

# Chapter 7

## Advancing Careers

### Facilitator Notes

Chapter 7 on Advancing Careers explores how individuals and firms can foster growth, leadership, and career satisfaction through equitable practices. This chapter emphasizes the importance of clear career paths, access to opportunity, and cultures that encourage professional development for people of all identities and roles. Participants will examine the systemic and interpersonal factors that support or hinder advancement in the architectural profession.

### What this guide includes:

- Definitions and dimensions of career advancement.
- Obstacles and enablers in career progress, including identity-related challenges.
- The role of feedback, recognition, and sponsorship in supporting growth.
- Strategies for individuals to own their development.
- Organizational actions to ensure fair advancement opportunities.
- Case scenarios and reflection questions.

### Use this outline to:

- Define what career advancement means, considering different contexts and goals.
- Explore how identity, bias, and firm culture influence access to opportunity.
- Clarify expectations and best practices for performance reviews and feedback.
- Encourage firms to build structures that promote equitable career growth.
- Reflect on individual and organizational roles in creating inclusive pathways to leadership.

### Suggested Pre-Read:

- To maximize engagement and discussion, participants should read the corresponding chapters one page, [Executive Summary](#).

### Corresponding Learning Objectives

Attendees will be able to:

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| — Recognize dimensions of career advancement beyond promotions.                                 | — Describe actions that individuals and organizations can take to foster inclusive development. |
| — Identify structural and cultural barriers that limit advancement for underrepresented groups. | — Reflect on their own roles in advancing their careers and those of others.                    |
| — Apply strategies to improve the quality and equity of feedback and recognition.               |   |

**SLIDE 2 THE GUIDES FOR EQUITABLE PRACTICE: ADVANCING CAREERS**

- The cultures of offices, the profession, and society influence career paths. Leaders can recognize and remove current and historical impediments, especially for members of underrepresented groups.
- This guide offers employers and organizations ways to support the development of all employees, with an eye toward equity and inclusiveness, and calls attention to critical junctures commonly found in architectural careers.

**Notes**

1. **What do you hope to get out of today?**
  2. **Why is this topic important to you or your firm?**
  3. **Set expectations for rules of engagement.**
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**SLIDE 3 WHAT IS ADVANCING CAREERS ABOUT?**

- Career development is influenced by you, your working environment, and the profession as a whole.
- Career growth can include steps such as gaining autonomy, leading projects, becoming a subject matter expert, receiving recognition, and increased decision making.
- However, individual choices are subject to social, cultural, historical, and economic forces that may not always be equitable. Inclusive leaders will recognize this and help individuals navigate their path, resulting in a more diverse profession.

**Notes**

1. **How can advancement decisions be made fairly and equitably?**
2. **Research has shown that race and gender factor into the speed at which one moves along one's career pathway.**
  - **One study showed that white professionals were more likely to be placed on a fast track while professionals of color spend longer times in entry-level positions before being moved up.<sup>1</sup>**
  - **In another study research participants evaluated the creativity of fictitious architects based on a set of images of work supposedly created by them. When participants were told the work was by a male architect, they evaluated the designer as being more creative than when told that the same work was by a woman.<sup>2</sup>**

**SLIDE 4 SUPPORTING CAREER PATHS EQUITABLY**

- Organizations should have clear, written, public criteria for promotion. Employees' perceptions of fairness and effective organizational support for development are highly predictive of employee retention and productivity.<sup>3</sup>
- Offer networking opportunities, including mentoring and sponsors. While networks benefit all working professionals, women and people of color have less access to peer representation.
- Provide skill-specific training, coaching, job shadowing, and workshop or conference participation. Ensure that selection for these opportunities is based on well-communicated criteria that support equity and reduce implicit bias.
- Encourage career pathways that resemble a lattice more than a ladder. A ladder offers a rigid, vertical career path, while a lattice supports flexible, collaborative growth with multiple routes and timelines.

**Notes**

1. **What do you attribute your career advancement to thus far? What has held you back?**
  2. **Networking is particularly relevant to advancing a career since over 80% of jobs are filled by word of mouth.**
  3. **How does your organization determine who will be promoted? Is this documented somewhere? Who has access to this information?**
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**SLIDE 5 LADDER VS. LATTICE**

- Traditional vs. Lattice Model Image

**Notes**

1. **What stories do these two models tell? How are they similar? How are they different?**
2. **What reaction do you have to the two models?**
3. **Has your career followed a ladder or lattice journey? What has worked well for you—or not?**

**SLIDE 6 WHY CAREER ADVANCEMENT MATTERS**

- Supportive, equitable workplaces that reduce barriers, develop skills, and provide meaning contribute to job satisfaction.
- Equitable advancement improves retention, motivation, and innovation.
- Barriers to advancement reinforce inequity, disengagement, and turnover.
- When employees see a clear path forward, they are more likely to stay, grow, and contribute to a stronger profession. If all employees have an opportunity to progress within the profession, all levels of leadership will eventually become more diverse.

**Notes**

1. **What types of advancement opportunities are most exciting to you? Are they more aligned with traditional or lattice models?**
  2. **What connection have you seen between equitable treatment, job satisfaction, and retention – or a lack of them?**
  3. **Connect back to business value: diverse leadership improves decision-making and outcomes.**
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**SLIDE 7 WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE****Notes**

1. **Review each example of what good looks like. Make a check mark next to practices that you can find in your firm or organization, a question mark for those where you are not sure, and a minus for those that are missing.**
  2. **What areas are strong, which are you not sure about, and which areas are weak?**
  3. **Ask for volunteers to share examples.**
  4. **What can you do to influence change?**
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**SLIDE 8 ADVANCING CAREERS (INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL)**

- Design your career path using a lattice approach. Consider transitions and pinch points and the kinds of support you might need.
- Map out goals for different time periods: one, five, ten, and 25 years. Break down your goals to see what types of skills or development you would need to reach them.
- Review your job descriptions, roles, or responsibilities and identify what you aspire to do more and less of. Build annual goals to support those changes.
- Construct a support network that offers accountability and shared growth.

**Notes**

1. **What has been your strategy for career advancement to date? What has worked, and what has not?**
2. **Encourage peer support and feedback exchange.**

**SLIDE 9 ADVANCING CAREERS (FIRM-LEVEL)**

- Be aware of how bias—whether based on gender, race, ability, or other identities—can affect career advancement and actively look for patterns of underrepresentation or exclusion.
- Build systems that promote equitable advancement, including team-based discussions around rewards and benefits, rather than relying solely on individual requests.
- Conduct evaluations that are bias-aware and growth-oriented to better understand how employees experience development and advancement.
- Support employee networks, especially for people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and women, who often face barriers to leadership and mentorship opportunities.
- Foster a workplace culture where employees feel safe requesting accommodations for mental wellness, disabilities, and medical conditions. Ensure your firm understands its responsibilities under the ADA and uses trusted resources, such as the [Job Accommodation Network](#), to stay informed.

**Notes**

1. How does your firm evaluate advancement readiness?
  2. What systems or practices does your firm have in place to ensure equitable advancement—and where are there gaps?
  3. How can we better support employees who may need accommodations—whether for mental wellness, disability, or medical conditions—so that asking for support feels safe and normal?
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**SLIDE 10 CONSIDER SCENARIOS & REFLECTIONS****Notes**

1. Select a scenario from the chapter that you feel will resonate with the group. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss the discussion prompts in small groups and share with the full group.

**SLIDE 11 NOW WHAT?**

- Make a list of what you hope to learn or achieve over the next year—both personally and professionally.
- Then, choose one item from your list and write down:
  - The support, time, and resources you'll need to make it happen.
  - Any potential obstacles or “speed bumps” you might face

**Notes**

- 1. Give everyone the option to share.**
  - 2. Suggest they check in with a peer or accountability partner one month later.**
  - 3. Note that there are many more ideas for action and additional scenarios in the full chapter.**
  - 4. If you have specific resources, committees, or additional worksheets, you can promote those here.**
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1. Thomas, “Race Matters.”
2. Proudfoot, Kay, and Koval, “A Gender Bias in the Attribution of Creativity.”
3. “State of the American Workplace,” Gallup, 2017, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx>; and “SHRM’s Effective Workplace Index: Creating a Workplace that Works for Employees and Employers,” Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 2016, <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/special-reports-and-expert-views/Documents/SHRM-NSCW-Effective-Workplace-Index-Summary.pdf>.