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real links

A Snapshot of
Internal Mobility in 2021

It's time to start thinking differently





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In association with



RESOURCING LEADERS 100

Introduction

'A Snapshot of Internal Mobility in 2021' is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research into the subject of Internal Mobility undertaken over the period March-June 2021.

The paper consists of findings from research carried out with Resourcing and HR professionals from over 100 businesses of varied sizes and industry sectors based primarily in the UK and US. Research included one to one interviews; a virtual roundtable held in March in partnership with the Recruitment Events Company; a dedicated survey and anecdotal insight from three live Real Links clients.

We'd like thank everyone who took their time to contribute, and special thanks to those who gave up their time to be interviewed:

Lesa Molinari, Head of Global Talent Acquisition and Employer Branding - [Colt Technology](#)

Rodney Moses, Managing Director - [Edgewater Talent](#) /

Nick Pullan, Group Head of Talent - [GoCo Group](#)

Sarah France-Gorton, Head of Resourcing Solutions - [North Yorkshire County Council](#)

Shelley Lawton, Resourcing Operations Senior Manager - [Drax Group](#)

Ellen Stone, Head of Talent Acquisition - [O2 Telefonica](#)

Pauline Hamilton, Head of People and Talent - [Blue-Zoo](#)

Will Foulds, Talent Development Manager - [Blue-Zoo](#)

Keirran Slimmon, Head of Recruitment - [Great Western Railway](#)

Louise Mitchell, Senior Talent Acquisition Lead - [Jisc](#)

Laura Pengilly, Internal Careers Manager - [Admiral Group](#)

The Recruitment Events Company - [Resourcing Leaders 100 Group](#)

CareerXroads - [Professional Community](#)

In 2019 Deloitte asked the question 'why is internal mobility hard'?

DELOITTE, TALENT
MOBILITY 2019

Deloitte concluded that although internal mobility is a high priority, it's not easy to do well. That statement ties in with what we're hearing from the marketplace in 2021, but with the addition of comments like:

"There aren't enough 'what good looks like' examples of internal mobility from peers that I can reference for support"

"A lot of what's written about IM is academic, rather than practical"

"I don't have a source of reliable information to support me with the wide ranging sets of challenges I face when trying to make a success of IM".

Fast forward to 2021, and the pandemic has driven the urgency of internal mobility even further up the agenda. Redeployment; recruitment freezes and budget cuts have reminded organisations just how important their internal workforce is.

So in response to this and in the spirit of collaborative and transparent problem solving, we're aiming to answer 4 simple questions with this piece of research:

- **Why is internal mobility important to businesses now?**
- **What are the barriers to successful internal mobility?**
- **How have organisations successfully overcome these barriers?**
- **How do you measure the success of internal mobility?**

Statistical snapshot of internal mobility

96.7%

INTERNAL MOBILITY AS PART OF TALENT STRATEGY

Of respondents said internal mobility would be an important part of their talent management strategy in the next 1-3 years

QUICK CONCLUSION: IM is on the agenda to stay - so we need to work together to get this right.

91%

INTERNAL MOBILITY & DEI

Of respondents said they either agreed or strongly agreed that a robust internal mobility strategy can positively impact DEI objectives.

QUICK CONCLUSION: Use IM as a tool to help support the delivery of your DEI strategy.

9%

TECHNOLOGY FOR IM AUTOMATION

Of respondents said they had a fully automated technology solution for internal mobility. That means 91% of businesses surveyed don't have an automated tech solution for IM.

QUICK CONCLUSION: Manual management of IM will negatively impact success. Looking at a tech solution that will work for your business is a critical first step to success.

85.29%

WHY IMPLEMENT INTERNAL MOBILITY?

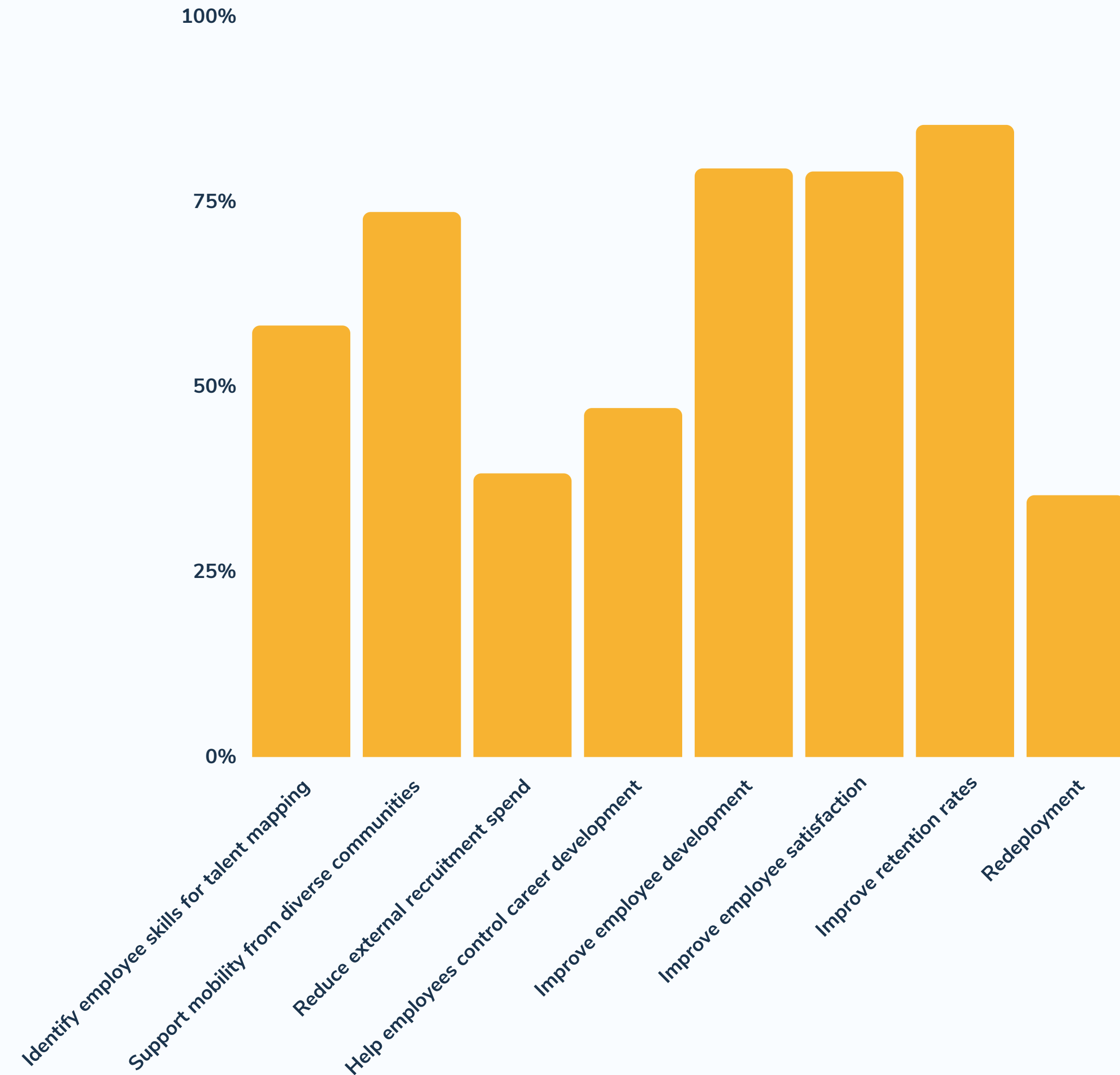
Of respondents said the main reason for focusing on internal mobility was to improve employee retention rates.

QUICK CONCLUSION: Employee retention continues to be a challenge, successful IM can have a huge impact.



Why is internal mobility important to businesses now?

What are the main reasons for implementing internal mobility?



From what we've heard, a big focus of the drive to achieve success with internal mobility is centred around the employees. Improving employee development; satisfaction and retention and supporting mobility from diverse communities rank highest on the list. Way above company focused benefits like identifying skills for talent mapping and reducing external recruitment spend.

In theory, if the motivation behind getting this right is helping the employees then longer term, if IM is positioned correctly within the organisation you should see high levels of engagement from your workforce which will positively impact all areas of the business.

Internal mobility in practice - why O2 are implementing IM



Ellen Stone, Head of Talent Acquisition, O2 Telefonica

We've gone through a journey with internal mobility over the last few months. When Covid hit, we had teams whose workload went through the roof, but in retail we were left with thousands of employees with nothing to do. We ran a short resource matching project to match skills with the areas of the business most in need of support which has started to drive the idea of employees getting exposure to different parts of the business.

One way we've tried to manage this is by splitting people into a few succession planning talent lists including early careers; business critical roles and aspiring leaders. People not on these lists can still view opportunities but won't be proactively approached for roles.



Why is internal mobility important to you?

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MOBILITY VIRTUAL
ROUNDTABLE, 2021



"Commercially, we can't keep paying a premium for external talent and ignoring the internal workforce."

"We don't want a 'bums on seats' mentality. We want to give people the right opportunities to develop themselves and as a business become known for that".

"Increasing globalisation and the impact of Brexit means global mobility policies are now required."

"We want our recruitment team to become talent advisers who articulate from a total talent point of view covering both internal and external candidates"

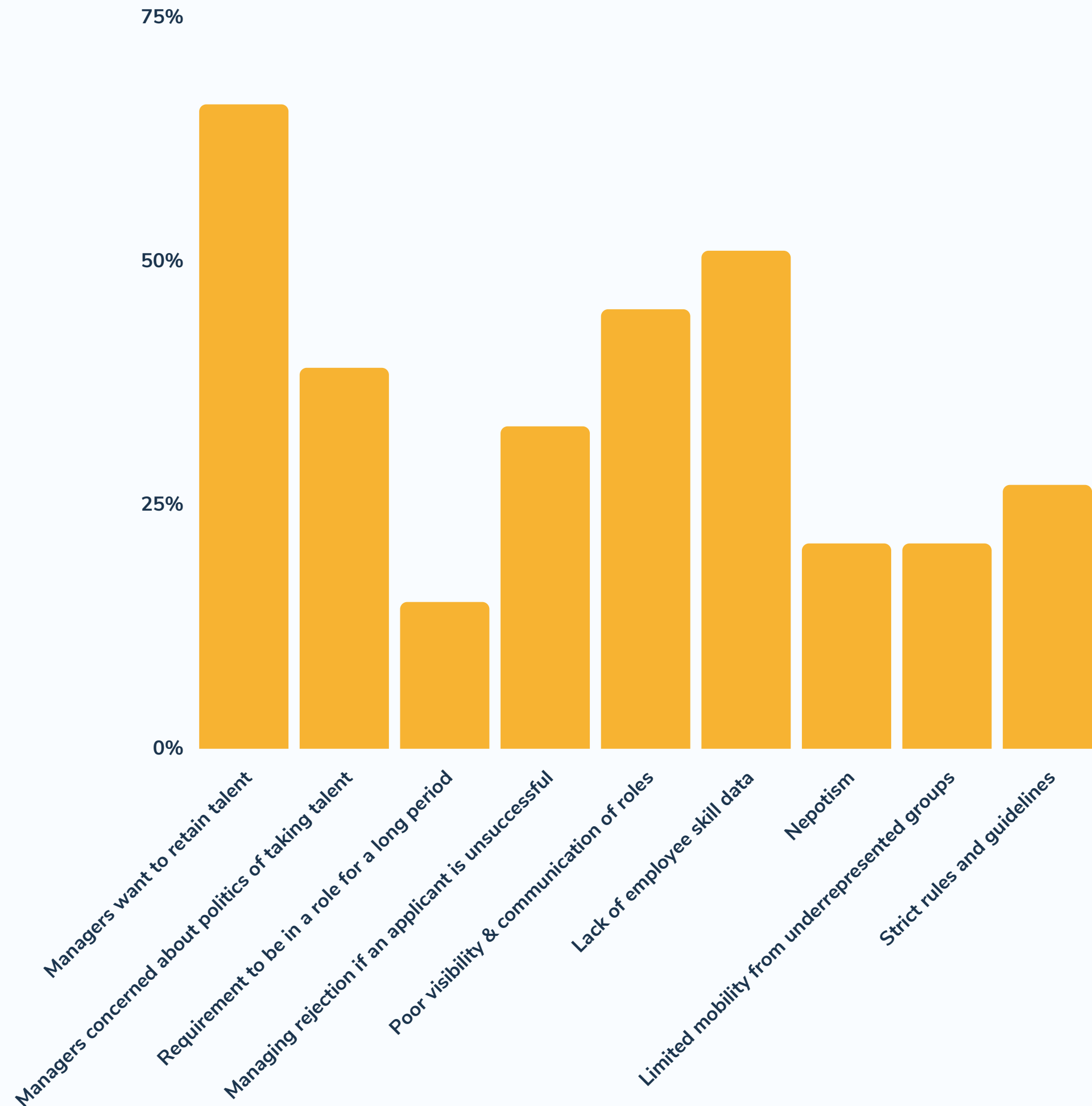
"Location is less of an issue due to remote working, so transfer of skills to different parts of the business is becoming easier"

"We want employees to be empowered to take more responsibility for their careers"



**What are the barriers
to successful internal
mobility?**

Top barriers to successful internal mobility



As you might expect, managers wanting to retain talent came out as one of the top barriers to internal mobility. Followed by a lack of data and poor visibility of roles and opportunities, supporting the other finding from the survey that only 9% of businesses have technology automation in place to support internal mobility. Internal politics about the movement of talent and strict guidelines and rules were also common place.

The biggest barrier we've seen is usually cultural change. Education and patience was high on the list of solutions, and taking the process a step at a time. Changing culture and behaviour is an ongoing battle for most organisations attempting to make a success of internal mobility and required long term focus.

Internal mobility in practice - IM challenges at Blue-Zoo



**Paulene Hamilton, Head of People & Talent and
Will Foulds, Talent Development Manager Blue-Zoo**

As an animation studio of around 460 people, our talent is typically hired on a short term project basis but they like to move onto other projects. This makes internal mobility a job in its own right as we have high volumes of movement.

Our biggest challenges are pulling accurate data on employees not just around skills but how long they're on a job for, as due to the nature of projects and moving schedules this needs to be managed tightly.

We are keen to hire someone dedicated to delivering IM. We'd also like to develop an integrated L&D platform that ties development to roles with scoring and we'd like to get a lot more detailed with analytics and metrics across the business.



What are your barriers to internal mobility?

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MOBILITY VIRTUAL
ROUNDTABLE, 2021



"Employees are still stuck in the mindset of linear careers, we need to open people's minds to a new approach to personal development."

"Measuring the success of internal mobility can be challenging".

"Poor communication of our internal mobility options with the workforce results in limited engagement with the process."

"Internal mobility needs to be worthwhile, user friendly and make people want to interact with the program, otherwise it doesn't work."

"Infighting between teams and managers when moving people around is a big issue."

"Collective support from leadership and management is critical."

Internal mobility in practice- Real Links clients - barriers to internal mobility

Keirran Slimmon, Head of Recruitment, GWR
Louise Mitchell, Senior Talent Acquisition Lead, Jisc
Laura Pengilly, Internal Careers Manger, Admiral Group



There were some common challenges shared by all three of these clients when they first started working with Real Links.

Great Western Railway

Our IM journey started with the necessity for skills identification. When the first lockdown happened we realised we had a lot of colleagues who had come through volume recruiting, a process that we've made very quick and easy, but that's meant we lack more detailed information on a large proportion of our volume talent.

Jisc

One element that was really important to us was finding a solution to bring open roles and relevant internal employees together. We were struggling to create an easily accessible internal talent pool that we could communicate new opportunities with regularly, and more than that, making sure those opportunities were relevant to avoid impacting engagement.

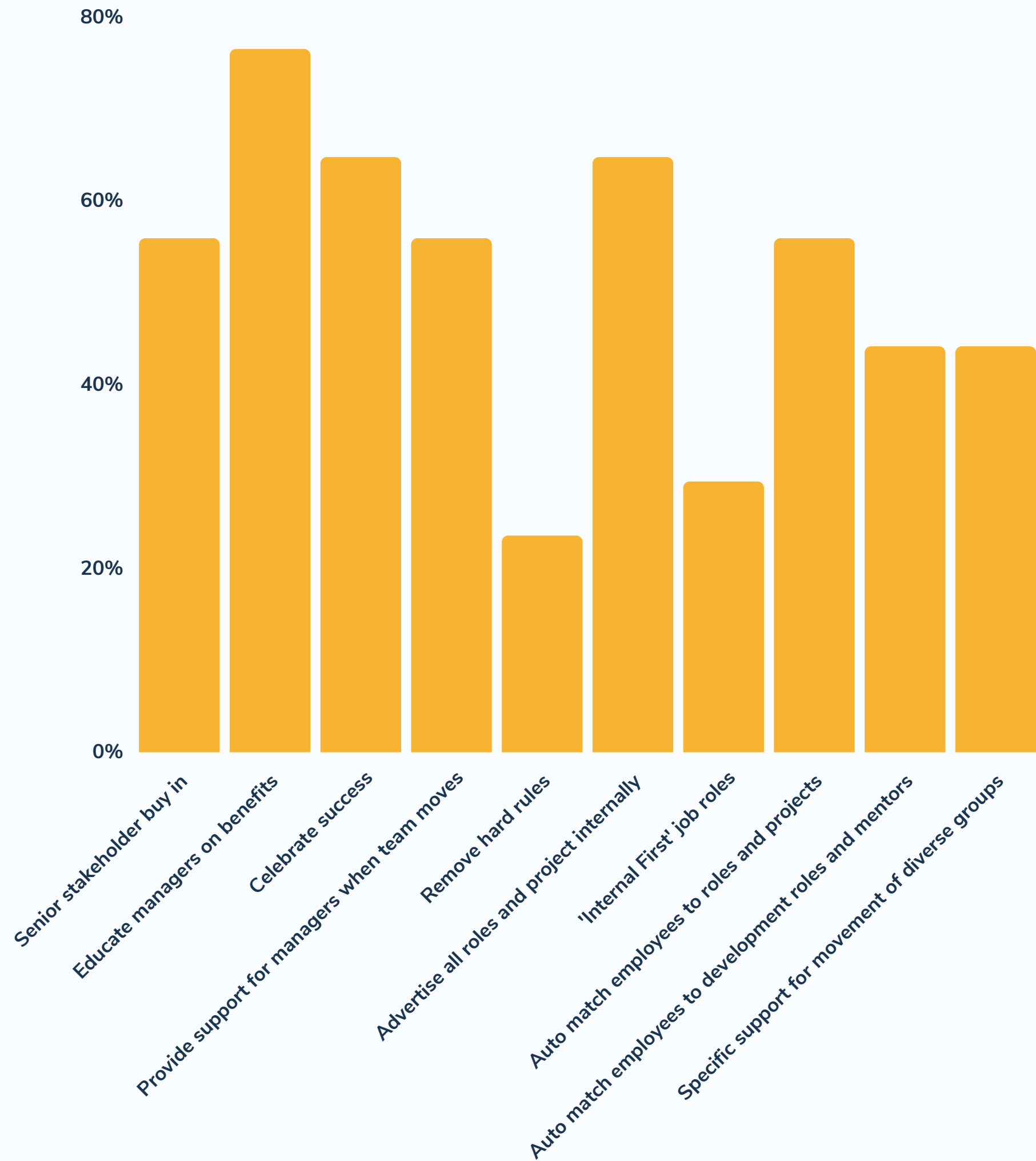
Admiral Group

As it stood, employees weren't easily able to identify the areas they'd like to develop in. We wanted to know more about employee's interests and aspirational skills, to help support us to really provide development for employees in the right areas, whether that was plugging them into relevant mentors or offering them the opportunity to join projects that would support the development of the skills they were most interested in, positioning them for roles in the future.



**How do you
overcome the
barriers to successful
internal mobility?**

How to overcome barriers to internal mobility



Educating managers on the benefits of internal mobility; celebrating success and improving communication of opportunities to employees are clear solutions to some of the main IM challenges. The next step is to look at exactly how that education and communication will be delivered and managed.

Automating as much of the process as possible by gathering employee skills then auto-matching those to the jobs and development opportunities will save a lot of time.

Senior leadership backing is critical to support culture change in combination with new initiatives that help managers learn how to train junior staff quickly and effectively. That training may remove some of the fear of losing members of their team to roles in other departments if managers are confident they can train a replacement.

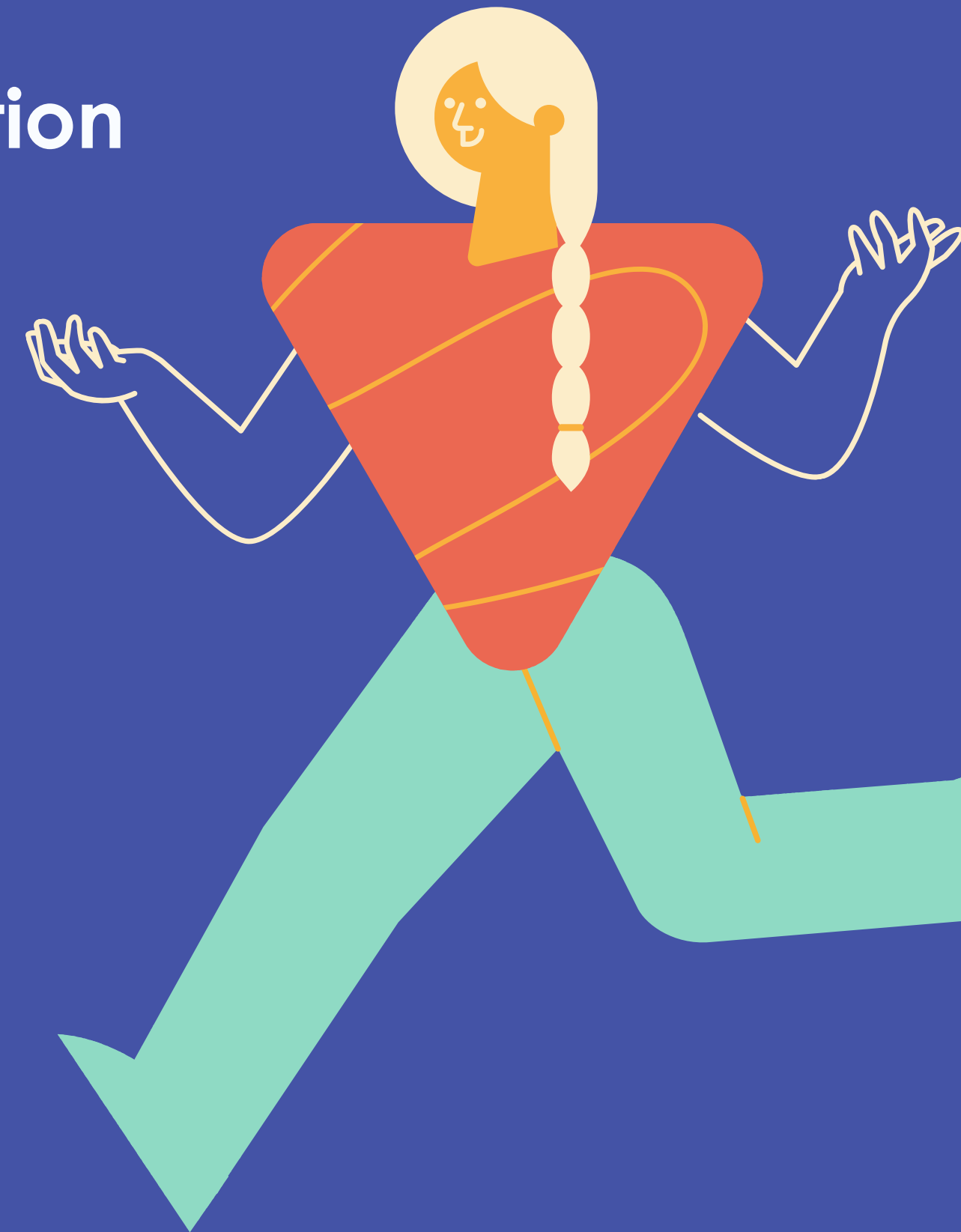


Internal mobility in practice - taking an internal first approach

Lesa Molinari, Head of Global Talent Acquisition and Employer Branding, Colt Technology

We're trying to get the business to take an 'internal first' approach. The business knows everything must be advertised for 2 weeks internally before going external. We've worked hard on educating managers and the approach is beginning to be embedded with internal mobility having increased by 129%. Using a technology like Real Links to help employees understand what's possible when looking at internal roles and recruiters to help identify them is crucial for success.

Previously there was a lack of understanding in the business of the value of internal candidates so everything was going external. Managers didn't want to lose their best talent and would extend notice periods for internal moves but that has really changed over time.

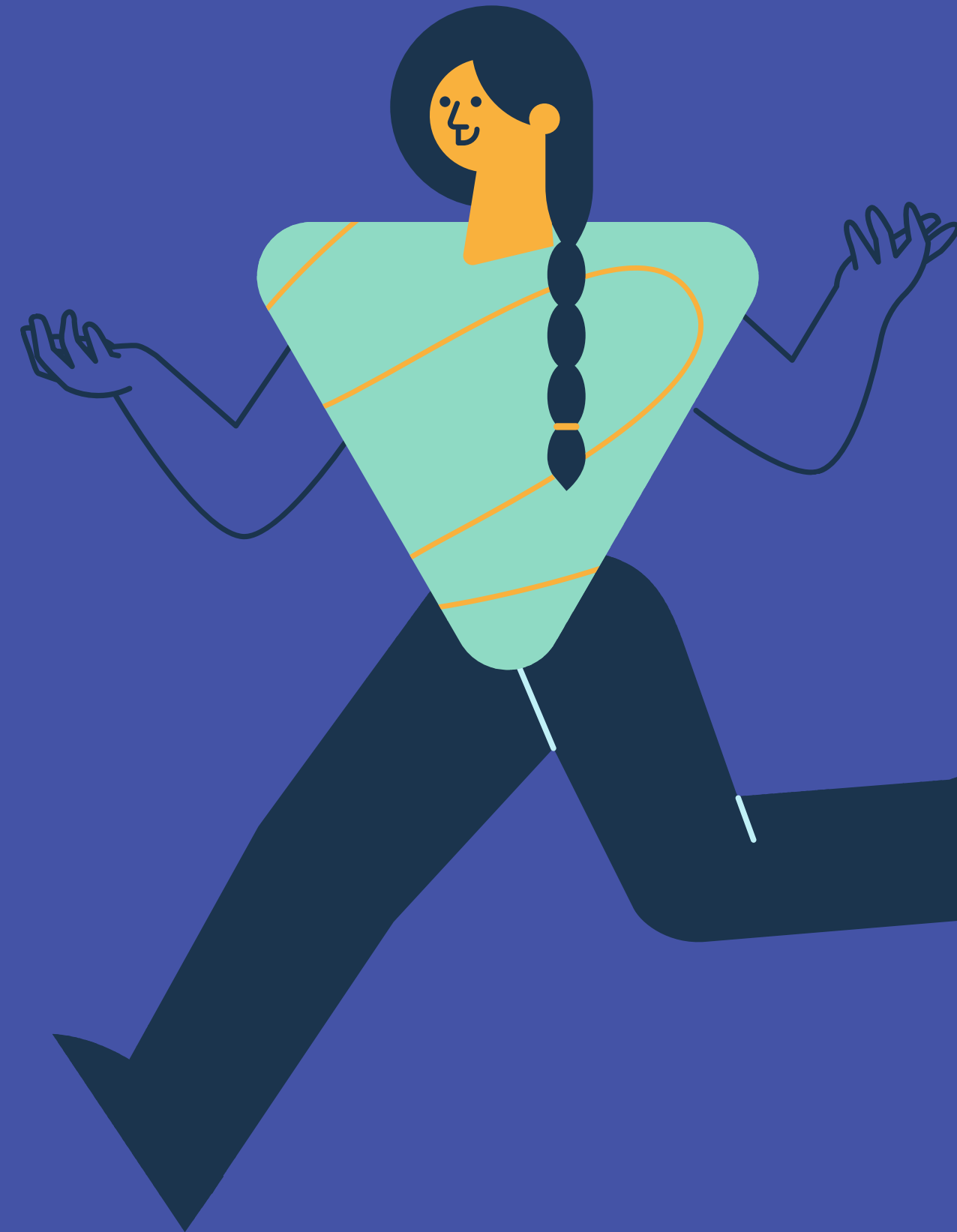


Internal mobility in practice - counteracting manager resistance

**Sarah France-Gorton, Head of Resourcing
Solutions, North Yorkshire County Council**

We've tried to counteract resistance from managers through manager education; negotiating longer and more positive handover periods and we encourage trainee positions and internships across all teams to help teach managers how to train and develop staff to help normalise internal moves.

We have three main processes to help align internal moves. One, we ask staff to complete a skills survey to build a talent bank. This supports opportunities that require a quick response. Two, for permanent moves where a person needs support or may be at risk of leaving we'll set up skills mapping and prioritise them for internal opportunities. Three, we advertise 'relief roles' where people can apply to support on top of their day job for extra pay.



How have you overcome the barriers to successful internal mobility?

RL100 INTERNAL
MOBILITY VIRTUAL
ROUNDTABLE, 2021



"A skills survey with all employees is a critical starting point to creating an internal talent bank."

"We made it a rule that nobody can stop anyone moving or applying for an internal role. Mutual support to make sure internal roles are seen as positive rather than someone leaving a department because their manager has failed."

"To use IM to support DEI we've focused our initial data tracking at a granular level on gender and ethnicity as that's the challenge we are currently trying to solve."

"Encourage teams to focus on the long game. When employees eventually do leave we want them to leave as ambassadors for our business."

"Train managers and the recruitment team to properly handle internal applicant rejections to minimise impact on morale."

"We won hearts and minds by getting senior buy in from the outset, and making incremental changes over time."

Internal mobility in practice- Real Links clients - overcoming the challenges

Keirran Slimmon, Head of Recruitment, GWR
Louise Mitchell, Senior Talent Acquisition Lead, Jisc
Laura Pengilly, Internal Careers Manger, Admiral Group



Real Links took a partnership approach to developing our internal mobility platform. We partnered with GWR, Jisc, Admiral and others to develop technology that specifically spoke to their needs and these are just some of the solutions we've developed.

Skills identification

We built a skills taxonomy to enable employees to highlight their current skills as well as aspirational skills they'd like to develop. This data is all stored in the system so HR and Resourcing teams have a full skills map across their entire organisation.

Job matching

Using Real Links' auto-matching technology, we were able to automate the process of matching employee's current skills to open roles in the business. Using automated communication including email, App notifications and Slack messages these roles and projects are regularly promoted to relevant employee, improving participation and engagement from internal employees.

Internal talent pool

By auto-matching employee skills with open roles, recruitment teams can easily build, manage and filter internal candidates. Allowing them to build talent internal talent pools that can be used now, or nurtured and developed for future opportunities.

Mentor and project matching

By identifying employee's aspirational skills, it means we can auto-match people to projects that will help their future career development. Not only that but if an employee tries to apply for a role they're not ready for, the system signposts them to relevant mentors or projects that will help develop the skills required for that role.



**How do you measure
the success of
internal mobility?**

How do you measure internal mobility success?

Shelly Lawton, Resourcing Operations Senior Manager - Drax Group

Shelly is currently using the following metrics to measure success:

- **Tenure in the business is a KPI - but with the understanding longer tenure isn't always positive as it can lead to a lack of diversity of thought.**
- **Engagement survey each year with a YoY comparison.**
- **Number of hires vs. average length of service; time in role and development opportunities.**
- **Each year they do a score card to track employee's feelings which is tied to the bonus for the recruitment team, with the aim to improve that score year on year.**

Sarah France-Gorton, Head of Resourcing Solutions - North Yorkshire County Council

Sarah is currently using the following metrics to measure success:

- **Reporting on succession planning for critical roles.**
- **Reporting on high risk areas in succession planning.**
- **Tracks how many people apply for coaching or training.**
- **Number of trainees and developing staff currently on projects.**
- **On-boarding interviews when moved internally to get feedback on the process.**
- **How have they defined high potentials in their team?**

Rodney Moses, Managing Director - Edgewater Talent

Rodney suggests creating a scorecard for each manager that measures all relevant key performance indicators, not just attrition which is the common go-to. Each hiring manager should be informed of their scorecard and receive regular feedback on how they can improve. Here are some example KPIs to get you started:

- **How many people were promoted in the organisation?**
- **How many people were moved on elsewhere in the organisation?**
- **How many people moved out of the organisation?**
- **On-boarding interviews when moved internally to get feedback on the process.**
- **How have they defined high potentials in their team?**

Internal Mobility Checklist



Get **senior stakeholder buy-in** from the outset by building a business case for Internal Mobility.



Implement technology that allows you to automate communication with the business; auto-matches open roles and projects with the skills you have available and offers a thorough skills taxonomy. **Book a demo of Real Links Internal Mobility platform** at the end of this document.



Set up a **dedicated learning and development process for managers**, educating them on how internal mobility will benefit them and teaching them how to better manage internal staff.



Provide **proactive support** to managers for when a team member moves to another department.



Instil an **'internal first'** culture, building policies that require all roles to be shared internally before they go external.



Make **skills mapping** part of your **on-boarding** process.



Update and communicate **policies** around internal applications and lateral moves.



Decide from the outset **how you plan to track and measure success** and use a **tech platform** with analytics dashboards to support you.



Decide your **most important KPIs**, and build an iterative plan to achieve them over time.



If you're just starting out with DEI figures, concentrate on **data tracking at a granular level**, solve your most critical issues first then move onto the next ones.



Publicly **celebrate** and promote success.



Join the **Real Links Internal Mobility WhatsApp Group** for peer to peer support (instructions overleaf)

Join the WhatsApp community for peer to peer support

1. Scan the QR code with your phone camera
2. You'll be automatically added to the Internal Mobility WhatsApp group
3. Ask questions, listen, learn and share best practice with other senior resourcing and HR leaders committed to succeeding with Internal Mobility



real links

Internal Mobility Technology

Learn more and
book a demo