

Lost in Transition

Forget the Career Ladder.
Think Career GPS.

Help employees grow and stay through career pathways built to flex with future demands.

Inefficient career transitions cost the U.S. economy more than \$1 trillion a year.
But for employers and employees, the fix is about more than just efficiency.
It's about new kinds of career pathways.

Your employees now need to continuously learn new skills—and master how to learn effectively in the first place.

Organizations that build flexible, personalized career pathways don't just reduce transition costs. They create workforces that can adapt quickly, turning disruption into a competitive advantage.

Careers Are No Longer Linear

From Career Ladders to Career Networks

Remember when careers followed a predictable path up the corporate ladder?
Those days are gone. Today's careers zigzag through roles, industries, and entirely new skillsets. Career advancement isn't just about what your employees know—it's about how quickly they can learn.

A recent OECD study found nearly one-third of workers are in roles that don't match their qualifications or skills. As jobs transform in real time, your traditional development programs might be creating more friction than flow.

“We don’t really build career pathways; we build training programs for jobs.”

— Nate Anderson, senior advisor at Jobs for the Future

Breaking Free from Rigid Structures

This disconnect explains why many development efforts yield disappointing returns despite significant investment. Effective career pathways today need to be:

- **Modular:** letting employees assemble skills based on their goals, not just organizational needs
- **Flexible:** validating learning from all sources, whether formal education or on-the-job experience
- **Personal:** accounting for individual aspirations, strengths, and working styles
- **Forward-looking:** connecting today’s learning to tomorrow’s opportunities

Organizations need more than a pipeline of qualified workers. They need clear, flexible pathways that reflect how careers actually unfold. Done well, these pathways reduce friction, shorten retraining timelines, and support mobility across departments, roles, and industries.

\$139 billion estimated increase in employee earnings from reducing upskilling time by 20%

The long-term value runs deeper: personalized career pathways help organizations retain adaptable talent and align development efforts with what’s next.

That former theology student might end up in a position focused on ethical AI. A plumber might end up designing real-life sanitation scenarios for use in augmented reality training.

So how do you design career pathways that actually help people move forward?

Personalized Learning That Takes People Where They Want To Go

The challenge is clear. So is the opportunity.

Creating career pathways that are flexible and personalized doesn't have to mean sacrificing scale. It means rethinking how we define, support, and recognize learning in the first place.

Start by shifting from curriculum-centered models to employee-centered programs that meet people where they are. Your workers.

- Have a wide range of schedules, responsibilities, and needs
- May be navigating career change midstream
- Could be balancing upskilling with caregiving, health needs, or financial constraints

Your employees need content that's asynchronous, accessible, and relevant. They also need support—whether from AI tools that guide them through learning choices or from mentors who help them visualize what's possible.

Digital wallets and credential platforms can help. These tools turn scattered experiences into a single, trusted story—one that employees can share across jobs, industries, or careers.

These platforms provide workers with professional portfolios that “portray the variety of skills people have developed—giving a more holistic and accurate view of their knowledge than a simple transcript or résumé,” says Lydia Logan of IBM SkillsBuild.

Digital wallets benefit employers

- Assess your workforce capabilities
- Identify transferable skills
- Build internal mobility

AI enhances personalization

- Help employees identify skill gaps
- Align personal development with career goals
- Provide prompts to help your people stay on track
- Use labor market data to guide workers toward high-demand skills

The result? A smarter system—one that doesn't wait for change but helps people stay ahead of it. And that helps your company stay ahead of competitors.

Rethinking Career Growth for a Changing Workforce

Workforce agility is no longer a competitive advantage—it's table stakes. But agility doesn't happen through guesswork or one-off training. It comes from systems that evolve with the businesses they serve.

Organizations must prioritize learning to learn as a core competency for employees and their managers.

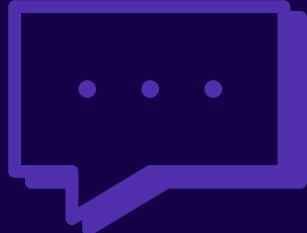
And career pathways need to reflect the modern economy: flexible, personalized, supported by tools that scale, and ready to pivot as technology and markets shift.

But retaining and developing talent requires effective learning—and more. It requires direction from the employer and commitment from the employee. That's what personalized career pathways offer.



Let's Talk

Transform Your Team's Learning Today



We're building what's next in workforce development—and your organization deserves to be part of it.

Connect with our team to discover how AI-supported learning can unlock your workforce's full potential.

Learn more at pearson.com/en-us/work.html.