. A 2020 Employee Engagement Trends Report by Quantum Workplace found that "of the most disengaged employees, 72% said they were not receiving enough development opportunities, compared to only 43% of engaged employees" (Wichkam, 2020). Approximately one-third of employees cite a lack of career development opportunities as the reason they would think of leaving an organization (Gurchiek, 2008). Engaging employees can lead to multiple benefits for the organization, including improving productivity, increasing customer satisfaction, raising employee retention, enhancing the company culture, increasing innovation, happier and healthier employees, attracting talented new hires, and increasing public opinion of the organization (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021a).

## RECOGNITION

Employee recognition refers to how a company rewards employees to show them that it values and appreciates them, including monetary and nonmonetary compensation (Hastwell, 2021). According to a 2020 Engagement and Retention Report by Achievers, 19% of employees were considering leaving their job due to a lack of proper recognition (Miller, 2020). Including a recognition program in an overall career development framework can help organizations “retain top talent, increase employee engagement, and encourage high performance” (Hastwell, 2021). To create a successful employee recognition program, organizations should start by defining the program goals, recognizing the behaviors that it wants to be repeated and that can benefit from positive reinforcement, and making it very clear to employees what they need to do to be rewarded and recognized through the program (Mery, 2021).

## RETENTION

Employee retention is an organization’s ability to keep its turnover rates down by retaining its staff members. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, turnover rates can range from 20% in industries like the public sector to as much as 60% in professional service organizations (Paulsen, 2021). Retention is essential for career development strategies because retention reduces company costs for hiring, training, and developing new employees, and without it, turnover can have a high cost to a company’s overall performance as well as cause a loss of knowledge (Paulsen, 2021; SHRM, 2022; Workable, 2019). Replacing just one employee can cost upwards of 50% to 60% of the last worker’s salary when accounting for recruiting, hiring, and training the new worker (Holiday, 2021). To retain employees, organizations should hire the right talent and then spend resources centered around growing and developing those employees’ careers (Paulsen, 2021). Employers can also start having meaningful conversations with their staff members about their desired career paths, consider offering career lattices (which allow for more mobility) instead of career ladders, and frequently evaluate the return on investment from their career development programs to make sure they are effective (Gomez, 2014).

## CAREER PLANNING, PATHING, AND INTERNAL UPWARD MOBILITY

Career planning is a process an individual completes to better understand their strengths, interests, and skills and to discover professional opportunities that the individual would likely succeed in (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021b; Williams, 2020). When employees complete this process, the organization can better understand employees' needs, share development opportunities aligned with those needs, seek opportunities to develop the employees' existing abilities, and help to improve employees' overall personal growth (Williams, 2020).

Career pathing is when an organization works with an employee to chart their career trajectory within the organization, which "maps out potential roles and the skills, knowledge, competencies, experience, and personal characteristics required for each job level as an employee moves up the corporate ladder" (Test, 2020). Career pathing can create a progression both vertically and horizontally within the organization. It can lead to many benefits, including increasing hiring return on investment, more engaged employees, greater loyalty and longer tenure of employees at the organization, clearly defined paths for development, and increased trust in the organization (Paychex, 2020). Organizations should start by creating their career paths and then sharing them with their employees. Employees can then work with their managers to develop a plan that works for their specific interests and the company's needs (Test, 2020).

Lastly, internal upward mobility is when an employee is allowed to move into a higher position within the organization. The potential for employees to move upward internally is a strong factor in an organization's ability to retain employees (Recruiter.com, 2022). Some of the benefits of this retention strategy include longer retention of key employees, a more flexible staffing approach, the ability to build a more robust pipeline and succession plans, and improved teamwork (Roder, 2009). Organizations can develop a successful upward mobility plan by intentionally hiring from within, offering plenty of training and development opportunities for internal staff, and fostering a growth mindset in their culture (Pascual, 2021).



# The Changing Nature of Career Development

Significant challenges pose threats to a person's career development. These challenges are extensive, prevailing, and global. The International Labour Organization ([ILO], 2018) anticipates unemployment to continue rising worldwide as the global workforce is expanding more quickly than jobs are created. Automation displaces jobs in some sectors and causes uncertainty in others (Blustein, 2019). A growing number of those seeking employment face precarious, unreliable work with inconsistent income and decreased access to social protections, causing further uncertainty and insecurity (ILO, 2018; Kalleberg 2009). In 2018, the ILO estimated that 42% of the world's population, approximately 1.4 billion people, is in a vulnerable form of employment, and the ILO expects that number to increase by 17 million people per year for the next several years (ILO, 2018). Notably, this was true before the COVID-19 pandemic caused life-changing employment alterations worldwide, with millions experiencing unforeseen job losses (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Autin et al. (2020) note, "Although the nature of COVID-19 impacts may vary, we anticipate that few workers will escape this pandemic without radical changes to their vocational landscape" (p. 488). These impacts include unemployment, worker mental health, the work-family interface, and employment disparities. While these impacts existed previously, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought them to the forefront (Autin et al., 2020).

Gutowski et al. (2021) describe the changing landscape for employment as the "decline of decent work in the twenty-first century" (p. 23). Decent work provides four elements: "(1) adequate compensation and health care, (2) safe and secure working conditions, (3) hours that allow for free time and rest, and (4) organisational values that complement family and social values," and decent work is acknowledged as central to human well-being and a fundamental human right (Blustein et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2017; ILO, 2008; United Nations, 1948; as cited in Gutowski et al., 2021, p. 24). However, a present-day career development framework may reflect the reality that the decline in decent work has created substantive consequences that impact individuals, communities, and societies worldwide.

# Career Development Frameworks

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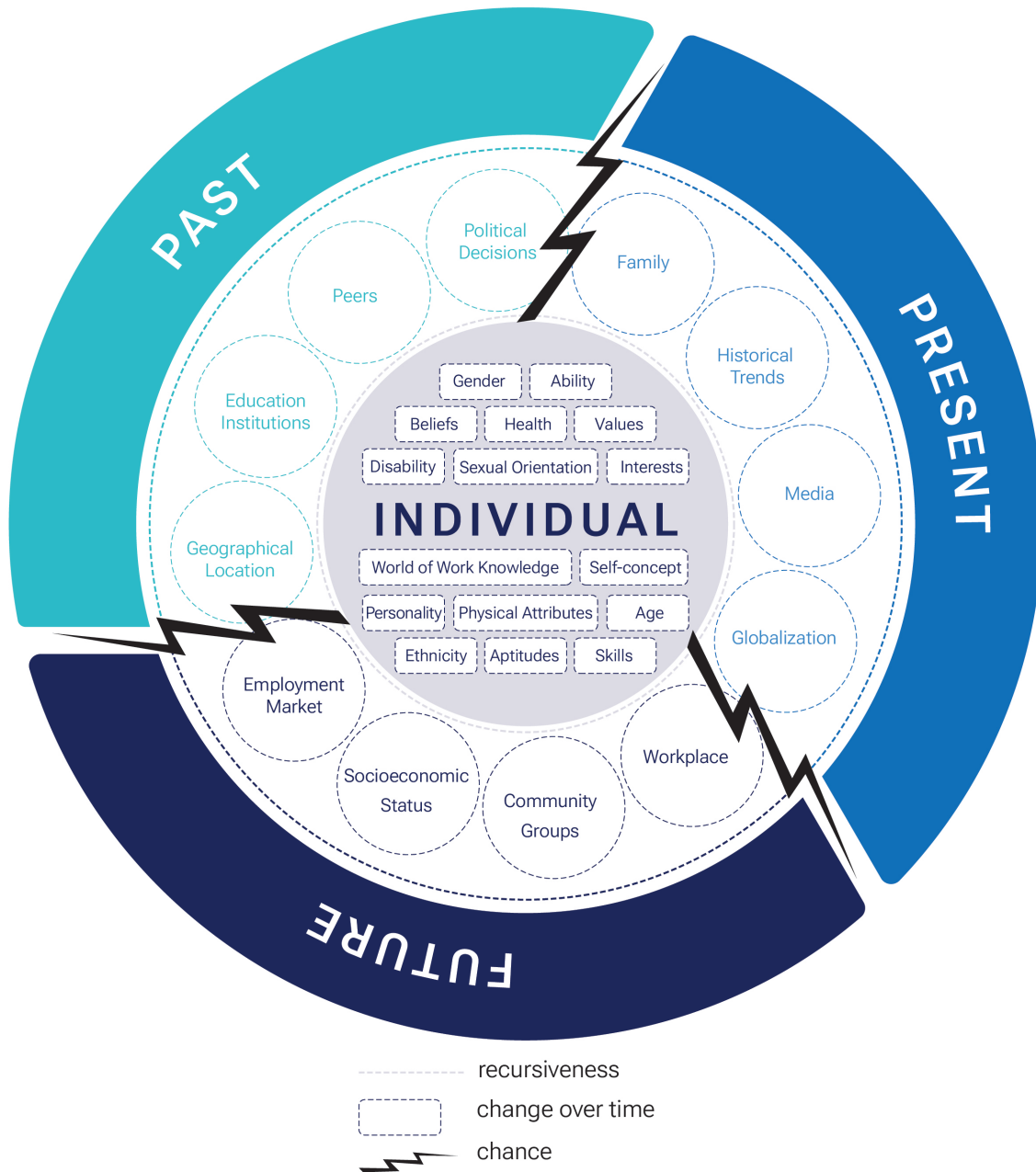
We analyzed more than 50 career development theories and frameworks to provide saturated context and understanding for this review. We describe foundational theories, prominent theorists, and new developments to the field in consideration of sources such as the Oxford Handbook of Career Development and various works by the National Career Development Association.

## SYSTEMS THEORY FRAMEWORK OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT.

Patton and McMahon are prolific and well-respected authors in the career development field. Their work to unify the many approaches to career development resulted in their Systems Theory Framework (STF) of Career Development. The STF provides a comprehensive understanding of individuals and their career development in the context of the larger structures that impact them. This metatheoretical framework connects theory to practice in a way that is inclusive of non-Western populations (Patton & McMahon, 2015). This framework is also a career counseling framework, which distinguishes it from other theories. The STF centers around the individual who is engaging in the process of making meaning in their career in context and developing their career. As Patton and McMahon (2017) note, the STF relates to “individuals, their social system, their environmental-societal system, and the context of time” (para. 3). Notably, McMahon (2020) conceptualized how the STF can be used to understand and address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The elements of the STF are depicted below in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**

The Systems Theory Framework (STF) of Career Development



Source: Patton & McMahon, 2017

The core elements of the STF include “connectedness, meaning-making, agency, reflection, and learning” (para. 11). To engage in such elements, McMahon, Watson, and Patton (2015) developed a storytelling approach to career counseling:



*The storytelling approach encourages individuals to engage in a reflective process (reflection) during which they tell their stories in relation to the systems of influence within which they live (connectedness), begin to understand how identified influences have impacted their story (meaning-making), identify themes and patterns evident within and across stories (learning), and, as a result, play a more active role in constructing their future identities and career stories (agency). (para.12)*

Within this framework, there are opportunities to incorporate step-by-step processes for understanding the influences on their career development through the My System of Career Influences (MSCI) inventory, along with opportunities for qualitative career assessment by operationalizing the STF conceptual framework (McMahon, Watson, & Patton, 2013a, 2013b; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Through the Career Systems Interview (CSI) process, semi-structured interviews that are theoretically grounded in the STF, clients can reflect upon the STF influences on their careers. After participating in a CSI, the individual can write their version of the My Career Chapter (MCC), a career autobiography. Using these tools, organizations can use career counseling to promote career development and a raised awareness of the factors that affect each person’s career development.

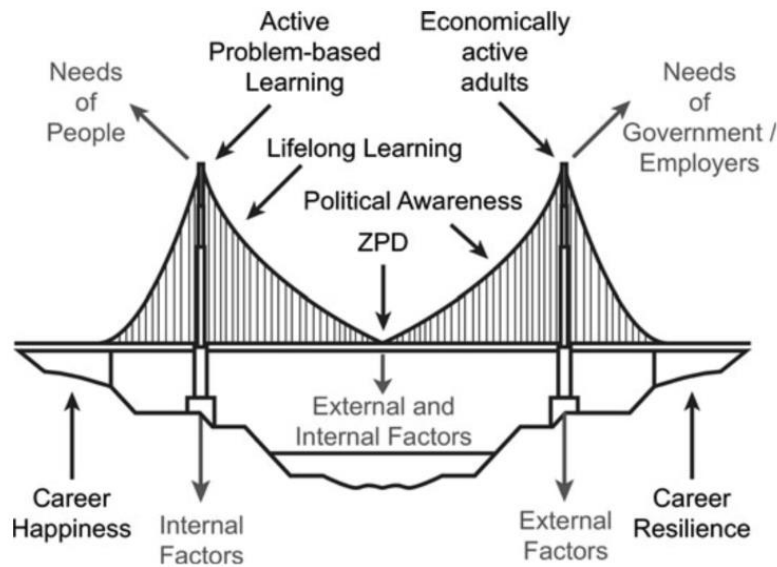
## CAREER AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT BRIDGE.

Bassot (2012) integrates recent theories to offer the Career and Learning Development (CLD) Bridge as a deeply explored, detailed theoretical model for the connection between learning and work (Figure 2). While the bridge metaphor is not new to the career development field, Bassot’s CLD Bridge is uniquely designed for two-way traffic through which people can revisit educational opportunities of all kinds to engage in lifelong learning, allowing them to develop their knowledge and skills to promote their career development. At the two ends of the bridge are the needs of individuals for fulfilling their potential in satisfying lives and the society’s needs, including the

needs of the government and employers. Bassot uses the metaphor of a suspension bridge to convey the tensions and forces that are harnessed and relied upon in balance to keep the bridge from collapsing. The forces are internal, such as a person’s lack of motivation or low self-esteem, and external, including economic recessions and unemployment rates.

**FIGURE 2**

The Career and Learning Development Bridge



Source: Bassot, 2012

Career happiness and career resilience anchor the bridge. Career happiness requires that people have found their career calling and includes “maintaining a healthy work/life balance, choosing a field of work that will be satisfying to the individual concerned, and working in an organization that is in tune with their personal values” (Bassot, 2012, p. 38). Career resilience involves an ability to take risks, adapt to ever-changing conditions, and cope with the realities of the labor market. Bassot references the four factors of career resilience as “particularly important: an underlying belief in oneself and one’s abilities and skills; a disregard for traditional sources of career success, for example, a high salary; a high level of self-reliance; and being receptive to change” (Fourie and Van

Vurren, 1998, as cited in Bassot, 2012, p. 38). The stretch of the road represents the distance between individuals and their work, and the road itself represents their zone of proximal development (ZPD). A person progresses within their ZPD by taking the next steps on the road to travel across the bridge, and these steps can include their progress in their career thinking, learning, and skill development, among others.

This theoretical framework provides clear indicators for what career development programs need to include and how organizations can effectively implement them. Career learning and development will be effective “when it helps people identify what constitutes career happiness for them, build career resilience, develop their career narrative, and make progress within their ZPD” (Bassot, 2012, p. 39). This learning should occur socially, enabling interaction with others, to be most effective. Activities can include, for example, exercises that allow people to clarify their values and define success for themselves in small groups, develop contingency plans, and tell their career narratives to a partner.

## THE 70:20:10 MODEL FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

Researchers Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo, and Robert A. Eichingerhe created the 70:20:10 Model for Learning and Development in the 1980s while working at the Center for Creative Leadership. Their research involved analyzing 200 successful managers to see how they self-reported their optimal ways of learning (Britton, n.d.). Additional researchers used their findings to further develop the 70:20:10 model designed to help organizations provide a broad, integrated, and continuous learning model for employees (Training Industry, 2014). The model is a learning and development framework that states, “70% of our learning comes from challenging assignments and on-the-job-experiences, 20% of our learning is developed from our relationships with others, and 10% of our learning is derived from formal training, such as courses and workshops” (Scott & Ferguson, 2014, p.1).

**FIGURE 3**

The 70:20:10 Model for Learning and Development

70 EXAMPLES OF LEARNING BY WORKING	20 EXAMPLES OF LEARNING BY WORKING TOGETHER	10 EXAMPLES OF LEARNING BY FORMAL INTERVENTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Problem Solving</li> <li>▪ Challenging Tasks</li> <li>▪ Other Roles and Responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Auditing / Reviewing</li> <li>▪ Innovation</li> <li>▪ Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coaching colleagues in the workplace</li> <li>▪ Collaboration and continuous improvement</li> <li>▪ Giving and receiving feedback</li> <li>▪ Learning in Networks</li> <li>▪ Action Learning</li> <li>▪ After-action reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Courses</li> <li>▪ Modules</li> <li>▪ Workshop / Masterclasses</li> <li>▪ ELearning</li> <li>▪ Seminars</li> <li>▪ Reflection</li> </ul>

*Source: 70:20:10 Institute, n.d.*

The researchers believe that on-the-job experience, which comprises 70% of our learning, is beneficial to employees because it “enables them to discover and refine their job-related skills, make decisions, address challenges, and interact with influential people such as bosses and mentors within work settings” (Training Industry, 2014, para. 4). This experience also helps individuals learn from their mistakes (Britton, n.d.). Additionally, employees can receive immediate feedback on their performance (Training Industry, 2014). Employees’ learning from others, which involves 20% of their learning, is accomplished through various activities such as mentoring, coaching, observing others in social settings, collaborative learning, and other methods of interacting with peers (Training Industry, 2014; Scott & Ferguson, 2014). The last learning area is the example of learning by formal intervention and represents the remaining 10%. These learnings come from traditional professional development programs such as classroom instruction, online courses, workshops, and seminars (Training Industry, 2014; 70:20:10 Institute, n.d.).

Organizations use the 70:20:10 model widely around the globe (Training Industry, 2014). The model is beneficial because it encourages organizations to shift their mindset regarding how to approach learning in their environments (Scott & Ferguson, 2014). Additionally, it creates opportunities for enhanced knowledge retention through spaced repetition (Britton, n.d.). Critics of the model have concerns that the model is a prescription for how to operate versus designed to be a more fluid model. There are also concerns that the model lacks empirical evidence and was built on research with a relatively low sample size (Scott & Ferguson, 2014).

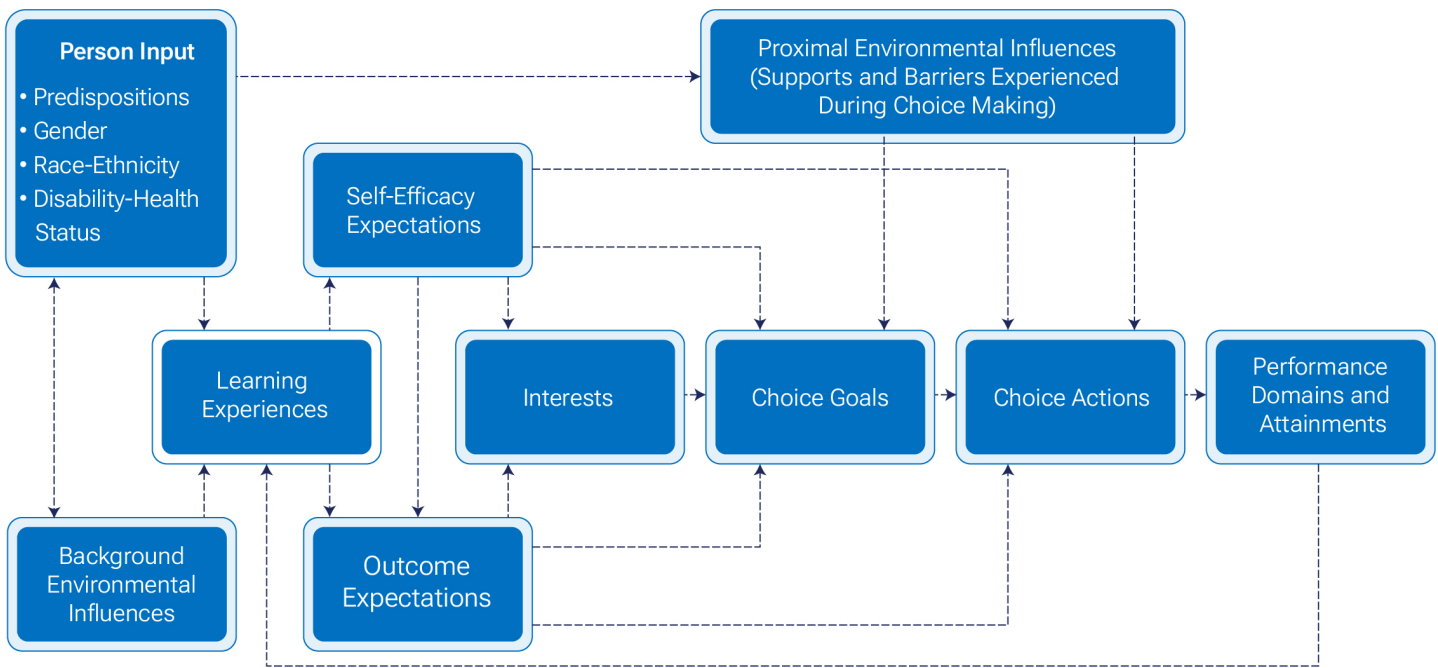
## SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER THEORY.

Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett developed the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) in 1994 using Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Leung, 2008). They designed it to help understand "educational and occupational interest development, choice-making, performance and persistence, and satisfaction/well-being" (Lent & Brown, 2013). The theory initially consisted of three interrelated variables: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals to help explain "the development of academic and vocational interest, how individuals make educational and career choices, and educational and career performance and stability" (Leung, 2008). Researchers later updated the model to include a fourth variable of understanding satisfaction and well-being in educational and vocational contexts (Lent & Brown, 2013).



**FIGURE 4**

Simplified Model of Social Cognitive Influences on Career Choice Behavior



Source: IResearchNet.com, 2016

Leung (2008) notes the variable of self-efficacy is “shaped by four primary information sources or learning experiences which are personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states” (p.125). The outcome expectations variable includes people’s beliefs regarding the consequences or outcomes of specific behaviors (IResearchNet, 2014). Lastly, the personal goals variable is defined as an individual’s intentions to engage in a particular activity or attain a specific performance level (Leung, 2008).

Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals are the three main variables in the interest, performance, and choice models of SCCT (Leung, 2008). The Interests Model views that individuals would develop interests in activities they would be successful at and that they believe would have associated positive outcomes. Through childhood and adolescence, individuals are exposed to various occupationally relevant activities at school, at home, and in their communities. The interaction among interest, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations leads to interest in career-related activities (IResearchNet, 2014). As individuals further develop these interests, they

lead to goal setting for sustaining or increasing their involvement. As the individual either masters or fails in these experiences, they revise their interest, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations (IResearchNet, 2014).

The choice model of SCCT views career development as choices that employees make as self-efficacy, interest, and outcome expectations interact over time (Leung, 2008). Individuals make choices based on their career goals, and their performance helps to revise or confirm those choices. The more precise, public, and supported by significant others the goals are, the more likely that the individual will take action to achieve those goals. Additionally, the individual's environment, such as their economic status, family pressures, and educational limitations, influences their choices (IResearchNet, 2014).

The last model of SCCT is the performance model, which tries to predict and explain “the level of success that people attain in educational and occupational pursuits and the degree to which they persist in the face of obstacles” (IResearchNet, 2014). Ability, defined as one's aptitude, achievement, and past performance, serves as feedback to inform an individual's self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Those, in turn, influence the individual's performance goals and motivation (Leung, 2008). Individuals will be able to establish higher goals, organize their skills more effectively, and overcome obstacles and setbacks, leading to higher levels of success (IResearchNet, 2014).

There is a large body of empirical support in the research for the SCCT framework as a valuable and comprehensive career development framework. Additionally, researchers view the SCCT as an appropriate career framework for offering international career guidance. Supporters, however, acknowledge that, while it is a viable framework, further development and adaptation of existing tools associated with SCCT may be necessary to ensure they are valid and reliable across cultures (Leung, 2008).

The career development frameworks represented herein provide a helpful overview of the many career development frameworks available within the literature. All of the frameworks have a common theme of the importance of knowing individuals by examining their past, present, and future; what they are interested in; what motivates them; and what potential barriers or challenges to success may exist. Additionally, there is value in understanding the organization's context and what other opportunities or barriers may exist within the organization in which the individual is looking to grow and develop. While these key themes are informative to our project, it is crucial to ensure that we do not take a generic approach to implementing one of the frameworks within the Blue Med Group. Through our inquiry, we need to discover the employees' interests, motivations, challenges they may be seeing, and the variances that may occur throughout the organizational sites. Additionally, we may need to investigate how COVID-19 may change how we look at career development going forward.

# Conceptual Framework

06

This study utilizes Patton and McMahon's (1997) Systems Theory Framework (STF) of Career Development (see Figure 1) due to its prominence and demonstrated validity in the literature. Many industries spanning from speech pathology (Byrne, 2007) to agriculture (McIlveen, 2015) use the STF. Along with its usefulness across sectors, the STF framework is used globally, as Sampson (2017) notes, which has developed a strong community of practice that continues to enhance the efficacy of the STF framework for clients, practitioners, researchers, and theorists. As Patton and McMahon (2017) elaborate,

“

*The STF, as a metatheory, fulfills all of Krumboltz's (1994) criteria for a "useful theory" through its capacity to accurately describe career behavior, afford personal responsibility to individuals, take a holistic contextual perspective, integrate, and converge with other theories, and evolve over time. The usefulness of the STF is attested to by its practical applications, which are original, theoretically grounded, rigorously developed, and supported by an emergent evidence base. (para. 26)*



Notably, the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development incorporates the aspects of the individual's identity and their contexts over time to provide a robust, comprehensive framework for understanding, assessing, and providing recommendations for revamping the Blue Med Group's career development system.

As previously described, we define career development as an integrated, active process in which individuals, their managers, and their organizations participate within the systems and structures that constrain and afford opportunities for learning, growth, and progression in their work. This view of career development intentionally includes all persons, including their identities, positions, and contexts.

We focus our attention on professional development, employee engagement, retention, recognition, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility. We frame professional development as any type of learning or development activity that is related to an individual's work (Mizell & Learning Forward, 2010). Professional development shows employees that their employer cares about their development while also helping to retain, reenergize, build confidence, and develop future leaders (Kaplan, 2022).

Employee engagement describes the nature and quality of the relationship between employees and their place of work, and the term is often used synonymously with employee satisfaction and employee experience. Higher levels of employee engagement are positively correlated with productivity, satisfaction, and morale. Conversely, disengaged employees connect less with the company's mission, vision, and goals, and they lose motivation and are less productive. Due to the Blue Med Group's objectives, employee engagement is crucial in assessing its career development framework due to the linkages between career development and employee engagement.

Drawing upon the work of Brun and Dugas (2008), we frame employee recognition in this study as a fourfold practice of expression (see Figure 5) that includes "personal recognition, recognition of work practices, recognition of job dedication, and recognition of results" (p. 719).

**FIGURE 5**

The Four Employee-Recognition Practices

**WORK PROCESS**



*Source: Brun & Dugas (2008)*

This framework is rooted in an ethical perspective, humanistic and existential view, work psychodynamics theory, and a behavioral approach.

We conceptualize employee retention as the strategies and practices employed by an organization to retain its employees in addition to a metric or statistic that notes the percentage of employees retained during a particular period. A 2018 survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management in collaboration with Globoforce shows that “retention/turnover was the top workforce management challenge cited by 47% of HR professionals,” which is “nearly a two-fold increase since 2012” (pp. 4, 24). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges regarding psychological safety, emotional distress, and burnout, which are all challenges to employee retention efforts and outcomes. While some turnover is healthy, employers need to work to retain their best employees to promote a healthy workplace culture that supports positive customer and revenue outcomes and establishes trust, psychological safety, and empowerment to encourage employee career development.

We frame career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility in three parts: understanding one’s strengths, interests, and skills (Williams, 2020), charting trajectories (Test, 2020), and developing a successful upward mobility plan (Pascual, 2021). Career pathing can lead to many benefits, including increasing hiring return on investment, more engaged employees, greater loyalty, longer tenure of employees at the organization, clearly defined path for development, and increased trust in the organization (Paychex, 2020). These five key elements in the context of the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development scaffold our research.

# Project Questions

07

Two central questions provide a guide for this project:

01. How does the Blue Med Group's current online career development portal impact its employees' professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and internal upward mobility?
02. How, if at all, do employees' outcomes vary based on gender, country of work, and functional area?

We developed these questions using the extant literature and frameworks regarding career development. Because professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility impact the efficacy of career development efforts, we investigated these concepts through an employee survey. Overall, the purpose of this project is to understand the online career development portal currently in use at the Blue Med Group and provide the data necessary to suggest improvements and enhancements to its career development framework and portal that will benefit the company's 95,000 employees globally.



# Project Design

## 08

With the aforementioned project questions in mind, we designed this study to investigate the phenomena associated with career development and the specific experiences of employees at the Blue Med Group. Rooted in the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development, this study includes a survey to understand individuals holistically, with consideration of their current and future needs, within the context of the larger structures that impact them.

## Data Collection

The literature review indicates that professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility are critical indicators and components of successful career development frameworks and programs. We used these key elements to develop our own survey (Appendix A) for the Blue Med Group to administer to employees globally to understand the organization as a whole, how employees view the currently available tools, and what resources or changes to the existing portal might better support employees' career development. We formulated the survey items through a combination of extant employee engagement, culture, and organizational wellness surveys that directly aligned with our literature review, including the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development. Each survey item directly relates to one of five key

elements associated with career development: professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility. See Appendix A for a complete listing of the survey items and their associated outcomes.

For this survey, we used random sampling to determine which employees to invite to participate in the survey because random sampling reduces the possibility of sampling bias or error (e.g., Emerson, 2015) and ensures that our sample's results should approximate what we would have obtained if we had surveyed the entire population (e.g., Shadish et al., 2002). In coordination with the Blue Med Group's program manager responsible for employee research, we chose the number of employees selected at random using a methodology that accounted for the global Blue Med Group population of approximately 95,000 employees and assumed a 30% response rate. With a goal of 95% confidence in the results and allowing for a 5% margin of error, we invited 1,500 employees. Since the Blue Med Group's direct labor employees often face additional challenges in accessing technology to take company surveys, we over-indexed the direct labor population. Our objective was to obtain statistically valid results reflective of the organization to generalize the results to the overall company while avoiding the risk of over-surveying their employees.

The Blue Med Group distributed our survey via email to a random sample of approximately 1,500 of its current employees. This employee pool included those at various levels in the organization worldwide, and the employees could take the survey in English, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Spanish, or Japanese. It is worth noting that the Blue Med Group translated our English survey items into the remaining languages using Google Translate instead of hiring translators despite our concerns regarding the accuracy of these computer-generated translations.

The data we collected include items related to the online career development portal, professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility at the Blue Med Group. The Blue Med Group linked the survey responses to the employee's identification number, which allowed us to track their responses based on the employee's gender identity, race and ethnicity (if the employee is located within the United States), region, country, job level, job family, job category, and operating structure.

Most of the survey items provided Likert-type responses that allowed employees to identify their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements provided. Specifically, the response options were listed as follows: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Somewhat disagree, 3 = Neutral or N/A, 4 = Somewhat agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. Please note that there is a true middle response option rather than a forced-choice scale.



We collected the data using the Blue Med Group’s Qualtrics software to provide an efficient and effective conduit for survey implementation. In total, 336 employees completed the survey, equating to a 22.4% response rate. Of the respondents, 167 (49.7%) were female, and 169 (50.3%) were male. 161 (47.92%) of the respondents were located in the United States, with 24 (7.14%) in China, 19 (5.65%) in Japan, 16 (4.76%) in Mexico, 12 (3.57%) in Ireland, 11 (3.27%) in the Dominican Republic, and 10 (2.98%) in India, with the remaining 35 countries having fewer than 10 respondents. For a complete listing of respondents by country, see below or Appendix B.

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY

Country	Number of Respondents
United States of America	161
China	24
Japan	19
Mexico	16
Ireland	12
Dominican Republic	11
India	10
Italy	8
Netherlands	8
France	6

Country	Number of Respondents
Singapore	5
Spain	5
Australia	4
Canada	4
Germany	4
United Kingdom	4
Argentina	2
Brazil	2
Costa Rica	2
Czechia	2

Country	Number of Respondents	Country	Number of Respondents
Portugal	2	New Zealand	1
Romania	2	Norway	1
Saudi Arabia	2	Pakistan	1
Vietnam	2	Russian Federation	1
Austria	1	Serbia	1
Belarus	1	South Africa	1
Bulgaria	1	Sweden	1
Colombia	1	Taiwan	1
Denmark	1	Thailand	1
Finland	1	Turkey	1
Israel	1	Ukraine	1
Korea, Republic of	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>

The Blue Med Group collects data regarding its employees’ race or ethnicity only for employees who live in the United States. Of the 161 respondents in the United States, 93 (65.03%) were White, 23 (16.08%) were Hispanic or Latino, 12 (8.39%) were Asian, 10 (6.99%) were Black or African American, 2 (1.4%) were of two or more races, while the remaining employees did not disclose their race or ethnicity to their employer.

Of the total survey respondents, 236 (70.24%) employees completed the survey in English, 37 (11.01%) completed it in Spanish, 25 (7.44%) completed it in Chinese, 19 (5.65%) completed it in Japanese, 8 (2.38%) completed it in Italian, 6 (1.79%) completed it in French, and 5 (1.49%) completed it in German. 79 (23.51%) respondents' job functions were in Direct Sales, 54 (16.07%) were in Manufacturing or Operations, 30 (8.93%) were in Sales and Marketing Support, 24 (7.14%) were in Research and Development, 18 (5.36%) were in Marketing, and fewer than 5% of respondents worked in the remaining 19 functional areas. For a complete listing of respondents by functional area, see below or Appendix C.

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY FUNCTIONAL AREA

Functional Area	Number of Respondents	Functional Area	Number of Respondents
Direct Sales	79	Finance	14
Manufacturing and Operations	54	Technicians	10
Sales and Marketing Support	30	IT	10
Research and Development	24	Engineering	9
Marketing	18	Clinical	8
Quality	16	Human Resources	8
Supply Chain	15	Lean Sigma and Business Process	8

Functional Area	Number of Respondents
Unknown	7
Health Policy	5
Regulatory Affairs	5
Administrative Services	4
Legal	3

Functional Area	Number of Respondents
Medical Affairs	3
Executives - Cross Functional	2
Public Relations and Communications	2
Compliance	1
Strategy and Business Development	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>

## Data Analysis

Following the survey, we analyzed the results using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software suite. We conducted a factor analysis to identify and establish our underlying variables (i.e., employees’ professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility) that will explain the correlation patterns and pinpoint possible collinearities before performing our linear regression analysis. We used SPSS to run reliability analyses of our survey items by factor score with Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) as the measure of internal consistency (i.e., reliability) using a threshold of  $\alpha > .7$  as acceptable. A four-item scale measured employees’ professional development ( $\alpha = .815$ ). A three-item scale measured employee engagement ( $\alpha = .746$ ). A three-item scale measured their sense of recognition ( $\alpha = .843$ ). A three-item scale measured their outcomes regarding retention ( $\alpha = .735$ ). A three-item scale measured their outcomes regarding

career planning, pathing, and upward mobility ( $\alpha = .709$ ). These internal consistency measures indicate that each section of our survey is reliable, especially considering its limited number of survey items per category.

We then conducted a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) to answer our first project question of how the use or nonuse of the online career development page on the Human Resources Portal impacts their scores. Since employees had the option of answering Yes, No, or Unsure to the question, “Have you used the career development portal?”, we removed the unsure responses from the pool to create a combined dependent variable. This allowed us to conduct descriptive statistics including the mean difference and significance between those who used the career development portal and those who did not.

Following this fundamental analysis, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to answer our second project question of how, if at all, employees’ outcomes vary on the five constructs from the factor analysis based on gender, country of work, and functional area. Finally, we translated the responses to the single open-ended question on the survey to English, reviewed and coded the 160 responses individually, determined our interrater reliability using Cohen’s kappa ( $\kappa$ ) in SPSS, and established our thematic codes (see Appendix D).





# Findings

09



## PROJECT QUESTION

How does the Blue Med Group's current online career development portal impact their employees' professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and internal upward mobility?

# 01

Our ANOVA revealed that a statistically significant difference exists between employees who did and did not use the online career development portal ( $p = .006$ ). The associated partial eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ), which is a measure of effect size, identified that 4.5% of the difference in outcomes related to participants' professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and internal upward mobility is explained by whether or not participants used the portal overall.

To provide additional clarity regarding our first project question, we ran another ANOVA using our combined dependent variable of whether participants have or have not used the career development portal across the five factor scores. We found that the use of the career development portal significantly impacted the factors of professional development ( $p = .006$ ), employee engagement ( $p = .030$ ), and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility ( $p = .030$ ). However, it did not significantly impact the employees' factor scores regarding recognition ( $p = .090$ ) and retention ( $p = .121$ ). It is noteworthy that using the career development portal positively impacted the employees' scores.

To answer this first project question with more insights for the Blue Med Group, we also asked participants an open-ended qualitative question, "What resources do you not have that would be helpful in your career development?" 160 (47.61%) of the respondents answered this question. 122 (60.24%) responded in English, 14 (11.01%) responded in Spanish, eight (7.44%) responded in Chinese, seven (5.65%) responded in Japanese, four (2.38%) responded in Italian, three (1.79%) responded in French, and two (1.49%) responded in German. We used Google Translate to convert the responses into English. Then, since we did not have themes decided before we analyzed the data, we separately used an inductive coding method where we started with the data and created codes over time. After sorting our data into these codes, we compared our themes and determined our interrater reliability using Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ) in SPSS. We found statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ) and the value of Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ) is .825, which Cicchetti and Sparrow (1981) and Fleiss et al. (1981) regard as excellent agreement. Finally, we established our culminating



thematic codes (see Appendix D). Some of the resources that participants stated they would find helpful include having career ladders, a better understanding of the portal, access to a career coach, more training opportunities, time during work hours to dedicate to career development, and a central location to learn about internal opportunities.

## PROJECT QUESTION

How, if at all, do employees' outcomes vary based on gender, country of work, and functional area?

# 02

Next, we analyzed the variance between groups of employees using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). These analyses revealed no statistically significant differences in outcomes based on the employees' gender or functional area. On the other hand, the employees' outcomes had statistically significant differences based on their country of work across four of the five factors. These statistically significant differences exist among employees' professional development ( $p = .002$ ), engagement ( $p = .012$ ), recognition ( $p < .001$ ), and internal upward mobility ( $p = .005$ ). These differences align with our presumptions regarding how the country of work and, correspondingly, their languages and cultures vary and affect their experiences. These differences each have very large effect sizes (professional development,  $\eta^2 = .250$ ; engagement,  $\eta^2 = .225$ ; recognition,  $\eta^2 = .263$ ; and internal upward mobility,  $\eta^2 = .237$ ), which indicates a highly meaningful relationship between the variables of country of work and their outcomes. Importantly, these large effect sizes mean that these research findings have practical significance.

Our curiosity regarding the possible variance of outcomes based on the race and ethnicity of employees in the United States (The Blue Med Group only collects race and ethnicity information for its employees based in the United States.) and our knowledge of how race and ethnicity can affect employees' work experiences (e.g., Goffman, 1963; Roberts et al., 2019; Pager, 2007) led us to conduct a MANOVA using the variable "Race/Ethnicity (Locale Specific)" and the factor scores of the 134 respondents from the United States. This analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between the United States employees based on their race and ethnicity.

## Additional Findings

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We grouped the survey questions into six key areas relating to the career portal, professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility (see Appendix A for the complete survey and see Appendix E for the results by key area). For general career development, we found that approximately 77% of participants were aware of the tools or resources that the Blue Med Group offers its employees. Of those, about one-third have used the existing career development page on the HR portal, and approximately 26% found the resources available to be helpful.

In the category of professional development, 67.26% of participants feel they are provided learning opportunities by the company as well as mentoring or career coaching. Roughly 50% understand their career path within the company and believe internal employees are given fair consideration for job openings and promotions. For employee engagement, approximately 78% of participants believe they go above and beyond what their employer expects of them in their job, 67% believe they do engaging work, and roughly 56% feel the organization values their contributions.

For recognition, two-thirds of participants feel their colleagues and managers recognize their contributions, while 52% perceive that their employer rewards them for their hard work and achievements. In the area of retention, two-thirds of employees see themselves working at Blue Med Group in a year and would recommend working at the company to their network. However, less than 50% believe they are reaching their full potential in their current position. Lastly, in the area of Career Planning, Pathing, and Internal Upward Mobility, roughly 72% of participants understand what it takes to be successful in their current role, and 44% clearly understand what it takes to be promoted to a more senior role. In addition, roughly 42% believe the current performance review process evaluates the right things to assess their work contributions fairly.

In summary, our research indicated that the online career development portal had a small positive effect on employees' outcomes. Employees' outcomes differed significantly based on their countries of work but did not vary based on their genders or functional areas. These results have practical application for the Blue Med Group in its further development and refinement of its online career development portal.

# Recommendations

10

We grouped our recommendations for the Blue Med Group's Global Learning and Leadership team in the same key five areas from our survey of professional development, employee engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility.

**RECOMMENDATION****Increase Professional Development****01**

To improve professional development, we recommend offering additional training opportunities, allowing staff dedicated time for career development, and modifying the existing online career development portal for easier navigation.

**Additional Training Opportunities.**

Approximately 25% of our qualitative responses from surveyed employees mentioned a desire for additional training opportunities. We recommend providing access to more training opportunities across the organization. Some of the key areas mentioned by participants in the survey include leadership and management training, training on new equipment that employees use, and tailored training sessions to address specific groups' needs within the organization (e.g., particular work locations, functional areas). These additional training opportunities will promote employee "learning" and "agency" within the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Dedicated Time to Pursue Professional Development.**

We recommend that all employees have dedicated time to pursue professional development during their workday. On average, organizations allot 1% of their employees' work time or approximately five minutes a day for professional development (O'Donnell, 2017). Six employees from our survey mentioned in the qualitative responses that they desired to have time to dedicate to professional development. The Blue Med Group should look for opportunities to increase the amount of time employees can invest in their personal career development as part of their regular workdays and, where possible, set a standard amount of time across the entire organization. This time will support employee "reflection" within the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2017). It also supports their autonomy and affords "personal responsibility to individuals" (Krumboltz, 1994, as cited in Patton and McMahon, 2017).

**Update the HR Portal.**

Approximately 7% of participants' qualitative responses mentioned changes that employees would like to see in the existing HR portal. The current HR portal should receive updates to allow for easier navigation,

become a one-stop shop to access resources, offer discussion forums, enable employees to self-select or receive recommended development opportunities, and use language in better alignment with the other “Grow Your Career” initiatives. It may be helpful to use imagery of growth (e.g., a tree) to show the growth that individuals can experience as they progress through the portal and experience all that the portal offers. In addition, a tutorial video should be created and provided to show employees how to navigate the portal and get the most from the resources and training sessions offered. These changes will support “connectedness” and “meaning-making” for the employees and will likely increase their chances of using the portal (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

## RECOMMENDATION

### Increase Employee Engagement

# 02

To increase employee engagement, we recommend making Human Resources more accessible, gamifying training opportunities, creating employee spotlights, and using incentives or contests to incentivize portal engagement.

#### **Make Human Resources More Accessible.**

HR teams usually play a large part in measuring and increasing employee engagement. Two survey respondents mentioned that they wished they had better access to HR. To assist in employee engagement and to ensure employees know how to access HR, we recommend better communication regarding how to access HR staff members, including how employees can request office hour visits or calls. Communications that are important should be shared both digitally and physically in multiple formats such as on the HR Portal, posters or flyers in office spaces, or even on digital tools such as Slack or Microsoft Teams so that those working onsite or remotely all have easy access to the same information (Newberry, 2019). Implementing this recommendation will support employee “connectedness” (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Gamification of Training Opportunities.**

Another area that can improve employee engagement is using gamification for specific training opportunities. Using gamification will inspire employees to engage with the content and increase the likelihood of using the training program. It also allows employees to quickly and clearly see a path to reach the next level, which will help motivate them to continue the training process (Romsey, 2021). Additionally, gamification increases productivity, encourages social interaction and teamwork, and fosters creativity and innovation (Rae, 2022). This gamification may speak to the individuals' "values" and increase their use of the online career development portal (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Employee Spotlights.**

The Blue Med Group can improve employee engagement by creating employee spotlights. Employee spotlights benefit an organization by recognizing employees, building a culture of appreciation, and helping to foster connections among employees (Siocon, 2022). By showcasing "a day in the life of" spotlights on specific people across the organization, employees will get to know more about their colleagues and what they do. It will also allow employees to learn more about jobs across the organization, especially the ones that may not be in their specific career ladder and therefore are less familiar to them. This solution can improve employee "connectedness" within their social system at the Blue Med Group (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Incentivize Portal Engagement.**

Lastly, we recommend offering incentives or drawings for individuals who complete training sessions or engage with the portal or resources in the desired way to help create awareness and drive engagement to the portal. According to Romsey (2021), when organizations pick rewards for employees they need to ensure that they make the employee feel special, have a quick turnaround time from earning to receiving, and can be used digitally. The Blue Med Group should keep a pulse on what incentives work well with its employees and adjust accordingly. Such incentives should connect to employees' "values" and "peers" expectations to support their engagement and "agency" (Patton & McMahon, 2017).



## RECOMMENDATION

## Increase Recognition

## 03

For recognition, the Blue Med Group should increase employee recognition by offering badges, certificates of completion, and an honor roll.

**Badges and Certificates of Completion.**

Consider awarding badges as part of the gamification process. Badges are visually displayed under an individual learner's username to display their accomplishments for others to see (Rae, 2022). Badges can also be used to reward employees with other incentives through the same platform (Romsey, 2021). The Blue Med Group should also award certificates of completion to individuals who complete specific courses or training programs that are important to their current job or for consideration for promotion to new roles. These badges and certificates of completion may improve an employee's "self-concept" and boost employees' agency so they "play a more active role in constructing their future identities" (McMahon et al., 2015; Patton and McMahon, 2017).

**CEO's Honor Roll.**

Establish an honor roll to further recognize employees who use the online career development portal. This is a form of "recognition for results" that will incentivize employees to complete additional modules in the portal (Brun & Drugas, 2008). The Blue Med Group can bolster and extend this recognition by having the CEO send a personalized note to each employee who achieves this status. Additionally, honor roll recipients can be celebrated at Grow Your Career Week events or other "recognition weeks" (Brun & Drugas, 2008). As Patton and McMahon (1997) note, workplaces and peers are important elements of employees' social systems, so this honor roll may have a positive impact on their social system and their self-concept.

## RECOMMENDATION

## Increase Retention

## 04

To increase retention, we recommend offering job shadowing and rotation opportunities, clarifying and expanding tuition reimbursement programs, and offering retention bonuses and service awards to show appreciation for longer-tenured staff.

**Job Shadowing and Rotation.**

The Blue Med Group should create both job shadowing and job rotation opportunities across the organization. Four of the survey respondents mentioned their desire to have these types of programs. Job shadowing and rotation programs help organizations hire and retain talent and increase the skill set of staff members within the organization (Gaul, 2018). Both of these programs will create opportunities for employees to be cross-trained in multiple areas while also exploring potential interests across the organization. Job shadowing and rotation can improve employee “connectedness” and provide “learning” opportunities in alignment with the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Review the Tuition Reimbursement Program.**

According to a survey of U.S. companies, 2% to 5% of employees take advantage of their companies tuition assistance programs when eligible; additionally, only 43% of employees are generally aware of this benefit’s existence within their organization (Joubert, 2018). The Blue Med Group should review its tuition reimbursement program and ensure it is broadly communicating to eligible employees about the program and its benefits. Additionally, it should review the program to see if any improvements can be made to cover additional employees or offerings. Lastly, if employees are not eligible, the Blue Med Group should increase and clarify communication to individuals on why it cannot approve their specific requests. As part of the larger context for employees, this recommendation aligns with “learning” and “autonomy” in the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Retention Bonuses and Service Awards.**

Blue Med Group should consider offering retention bonuses and service awards. Bonuses and service awards would create opportunities for staff to receive incentives—whether monetary, nonmonetary,

or both—that show Blue Med Group’s appreciation of staff members who have longer tenure at the organization and the Blue Med Group’s commitment to retaining these employees. Organizations that use real-time recognition programs are 41% more likely to increase employee retention (Achievers, 2021). These service awards may provide opportunities for employee “reflection” as touchpoints when employees internally consider and externally share their stories (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

## RECOMMENDATION

### Increase Career Planning, Pathing and Internal Upward Mobility

# 05

The last of our recommendations are in the area of career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility. We recommend that the Blue Med Group create and communicate career lattices, provide access to mentoring and career coaching, advertise internal opportunities in a centralized location, and create individual development plans using the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development.

#### **Career Lattices.**

Over 20% of survey respondents mentioned a need for creation of or communication of career ladders when asked what resources would be helpful in their career development. However, research has shown career lattices to have more flexibility (Gomez, 2014). The Blue Med Group should focus its time and energy on ensuring that career lattices for all positions exist and are available to all staff so that employees can not only understand the next step in career advancement on the path they are on but also explore the requirements for other positions they may be interested in. Career lattices help the organization retain employees, ensure a properly trained workforce, motivate their workforce, demonstrate to employees that the organization values them, and help the organization ensure it hires the right people (Roberts, 2019). This recommendation aligns with the STF domains of “connectedness” within their social system and supports their understanding of their career stories into the future (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Career Coaches and Mentors.**

Approximately 13% of survey respondents expressed a desire for access to a career coach or mentor. Employees should have access to career coaches to assist them in determining their path within the organization as well as mentors who can share their experiences with mentees. Coaching and mentoring improve an employee's performance and enhance the work environment (Society for Human Resources Management, 2022). These coaches and mentors can support employee "reflection" and "connectedness" through their meetings with employees (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Internal Job Boards.**

Employees should also have access to internal job opportunities, including current job opening advertisements and clearly defined requirements for vertical and horizontal roles that exist within the organization. According to the Society for Human Resources Management (2018b), posting jobs internally opens communication channels for career advancement, allows managers to more accurately discuss existing opportunities, creates a fair process for internal candidates to follow, and reminds employees about the importance of continued development. These internal job boards support employee "agency" and can increase their chances of furthering their career as they desire (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

**Individual Development Plans.**

The Blue Med Group should use the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development to create a customized individual development plan for each employee to ensure they have a personalized plan for career development within the organization. Managers should track employees' progress within this plan in conjunction with the performance review assessment. Employees should work with their managers to develop a plan that considers both the individual's and the company's needs (Test, 2020). These individual development plans support employee "agency" and "connectedness" within the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2017).

The Global Learning and Leadership Team should see these recommendations as an overall plan for creating a more robust and helpful career development portal. However, each recommendation can be implemented on its own or jointly to affect change. The team should consider the organization's current state and context, including internal and external factors that may affect the organization, such as current workload and priorities, the continuing impacts of COVID-19, the economy, the job market, and local and global considerations before determining an implementation timeline. The team should also consider how the portal changes will complement existing programs like "Grow Your Career" week and ensure that they amplify the success of those programs. Overall, with thoughtful implementation, the Blue Med Group and its employees should benefit from measurable positive outcomes from the recommendations.

# Limitations



11

Although the project team and the organization were both actively involved throughout the entire scope of the project, several limiting factors occurred due to situations beyond control or due to changes or learnings that occurred in real time as the project progressed. These limitations include the following:

## Change of Contact Person at the Blue Med Group

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Due to the client contacts' workload, the length of time between the start and completion of the project, and a contact's job transfer to another position within the organization, we had consistent access to the client team but not consistency around who was available to respond to questions, provide additional information about the company, or assist in survey refinement.



## Survey Design

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For the survey tool, we created our own questions instead of pulling the survey questions from a previously administered survey tool. This approach creates a potential concern for the construct validity of the tool. Additionally, the survey tool used a Likert scale that had a neutral option that also served as the “not applicable” option. This concern was not apparent to the project team until after we received the results. In hindsight, it would have been more appropriate to design the survey with a forced-choice response scale and no neutral option as well as to create a separate “not applicable” response.

## Translation Concerns

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The Blue Med Group completed the translations for the project using Qualtrics’ Google Translate functionality. Although the Blue Med Group uses this process consistently for each survey it administers, we had some concerns regarding the validity of the translations. To try and mitigate any confusion or miscommunication in translation, we found native speakers to review the translations and make recommended edits to our survey. Unfortunately, due to client team availability, the Blue Med Group did not use the native speakers’ translation edits, and the Blue Med Group administered the surveys in their original, Google-translated versions. This created a potential validity issue for the data because, even though we reviewed the results for correct translations, there could be validity issues in the employees correctly understanding the question as received. However, once we received the results, the native speakers provided further insight into the responses and their appropriate translations to ensure that we properly translated each response to English, our native language, and the Global Learning and Leadership Team’s preferred language.

## Race and Ethnicity Data

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The Blue Med Group only gathers race and ethnicity information for their employees based in the United States. The inaccessibility of race and ethnicity data for the respondents outside of the United States limited our ability to

see if there were any variances as to how employees perceived the career development framework based on race and ethnicity across the entire global footprint of the organization.

## Change of Initial Scope

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The concerns over the translation of the survey data and employees' limited availability led us to decide to revise the original plan of completing both surveys and focus groups. With the project team only fluent in English, we raised our concerns that proceeding with the focus groups would skew the employee data to English-speaking employee populations. While hiring translators may have assisted in the completion of the focus groups, it would have been costly and required additional resources from the client that were not available. Since the original scope of work was to get a better understanding of what the employees across the entire global footprint felt about the current and future career development programs, we decided not to proceed with the focus groups and instead use the results from the survey data.

## The Global COVID-19 Pandemic

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We were finalizing the scope of work for this project approximately one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, many believed that the pandemic was coming to an end and that work going forward may or may not look different from before the pandemic and the shift to remote work. Although we believe that the pandemic did not directly affect the project itself, it may have created additional barriers and limitations that we would not have experienced otherwise. We consider how the pandemic may have changed employees' interest in participating in the survey, their focus on career development at the time of the survey, and their awareness of how the organization and their career trajectory may change in response to the pandemic. Future research may want to consider what changes, if any, the Blue Med Group and other companies should make in a post-COVID-19 pandemic environment.

# Discussion

## 12

The Global Learning and Leadership Development team at the Blue Med Group, a medical technology company that employs approximately 95,000 staff members in more than 150 countries, sought our help in reviewing their existing training and development programs to ensure they are effective in supporting their employees' professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility. Additionally, the team questioned whether employees' experiences regarding these five key elements of career development varied based on their gender, country of work, or job function. In coordination with the Blue Med Group, we reviewed their current online career development portal and, through a survey of Likert-type and open-response questions, we assessed their employees' experiences with the portal and their perceptions of their professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility opportunities at the Blue Med Group.

Our survey revealed that a statistically significant difference exists between employees who did and those who did not use the career development portal. 4.5% of the difference in their responses was explained by whether or not they used the portal. We identified that the use of the online career development portal significantly and positively impacted our factors of professional development, employee engagement, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility, but it did not significantly impact the employees' factor



scores regarding recognition or retention. This analysis answered our first project question of how the Blue Med Group's current online career development portal impacts its employees' professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and internal upward mobility.

To answer our second project question, "How, if at all, do employees' outcomes vary based on gender, country of work, and functional area?", we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance. Our analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in outcomes based on the employees' gender or their functional area. Considering that the Blue Med Group has 100% pay equity in several countries including the United States and 99% pay equity globally (Annual Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Report, 2019) and the company ranks among the top companies in 2022's DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity (DiversityInc, 2022), these results are not surprising. On the other hand, the employees' outcomes had statistically significant differences based on their country of work across four of the five factors. These statistically significant differences exist in employees' professional development, engagement, recognition, and internal upward mobility. These differences align with our presumptions regarding how their country of work and, correspondingly, their languages and cultures vary and affect their experiences. These differences have substantial effect sizes, indicating a significant relationship between the variable of the country of work and employee outcomes. Importantly, these large effect sizes mean that these research findings have practical significance.

Additionally, through our survey, we found that approximately 77% of our survey participants were aware of tools or resources that the company offers employees, but only 38% have used those resources, and only 25.87% find those resources to be helpful to their career development. We also discovered that approximately two-thirds of respondents feel the Blue Med Group provides them with learning opportunities and access to a career coach or mentor, but only about half of respondents understand their career path within the company. Less than half feel that the organization gives internal employees fair consideration for internal job openings. Approximately 78% of employees feel like they often go above and beyond what the Blue Med Group expects of them, but only 56% feel the Blue Med Group values those contributions. Roughly two-thirds feel their colleagues and managers recognize them for their work and see themselves working at Blue Med Group a year from now. These employees would also recommend working at Blue Med Group to their professional networks. Lastly, over 70% understand how to be successful in their role, but only about 40% feel they know how to get promoted or that the performance review fairly evaluates them.

There are some limitations to implementing our recommendations. These include the limitations we noted previously, including concerns regarding the translations of the survey items and the qualitative responses since

we may have lost some meanings and connotations in translation. However, this presents opportunities for further inquiry through focus groups conducted in various countries in their native languages. These country-specific focus groups could reveal enhanced understandings of the online career development portal and the employees' experiences regarding their professional development, engagement, recognition, retention, and career planning, pathing, and internal upward mobility. The focus groups could confirm our survey findings' accuracy and dive deeper into the employees' needs.

Another opportunity for further inquiry exists after the renovation and announcement of the new and improved online career development portal. Since the Blue Med Group plans to implement several of our recommendations, we could conduct the survey again in one or two years to see how, if at all, employees' experiences with the portal and in their jobs have changed over time. Administering the survey again in the future may also address the limitations of our findings due to the possible mitigating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current realities of the job market, global economy, and current living conditions in particular countries.

For the aforementioned recommendations to be successful, the Global Learning and Leadership Team will need to consider whether they can manage the workload of implementing all our recommendations or whether it needs to be an iterative process as part of a long-term plan. They should consider both internal and external factors when creating an implementation plan. Additionally, they should ensure that implementing a recommendation will add value but not subtract from any existing career development resources unless they intend for the new resources to replace the existing resources. We are confident that by putting these recommendations into action, the Blue Med Group will be able to alter its existing online career development portal to meet the needs of all of its employees worldwide and positively impact its managers, customers, and stakeholders as well.





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# Appendices

# 14

## Appendix A

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### **SURVEY INTRODUCTION**

Your participation in this study will assist in revitalizing the career development offerings at your company. The survey has 18 questions and will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may opt out of any question in the survey. All responses will be kept confidential. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with your company. Agreement to participate will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you are at least 18 years of age.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Heather Greenfield via email at [heather.l.greenfield@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:heather.l.greenfield@vanderbilt.edu) and Adam Visconti via email at [adam.h.visconti@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:adam.h.visconti@vanderbilt.edu), or our faculty advisor, Dr. Matt Campbell, at [matthew.d.campbell@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:matthew.d.campbell@vanderbilt.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, contact the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (615) 322-2918.

Thank you.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

All statements, unless otherwise indicated, have Likert-type responses:

- ➔ Strongly disagree
- ➔ Somewhat disagree
- ➔ Neutral or N/A
- ➔ Somewhat agree
- ➔ Strongly agree

### PAGE 1 - CAREER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

#### QUESTION - 01

Are you aware of any tools or resources that your company offers to assist you with career development?

- Yes
- No

(If yes) Have you used the career development portal?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

(If yes) The resources available in the career development portal are helpful.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral or N/A
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree



**QUESTION - 02**

What resources do you not have that would be helpful in your career development at your company?

Short Answer Open Response

**PAGE 2 - CONTINUED****Professional Development**

1. My company provides me with learning opportunities.
2. My company provides me the opportunity to receive mentoring or career coaching.
3. Internal employees are given fair consideration for job openings/promotions at my worksite.
4. I understand my career path within the company.

**Employee Engagement**

5. I feel my contributions are valued by the company.
6. I have a chance to do engaging work in my company.
7. I often go above or beyond what is expected of me in my job to help the company be successful.

**Recognition**

8. I feel my contributions are recognized by my manager.
9. I am recognized by my colleagues when I do good work at my worksite.
10. I am rewarded for my hard work and achievements.

**PAGE 3 - CONTINUED**

**Retention**

- 11. I see myself working at this company for another year.
- 12. I would recommend working at this company to others in my network.
- 13. I believe I am reaching my full potential in my current position.

**Career Planning, Pathing, and Internal Upward Mobility**

- 14. I understand what it takes to be successful in my current role.
- 15. I have a clear understanding of what it takes to be promoted into a more senior role.
- 16. The performance review process at my company evaluates the right things to assess my work contributions fairly.

# Appendix B

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY

Country	Number of Respondents
United States of America	161
China	24
Japan	19
Mexico	16
Ireland	12
Dominican Republic	11
India	10
Italy	8
Netherlands	8
France	6
Singapore	5
Spain	5

Country	Number of Respondents
Australia	4
Canada	4
Germany	4
United Kingdom	4
Argentina	2
Brazil	2
Costa Rica	2
Czechia	2
Portugal	2
Romania	2
Saudi Arabia	2
Vietnam	2

Country	Number of Respondents
Austria	1
Belarus	1
Bulgaria	1
Colombia	1
Denmark	1
Finland	1
Israel	1
Korea, Republic of	1
New Zealand	1
Norway	1

Country	Number of Respondents
Pakistan	1
Russian Federation	1
Serbia	1
South Africa	1
Sweden	1
Taiwan	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
Ukraine	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>

# Appendix C

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY FUNCTIONAL AREA

Functional Area	Number of Respondents
Direct Sales	79
Manufacturing and Operations	54
Sales and Marketing Support	30
Research and Development	24
Marketing	18
Quality	16
Supply Chain	15
Finance	14
Technicians	10

Functional Area	Number of Respondents
IT	10
Engineering	9
Clinical	8
Human Resources	8
Lean Sigma and Business Process	8
Unknown	7
Health Policy	5
Regulatory Affairs	5
Administrative Services	4



Functional Area	Number of Respondents
Legal	3
Medical Affairs	3
Executives - Cross Functional	2
Public Relations and Communications	2
Compliance	1
Strategy and Business Development	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>

# Appendix D

## QUALITATIVE THEMATIC CODES

What resources do you not have that would be helpful in your career development at the Blue Med Group?

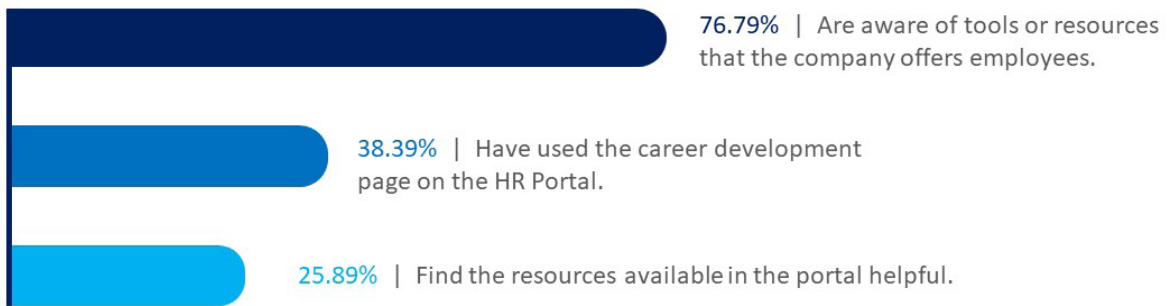
Theme	Number of Respondents
Additional Training Opportunities	39
Career Ladders	34
Career Coaching and Mentoring	21
Communication	19
Portal Updates	12
Time in Schedule for Career Development	6
Job Rotation and Job Shadowing	5
Career Advancement Opportunities	3
Access to HR	2
Tuition Reimbursement Improvements	2

# Appendix E

## FINDINGS BY KEY ELEMENT

### Findings: Career Development

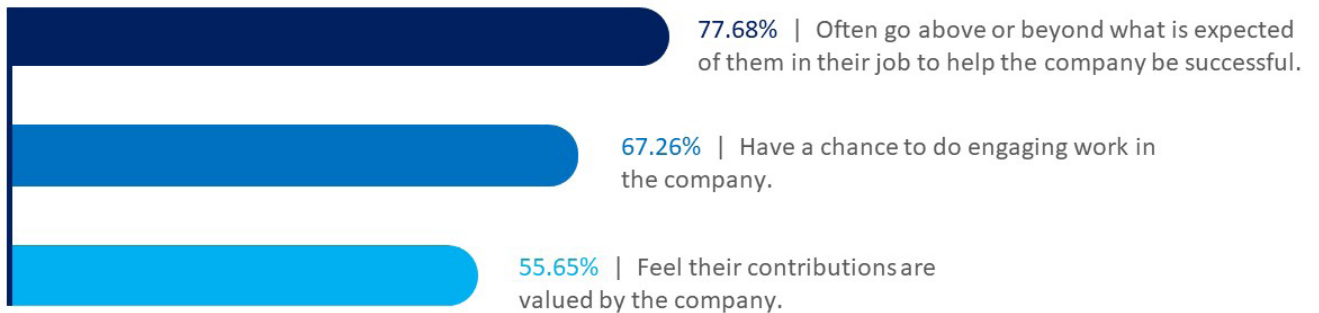
How familiar are Blue Med Group’s employees with existing career development tools and resources?



## Findings: Employee Engagement

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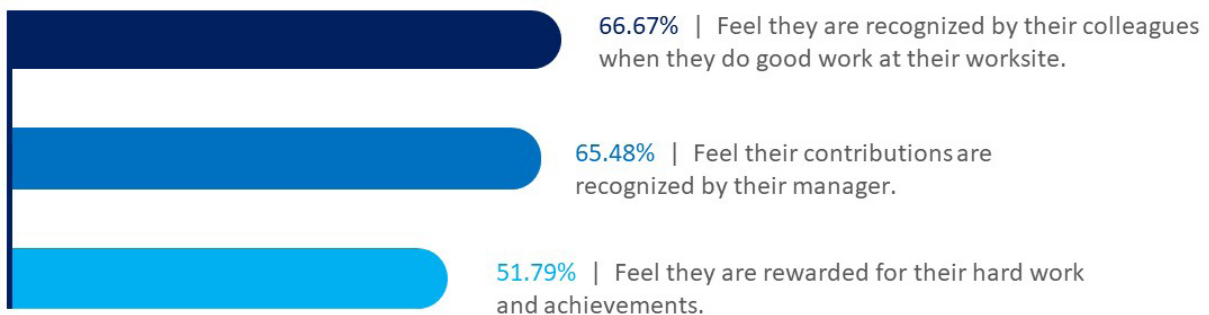
What is the nature and quality of the relationship between employees of Blue Med Group and their workplace?



## Findings: Recognition

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Does the Blue Med Group recognize its employees?



## Findings: Retention

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Do employees see themselves staying at the organization and recommending Blue Med Group to others?



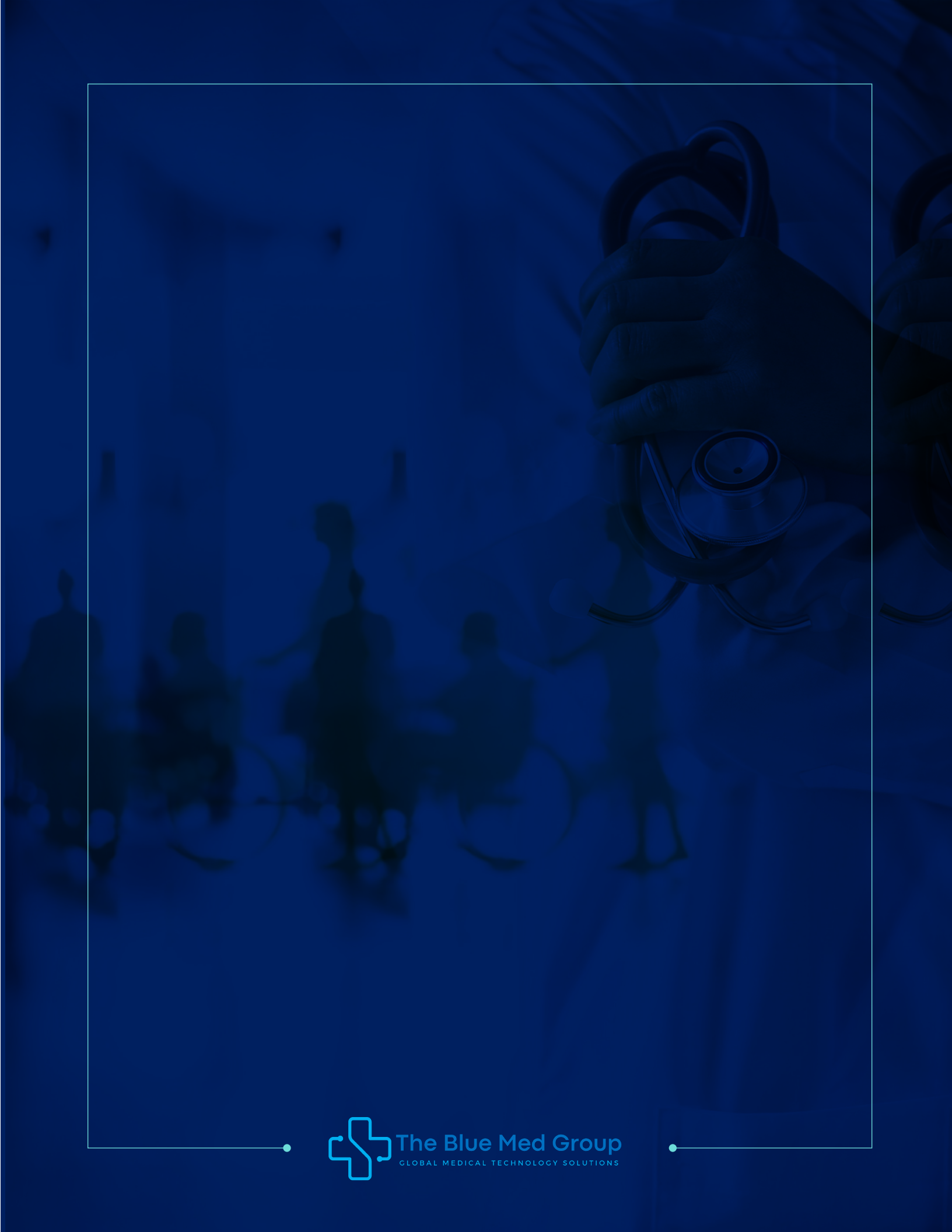
## Findings: Career Planning, Pathing, and Internal Upward Mobility

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Do employees understand their strengths, interests, and skills and how to create a successful upward mobility path within the organization?







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