



Korn Ferry Executive Survey Shows Lack of Development and Advancement Opportunities for High-Professional Talent

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Not “Being Recognized as an Expert” the Top Reason High Professionals such as IT Developers or Research Scientists Leave

LOS ANGELES--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Sep. 29, 2015-- A recent survey by Korn Ferry (NYSE:KFY), the preeminent global people and organizational advisory firm, shows a significant lack of development and advancement opportunities for high-professional talent. High professionals are defined as deep subject-matter experts, such as scientists, researchers or software developers, who may not have aspirations to be organizational leaders.

In a September 2015 global survey of more than 700 executives, nearly three quarters of respondents (72 percent) said there was not a clear path for advancement for high professionals within their organizations. In addition, 78 percent said their organizations do not have development programs designed to help high professionals advance within their specific function, as opposed to including them in broader high-potential programs that focus on developing the next generation of organizational managers.

“With the global economy becoming fiercely reliant on knowledge, technology and innovation, many businesses today require highly specialized leaders,” said Korn Ferry Managing Principal Tim Vigue. “It’s critical for companies to find ways to develop, reward and advance people with deep levels of expertise, not just people with good leadership skills.”

More than half of the survey respondents (55 percent) say their organizations do not have ways to encourage and reward high professionals, other than promoting them into formal management roles.

“Our survey found that companies that rely solely on promotions and raises for high professionals are missing the point,” said Korn Ferry Principal Consultant Marji Marcus. “We recommend initiatives that recognize the deep expertise these individuals have, and offer them opportunities to grow their contribution within their own functional areas.”

The survey found that nearly two-thirds of respondents (64 percent) say “being recognized as a subject matter expert” is what matters most to high professionals, followed by being able to build their professional skills at 25 percent. A raise (7 percent) and promotion (4 percent) barely made the list.

Nearly half (46 percent) said the organization’s lack of willingness to recognize the value of high professionals’ expertise is the number one reason high professionals would leave an organization, followed by a lack of advancement within their own functional areas, which was cited by 33 percent.

“Companies that depend on having a deep bench of expert talent to drive innovation and growth could find that pipeline depleted if they fail to provide alternative reward structures and technical career tracks for these high professionals,” said Vigue.

“The real key is providing the mechanisms that enable these experts to expand their contribution by transferring their knowledge to the next generation of experts – as informal coaches and mentors – without having to take on formal management roles,” said Marcus. “Otherwise companies run the critical risk of losing key institutional knowledge as experts retire or leave for another job.”

To view additional Korn Ferry research on high-professional talent, click [here](#).

About the Study

Korn Ferry conducted the global survey of 731 executives in September 2015. Following are the responses:

Does your organization have ways to encourage and reward high professionals, other than promoting them into formal management roles?

Yes	45 percent
No	55 percent

Is there a clear path for advancement for high professionals within your organization?

Yes	28 percent
No	72 percent

Does your organization have development programs specifically designed to help high professionals advance within their specific function such as IT or research? (As opposed to including them in broader high-potential programs)

Yes	22 percent
No	78 percent

What matters most to high professionals within your organization?

Promotion	4 percent
Raise	7 percent

Ability to build their professional skills	25 percent
Being recognized as a subject matter expert	64 percent

Why would a high professional leave an organization?

Lack of advancement opportunities within their own functional areas	33 percent
Required to take on responsibilities other than their area of expertise (e.g., managing people, being on committees)	8 percent
Lack of organization's willingness to recognize the value of their expertise	46 percent
Lack of opportunities to be a part of a community of high-professional colleagues	13 percent

About Korn Ferry

For nearly half a century, clients have trusted Korn Ferry to recruit world class leaders. Today, we are the preeminent global people and organizational advisory firm. Through our best-in-class practitioners and devotion to innovation and science, we are committed to making a powerful impact on people, organizations and society as a whole and producing positive outcomes for our clients and shareholders. The firm currently operates in 78 offices in 37 countries and has approximately 3,900 colleagues. Our knowledge and passion for people has made us the global leader in the business that enables business – the people business. We are ready to help our clients shape their future.

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