



## Retaining frontline talent through career mobility and growth

Insights from Deloitte

Frontline hospitality and transportation workers are critical to your organization's success. They interact directly with your customers, ensure the health and safety of your workplaces, and (literally) keep the trains and buses running on time. Due to rapid digitization and advanced technologies, companies are increasingly asking these workers to do more—and investing in growing their skills in customer services as well as new technologies. They often make up the majority of a company's workforce, yet receive little attention—and continue to turnover at alarming rates.

They are difficult to attract and expensive to replace, so shouldn't you do everything

possible to retain them? Reducing turnover makes both financial and operational sense. The average cost to replace employees can range from [one-half to two times](#) their annual salary. And employees who stay longer are more experienced and productive—with higher morale and job satisfaction, contributing to better customer service.

To reap these benefits, organizations need to rethink the frontline worker experience. Those with meaningful programs and opportunities can reduce turnover, spend more time upskilling rather than training, and turn frontline employees into loyal, proud brand ambassadors.

Here are three strategies to quell turnover and retain frontline workers.

### **Help workers see the long game**

Frontline hourly workers prioritize career growth, according to a [study](#) by WorkStep. Companies need to be clear from the beginning what a career could look like if you start on the frontline. Provide a career framework so that frontline workers—regardless of their aspirations and goals—can find a path that works for them.

Skills-based hiring, as described in the first article in this series, is the first step to retention success. With a talent pool of skilled frontline workers, you can fill a

pipeline toward more responsibility and salaried work. If you've already matched and hired candidates with the right skills, those new hires and employees will be able to leverage and build on their skill strengths and stay engaged. Who better to manage the hotel front desk operations than someone who has registered guests, kept the night watch, emptied trash, refilled coffee, and done all the other tasks associated with the front desk? Companies should constantly be evaluating their frontline talent pool for high-potential workers who can be groomed for more responsibility and upward or mobile career paths. Another benefit is that since frontline workers tend to be more diverse than others in the company, organizations can get a jump start on equity and inclusion by working to find a career path for their diverse frontline talent pool.

Done well, career mobility is about investing time and energy into your frontline people for their growth and the benefit of the organization. It can also help organizations achieve [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) goals such as appealing to your customer base or mitigating reputational or operational risks.

### **Prioritize learning for employee confidence and organizational success**

The ability for frontline workers to learn, connect, and drive innovation and effectiveness can differentiate your employment opportunity from competing jobs. Organizations where learning is at the heart of the corporate culture are shown to be higher performing than their peers. [Digital learning](#) platforms and tools, including adaptive learning platforms, custom mobile applications, collaboration tools, and social media now fuel a [training model](#) where employees have access to information and learning content wherever they are. Digital learning can be embedded into employees' daily lives and work with quick bites of information and knowledge checks.

When large call centers had to ramp back up quickly, digital tools were used to train both technical and soft skills—including how to deal with difficult customers—rapidly and at scale. One company implemented an

### **Offer opportunities to build skills—and resumes**

Upskilling is when an employee builds a higher level of competency in a skill or set of skills to better perform in current or future roles. It can be on-the-job training, formal instruction, outside classes, or all of the above. Providing job-centric upskilling is the first step, followed by monitoring whether employees thrive or progress in their jobs or improve their performance, and measuring if employees stay longer.

One avenue to retain qualified frontline workers is to build internal certification programs. These programs recognize employees as they pass standards of skill proficiency, for example, a grounds technician could become certified by performing certain landscaping tasks. The certification process allows employees to work toward goals, be recognized for new skills, and add certifications to their resume.

A highly publicized effort has been [Amazon's pledge](#) of US\$700 million to upskill 100,000 of its US workers by 2025. Some of the programs, including Amazon Technical Academy, Associate2Tech, and Machine Learning University, target the [development of technical skills](#) for in-demand jobs, helping to keep frontline workers current in both the theory and application of emerging technologies.

adaptive learning platform that feeds quick "bites" of learning to agents based on the types of calls that are coming in and recent business performance. Other companies are experimenting with simulations and AR/VR technology to let call center agents practice dealing with challenging customer situations and receive feedback to grow their capabilities. As call center agents build their own confidence, the company has seen increased engagement and retention.

### **Retain workers for the frontline win**

Make the most of your hiring and onboarding efforts by planning for the longer-term. To succeed, identify and launch innovative career pathing, upskilling programs, and digital learning capabilities to keep employees satisfied and productive, longer.

Ready to reimagine career growth and agility for frontline workers? Give us a call to continue the conversation.

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