

PEOPLE & HR LIVE CONFERENCE RECAP

Agents of Their Own Growth: Encouraging Employees to Advocate for Their Career Development

BY JESSICA SWENSON | MAY 13, 2025



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Non-linear career moves that may be deemed risky, like a lateral transfer with no increase in pay or title, can also offer unexpected benefits. Sumeeta Maxwell, chief people officer for [Experian's](#) Global Functions and Centers division, took control of her growth early in her career by making a lateral move that diversified her experience and broadened skill sets that later proved invaluable.

"Very quickly, I was able to demonstrate success and [show] that I can grow and have potential," Maxwell said during a fireside chat at [From Day One's Dallas conference](#). She encourages team members and peers to value a breadth of experience over a traditional strictly upward progression, favoring opportunities to illustrate their capacity for change and learning.

This is just one example of how employees can take charge of their career development at Experian. The company offers a variety of resources to attract, engage, and retain talent, but Maxwell says that one thing you cannot replace is the employee owning their development process. "Only the individual can actually seize the opportunity and then deliver on it," she said. "You have to take charge of your development—constantly evaluate your strengths and find ways to leverage them through your development plan."

Given the current status of the US job market, is an emphasis on career self-advocacy a good idea right now? Regardless of the market, you can never go wrong by continuously finding ways to learn, gather expertise, and expand your skills, says Maxwell.

One way to do this is to embrace stretch assignments or other opportunities for growth that are offered. In the midst of a transformation, Maxwell says, one Experian organization decided to further embed the tenets of its high-performance culture through an internal initiative focused on enhancing business goal performance. Senior technology leaders participated in a curriculum that combined learning activities with structured progress checkpoints to sharpen their skills in leadership, goal-setting, and communication. This program not only drove short-term impact to the business but prepared participants for high-level interactions through improved presentation skills.

As a global organization serving around 150,000 clients and millions of consumers, Experian's commitment to a flexible work culture is also crucial to the success of its 23,000 employees. Hybrid schedules have delivered high engagement and productivity, Maxwell says, allowing the company to "foster flexibility without sacrificing the value of in-person engagement."



Sumeeta Maxwell of Experian was interviewed by Steve Koepp, editor in chief and co-founder of From Day One

However, with multiple generations, working styles, and sets of expectations in the workplace, Maxwell and team understand that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. It is important for companies to consider the nuances of a diverse workforce, but employees can also advocate for what they need to advance their career. While universally appreciated, she says, flexibility can mean different things to different people, ranging from flexible work schedules to self-expression and inclusion.

"Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a foundational value for us," says Maxwell. It's a critical element of the company's culture as it strives to reflect its global customer base and encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work. DEI at Experian is supported by employee resource groups (ERGs) which are open to all employees regardless of identity. Maxwell says that Experian's ERGs provide not only a sense of belonging and community-building, but they are a resource that helps employees develop leadership capabilities, communication skills, and career mobility. Oftentimes, she said, "people will find out about internal opportunities through their friends in the ERGs."

Another resource available to Experian employees is artificial intelligence. The company's philosophy on AI is that if you don't adopt it, you'll be left behind. So they prepare their employees to use AI appropriately, says Maxwell. "We've put a lot of effort into ensuring our people are equipped and trained to know how, when, and why to use it," she said. Their system includes an internal AI coach named Nadia, which Maxwell herself even uses to prepare for meetings or specific conversations. Nadia is trained on the company's strategy and leadership principles, so leaders can interact with her as if she were an executive coach.

To really put employees in control of their career and internal mobility, Experian will soon launch a talent marketplace tool, Maxwell says. The platform is educated with internal career frameworks and role criteria. Employees will be able to create personal profiles and be proactively matched to open internal roles based on that criteria, helping them find ways to grow within the company. "The idea is, we really want our people to be able to find their journey and find their development inside [Experian], and not have to leave to find it," said Maxwell.

When it comes to advocating for your own career development, Maxwell says, consistent effort, strategic action, and hard work are essential regardless of your work environment. "Good communication skills and the ability to present never go out of style."

Jessica Swenson is a freelance writer based in the Midwest. Learn more about her at <https://www.jmsonline.com>.

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