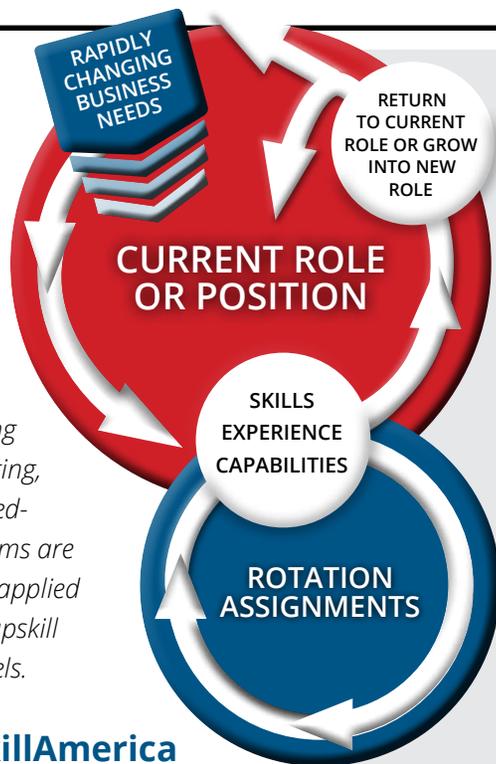


ROTATION PROGRAMS AS UPSKILLING STRATEGIES

Rotation programs, in which individuals are moved through different jobs or assignments to gain varied experience and capabilities, have long been used as development approaches for emerging leaders and high-potential talent. But in today's business world, skills are becoming obsolete at a rapid pace, challenging companies to provide timely, engaging, and effective training. Within blended-learning portfolios, rotation programs are being reimagined and innovatively applied as high-performance strategies to upskill employees at all organizational levels.



SIX CRITICAL COMPONENTS FOR SUCCESS

1. VALUE
2. STRUCTURE
3. ALIGNMENT
4. STAKEHOLDERS
5. PRODUCTIVITY/CONTINUITY
6. EFFECTIVENESS

(See reverse for details)



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How Some Companies Use Rotation Programs for Upskilling

"When someone comes out of nursing school, you want them to have some actual experience before they begin a patient-care job," explains the Vice President of Learning in a multi-facility, award-winning healthcare system. Her company created a rotation program for new nurses that enables them to gain exposure to patient care through short-term assignments (before their permanent placements) across varied departments and settings.

A U.S.-based financial services firm makes rotation programs a staple of its Early Career Development Programs. With assignments typically lasting from 12-to-24 months, experiential learning is augmented by in-depth onboarding, along with ongoing live and electronic training. Rotations provide new hires with client-facing exposure in a variety of financial services specialties (finance, accounting, asset management, operations, and more) and take place across the company's locations in nearly 20 states.

An Associate Vice President of Talent in the transportation industry says that "most real learning happens from actually sitting in the chair. When we hired people who would eventually become first-line managers in operations, we used rotations during their first 10 months of employment. We chose these short-term learning opportunities for several reasons: First, to ground the new hires in the core business. Second, to provide 'cross-appreciation training' that exposed them to other people and jobs, giving them awareness and understanding of the interdependencies within the organization. Finally, from a development/retention/engagement perspective, these short-term rotations were a valuable strategy."

In a global information technology (IT) company, rotation programs enable new hires, recent graduates, and interns to gain exposure to multiple business functions from human resources and finance, to sales and marketing and IT. The programs vary in length and afford exposure to different jobs within each discipline. Rotations help provide a pathway from college to full employment, educating participants in the organization's culture, and its products, services and business models through hands-on work on varied projects. The company leverages rotations as powerful recruiting tools, extensively publicizing the opportunities through its website and employment outreach.

Top Benefits of Rotation Programs for Frontline and Entry-Level Employees

For Organizations

- Enhanced workforce performance
- Higher employee engagement levels
- Improved retention of valued talent
- Better organizational performance
- Stronger learning outcomes
- Upskilled, cross-trained workers
- Enhanced appeal in acquiring talent
- Stronger, more extensive internal networks
- More development opportunities for managers and coaches overseeing rotations
- Enhanced knowledge transfer
- More robust talent pipelines

For Employees

- Improved performance
- Enhanced morale/engagement
- Upgraded knowledge and skillsets
- Wider professional networks
- Advancement opportunities
- Exposure to varied people and perspectives
- Awareness/appreciation of other jobs/roles in organization and how they interrelate
- Greater involvement/engagement in learning
- Better learning retention
- Hands-on training in 'safe' settings

ADDRESS THESE **SIX CRITICAL COMPONENTS** OF ROTATION PROGRAMS TO DRIVE UPSKILLING SUCCESS

1. VALUE

- **Make the business case** to establish rotation program value to the organization.
- **Note anticipated benefits** to the organization and all program stakeholders (including participants, managers, coaches, customers, and others).
- **Weigh cost and resource considerations**, including program administration, against projected returns on investments (ROI).
- **Cite current and future business goals** and imperatives driving skills training and show how use of rotation programs will aid in addressing those objectives.
- **Provide any other information** necessary to gain executive endorsement and support.

2. STRUCTURE

- **Define the purpose(s) and goals** of the rotation program and each of the rotations it will include.
- **Set and communicate specific and clear expectations** for participants, the organization, other stakeholders, and any other involved parties (such as outside organizations/people if external job rotations will occur).
- **Define program scope**, addressing which jobs/roles to include, whether rotations will be internal and/or external, numbers and durations of individual rotations, whether rotations will lead to advancement (or higher compensation or other specified outcomes), and any other core elements.
- **Determine stakeholders**, including employee groups/individuals who will participate as learners, mentors/coaches, managers, and any other support personnel.
- **Choose locations where rotations will occur**, ranging from within work or project teams, within and across departments and business functions/units, to options organization-wide (or even outside the organization).
- **Analyze roles** into which people will rotate, create success profiles for each role, and identify key learning points and goals.
- **Design a pilot** to implement within a department or team. An initial small-scale execution affords opportunities to identify issues, fine-tune, and fully develop rotation procedures.

3. ALIGNMENT

- **Ensure alignment/agreement with relevant enterprise-level elements:**
 - o Processes and procedures, especially administrative.
 - o Organizational values and culture.
 - o Product and employment brands.
 - o Alliances, partners, outside entities (primarily if external rotations are planned).

- **Ensure alignment/coordination with enterprise talent programs:**

- o **Rewards and recognition.** Providing reinforcement for rotations should include visibility for participants' achievements, communicating/highlighting success stories organization-wide, and financial or non-financial rewards.
- o **Compensation.** As appropriate, compensation can be linked to completion of specified rotations or completion of full training courses/tracks including the rotations.
- o **Internal mobility.** As appropriate, and when rotations are done specifically to prepare individuals for advancement or other role changes, participants who complete rotation programs should be afforded those opportunities (or added to pipelines) for advancement or lateral mobility.
- o **Talent management.** When rotations are to be used as strategies to engage and/or retain employees, ensure that any appropriate follow-through actions required to realize those objectives are taken (e.g., progressing employees along learning or career paths, assessing engagement levels, etc.).
- o **Communications.** Leverage internal communications to publicize/educate about rotation programs and generate interest and participation.
- o **Marketing.** Ally with marketing for internal promotional assistance and to ensure rotations align with external brand/employment brand marketing.
- o **Talent acquisition.** If rotation opportunities will be used to help attract external talent to the organization, coordinate with talent acquisition staff.
- o **Performance management.** Performance and development plans should reflect rotation program participation and completions.

4. STAKEHOLDERS

- **Define a selection process** for program participants, emphasizing inclusion and access, but also ensuring that individuals have the abilities needed to perform rotation positions.
- **Specify how support will be provided.** It is essential that participating employees (and other stakeholders) have accessible support throughout the rotation process.
- **Design training/preparation** for coaches, mentors, advisors, and other support providers. Ensure these individuals (often managers in departments where rotation is taking place, but also peers, learning staff, or others) receive orientation and training in how to best provide support for participants and ensure participants gain the intended learning experiences. Consider how to make supervision/support of rotations a development opportunity for coaches/mentors/advisors and managers.

- **Managers and leaders should receive regular communication** about rotations and reports on training completed and new skills/knowledge acquired by employees. Be attentive to needs of participants' current managers as well as those managing areas where rotations are taking place.
- **Instruct current managers** in strategies to help participants retain and apply new skills after rotations are complete and participants return to their current roles.

5. PRODUCTIVITY/CONTINUITY

- **Strategies to maintain productivity levels** and keep work flowing while employees are participating in rotations are key factors in program success. Work with participants' managers on apportioning workloads and consider an employee's absence as a development opportunity for other team members who take on fill-in duties.
- **Consider how additional or shifting workloads will affect managers** and other employees (those in a participant's usual department and those in the department where the rotation is taking place). Work with managers in impacted areas to mitigate any hardships and to capitalize on any potential opportunities.

6. EFFECTIVENESS

- **Before a rotation begins, define metrics** that will provide accurate gauges of program success and ROI (at individual/team/department levels as appropriate and at the enterprise level).
- **Schedule regular check-in points** and monitor progress during rotations. Update participants, managers, and other stakeholders.
- **When a rotation concludes, measure and document effectiveness** of the learning experience and new knowledge/skills acquired.
- **Debrief all stakeholders at the conclusion of the rotation.** Use insights gained to fine-tune the program and associated processes.
- **Create periodic ongoing touchpoints** to reinforce learning after the rotation concludes. Enlist participants' managers to assist and to find ways to include employees' new skills in their current roles.
- **Encourage rotation participants to share new knowledge/skills** with colleagues or others, and to become rotation program ambassadors or mentors for future participants.
- **If rotations resulted in advancements or job changes, assess participants' performance** in their new positions and their application of skills/knowledge gained during the rotation.

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