Internal mobility

Prepared for Workday's talent marketplace team. About 4 minutes to read.

Recommendation

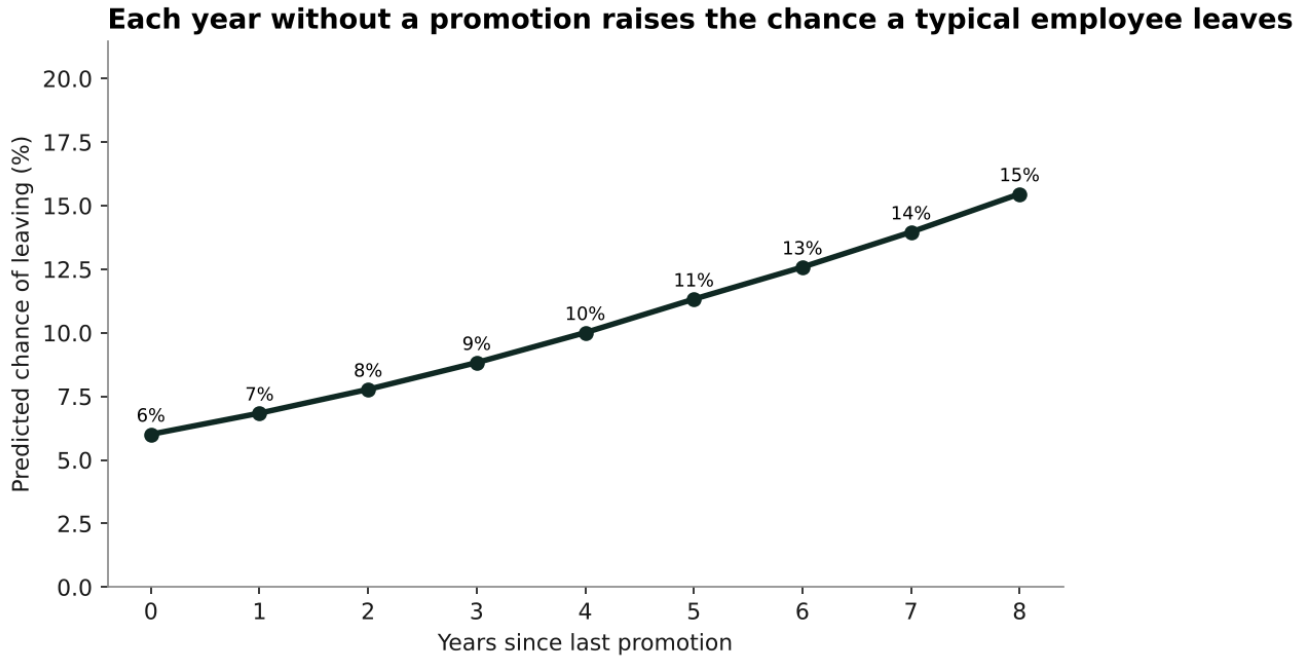
Make internal candidates the default. Post every role inside the company for two weeks before it goes outside, and match employees to open roles with skills profiles.

What to do

1. Add a two-week internal posting window to requisitions, on by default. Allow exceptions for urgent backfills and for roles that need a license nobody inside holds.
2. Notify matched employees on the day a role posts. About half of employees know about openings at their own company, so visibility is the first fix.
3. Build skills profiles that employees fill in and managers confirm, with fields for career interests and willingness to move teams.
4. Rank matches on skill overlap, then surface people with three or more years since their last promotion first. Their risk of leaving keeps climbing each year.
5. Stop managers from blocking an application. Let them see it after the employee applies.
6. Report internal fill rate and two-year retention of movers on the customer dashboard.

Key numbers

Measure	Value
Rise in the odds of leaving per year since last promotion	15%
Predicted chance of leaving, typical employee, 0 vs 5 years since promotion	6% vs 11%
Attrition of people who changed roles vs stayed in one role (2+ years tenure)	12% vs 19%
Voluntary exits for reasons an internal move can answer	45%
Two-year stay rate with an internal move vs without (LinkedIn)	75% vs 56%
Value of 4 more points of internal moves at a 5,000-person company (assumed inputs)	about $1.4 million per year of moves



Time since promotion

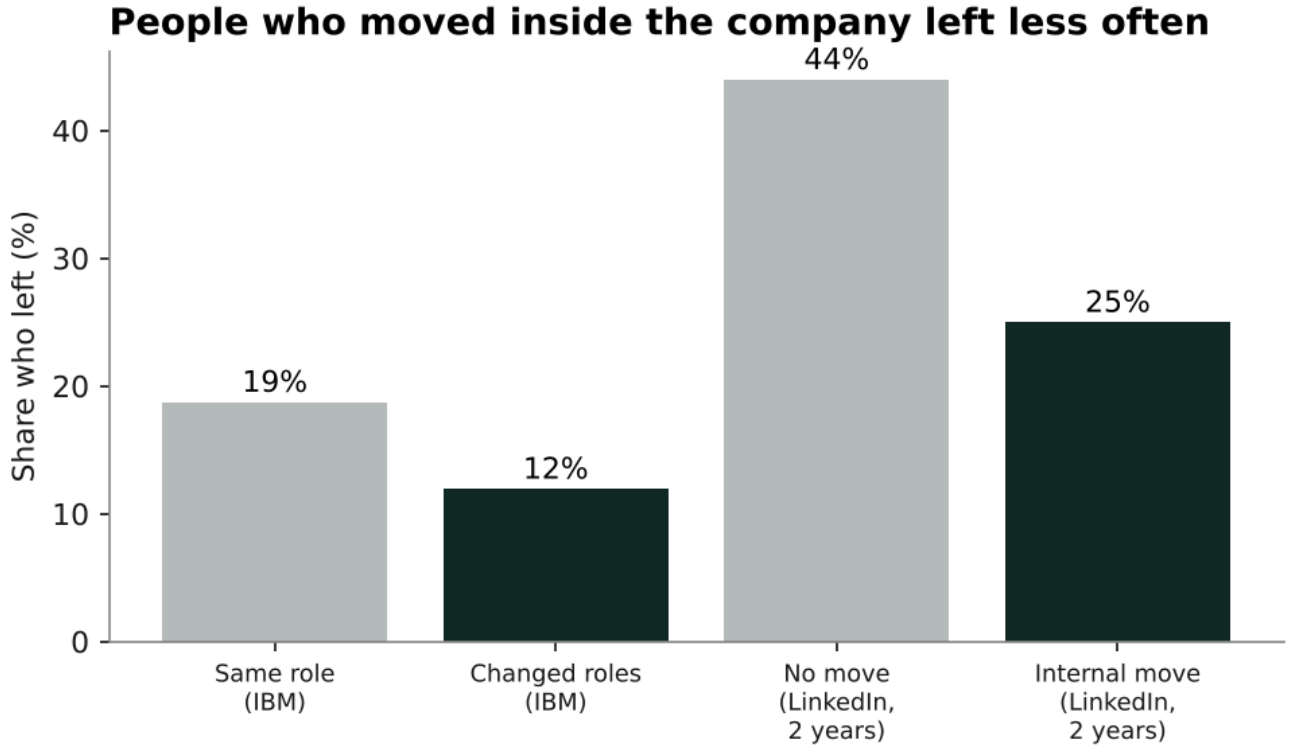
A logistic regression on 1,470 employees controlled for tenure, time in role, job level, overtime, pay and satisfaction. Each extra year since the last promotion raised the odds of leaving by about 15% (95% interval 7% to 23%, $p < 0.001$).

For a typical employee, the predicted chance of leaving rises from 6% right after a promotion to 9% at three years and 11% at five.

Movers vs stayers

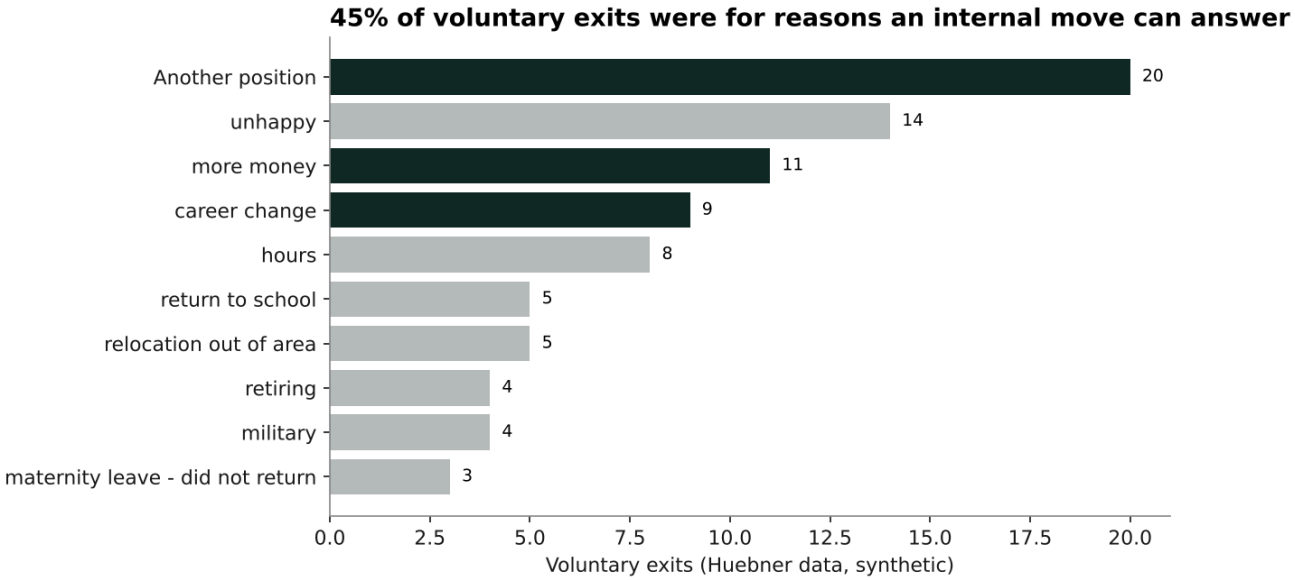
Among employees with two or more years at the company, 1,079 had changed roles at least once and 176 had stayed in their first role. Movers left at 12%. Stayers left at 19% ($p = 0.02$).

After controls for tenure, level, overtime, pay, satisfaction and role, movers still had lower odds of leaving (odds ratio 0.67). The 95% interval runs from 0.41 to 1.10, so this result alone is not conclusive. LinkedIn's data on millions of profiles shows the same direction, with 75% of people who moved internally still at the company after two years against 56% of those who did not.



Why people leave

In the Huebner dataset, 40 of 88 voluntary exits gave a reason an internal move can answer. Leaving for another position was the most common at 20. More money and a career change account for the other 20.

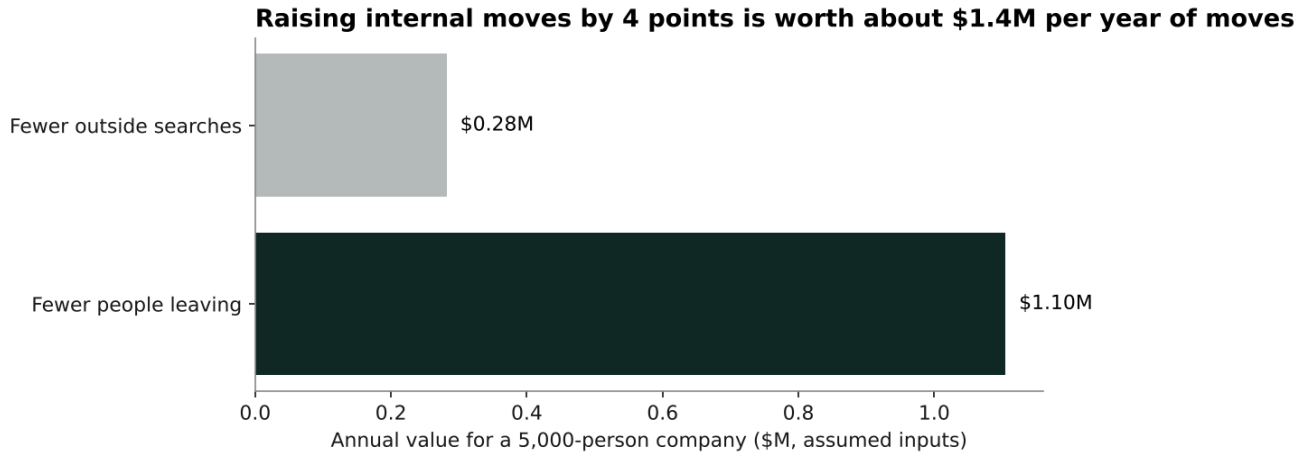


Opportunity sizing

BLS JOLTS puts the private-sector annual quit rate at 26.6% in 2025. A 5,000-person company at that rate loses about 1,330 people a year.

Raising internal moves from 8% to 12% of employees a year adds 200 moves. Applying LinkedIn's 19-point retention gap, about 38 more of those people are still there two years later. At $4,700 per hire plus about $24,400 of lost output while a replacement ramps up, that avoids about $1.1 million in turnover cost. Skipping part of the outside search for those 200 roles saves about $0.3 million more. Internal moves often open a backfill, so only 30% of search cost is counted as saved.

Inputs live in `data/raw/mobility_assumptions.csv`.



What published research says

- LinkedIn (2022): employees with an internal move have a 75% chance of staying two years, against 56% without one.
- LinkedIn data reported by SHRM (2020): people promoted within three years had a 70% chance of staying. A lateral move gave 62%.
- LinkedIn (2023): employees favor outside jobs because those openings are easier to find and often pay more.
- Gartner, as reported by Training Industry: only about half of employees know about openings at their own company.
- Bidwell (2011): outside hires were paid 18% to 20% more than internal promotions. They also got weaker early reviews and left at higher rates.

Limits of this study

The IBM and Huebner datasets are synthetic teaching datasets. Their numbers show the method, and the published LinkedIn and Bidwell research carries the external evidence.

"Changed roles" in the IBM data means time in current role is shorter than time at the company. It does not separate promotions from lateral moves.

People who move internally may already be stronger performers or more engaged. A customer running this for real should compare matched employees who did and did not get moves.

Data sources

- IBM HR Analytics Employee Attrition and Performance dataset (synthetic). https://github.com/IBM/employee-attrition-aif360
- Huebner, R. and Patalano, C. Human Resources Data Set, v14. Kaggle (synthetic). https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/rhuebner/human-resources-data-set
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, total private quits and hires, 2016 to 2025. https://www.bls.gov/jlt/
- LinkedIn, Talent Connect 2022. https://news.linkedin.com/2022/october/talent-connect-2022
- LinkedIn, Global Talent Trends (May 2023). https://business.linkedin.com/hire/global-talent-trends/archival/global-talent-trends-may-2023
- SHRM, Study: Internal Mobility Boosts Retention (2020). https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/internal-mobility-boosts-retention.aspx
- Pin, Source of Hire Quality Index (2026), summarizing Bidwell (2011). https://www.pin.com/blog/source-of-hire-quality-index/

Tools used

Python (pandas, statsmodels, SciPy, matplotlib), DuckDB SQL, Jupyter, BLS Public Data API, Kaggle.

Andrew Ly · andrewlengly.com · November 2026