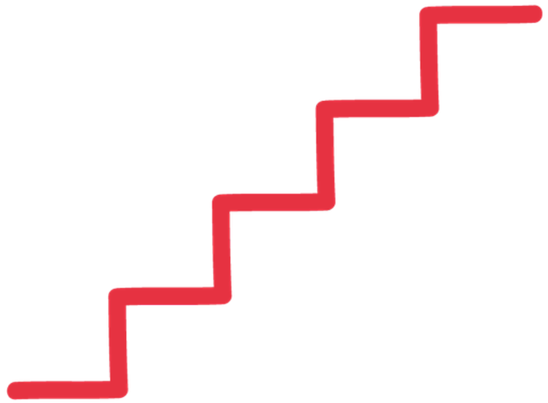
Squiggle & Stay Playbook

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Careers: Past



Careers: Present

Career ladders are an outdated framework for development. They don't reflect our reality or our individuality.

Today everyone has a squiggly career, where talents, direction and possibilities are more important than titles, destinations and plans. In this non-linear context, progression means much more than promotion. However, the legacy of the ladder often holds career development back.

At Squiggly Careers we're on a mission to make careers better for everyone.

In 2023, we started a 12 month programme called Squiggle & Stay. Along with 15 ambitious organisations, we experimented with new ways to help people progress.

In this playbook, we've shared our insights, tools and templates to inspire you to experiment in your organisation and help more people succeed in their squiggly career.

Helen Tupper & Sarah Ellis

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What is Squiggle & Stay?

Problem
Ladder-like career development limits people's opportunity to progress and results in employees being more likely to leave.

Opportunity
Unlock progression possibilities that go beyond promotion and give people the ability to personalise their career development.

Programme
A partnership with 15 companies and over 7000 employees to understand what experiments have the most positive impact on progression.

Playbook
A summary of the experiments and insights to help other companies adapt our approach and support employees with their squiggly career.

Our partners

Danske Bank
Specsavers
DANONE ONE PLANET. ONE HEALTH
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT
BBC
British Red Cross
AutoTrader
Pfizer
TOMORROW
NHS Property Services
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
Opencast
London Business School
e·on
Bauer Media Group

Summary: What worked



Replace ladder-like language with squiggly swaps

The words we use to describe careers makes a difference.
Simple changes to job adverts and career conversations, away from ladder-like language (destination, titles, steps, plans) to squiggly swaps (direction, talents, skills, moves, possibilities) changes behaviour. Even using the word 'experiment' was useful for organisations to position the programme as a chance to try things out and have permission to play.



Easy experiments

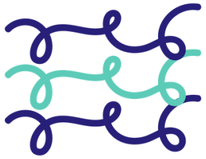
The easy experiments don't always have the highest impact but they do support organisations to get started and create momentum for a new approach to career development for employees.

Easy experiments like career stories and career moments, support employees to change their career lens to one that is more personal and curious rather than purely promotion focused.



Try before you apply

Transferring your talents into an unknown area can be daunting for both employees and managers. Creating opportunities for employees to try out new areas, with experiments like Career Safaris and Progression Projects, increases the confidence of everyone involved that cross-functional moves make sense.



Experiment stacking

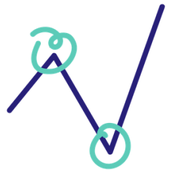
One experiment often leads to another, and stacking experiments together increases their impact.
For example Auto Trader combined Squiggly Job Specs, Squiggly Stories and Career Moments resulting in a 41% to 62% increase in internal hire rate.

Summary: What didn't



Manager buy-in

Though experiments like Squiggly Job Specs had a positive impact on internal applications, there was a challenge with 'squiggly' applicants securing new positions. Managers had a bias to hire people who had done a similar role. Manager education and support for squiggly transitions is important to address for experiments to succeed.



Experiment tracking / data

Organisations found it difficult to get the right data to fully understand whether experiments were successful. In many cases, they were starting from scratch in an organisation with no precedent for recording mobility data and therefore weren't able to compare to a benchmark before the experiment was launched.



Commitment / timing

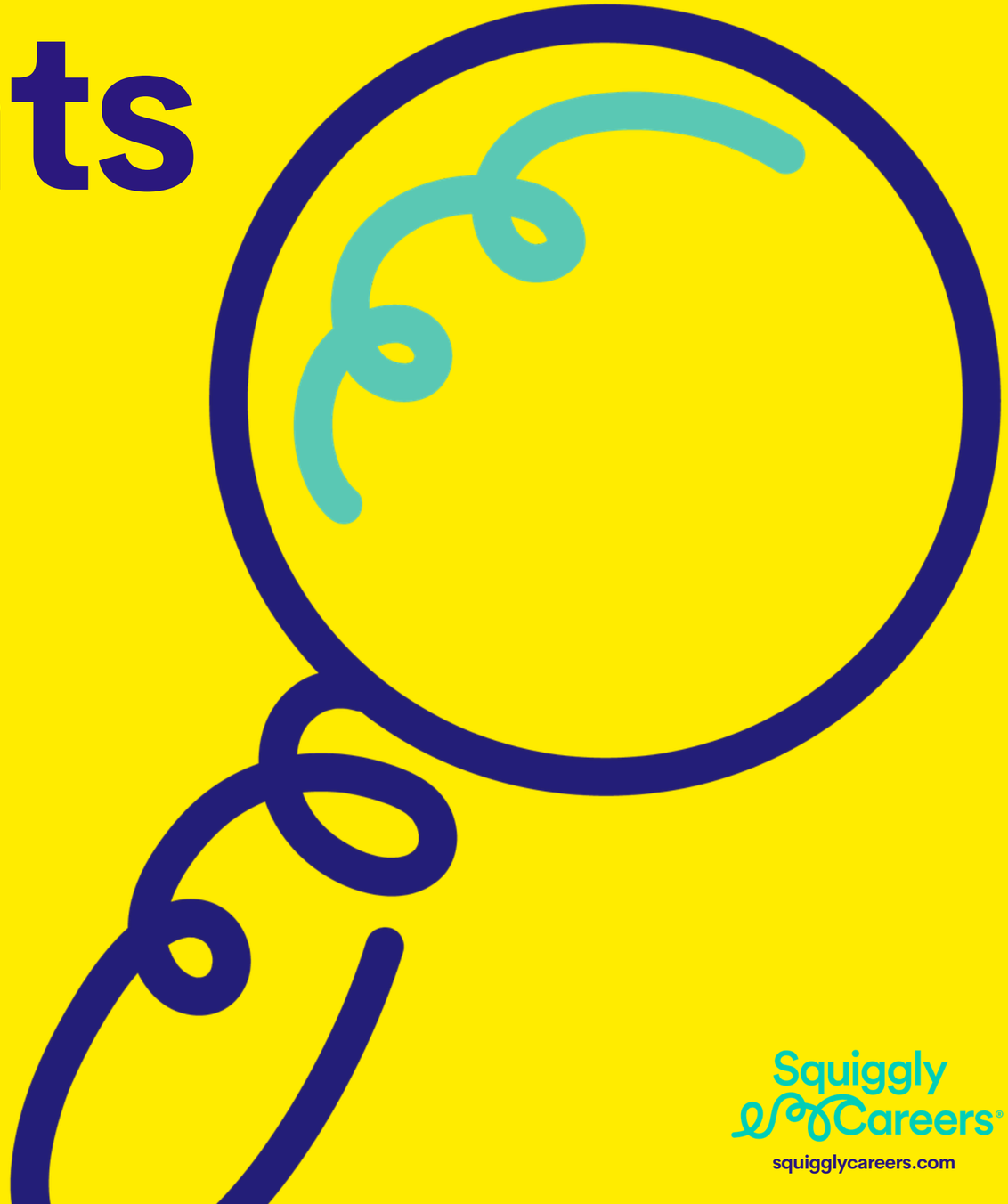
6 organisations weren't able to complete the 12 month programme. Challenges included; internal restructures, a lack of wider support for the initiative and key contacts moving roles. These challenges could have been mitigated by working with a team, rather than relying on one individual and having 'squiggle & stay' on the senior leadership team's strategic agenda.



Squiggly swaps

A 6 month role swap was proposed as an experiment for the programme. Whilst the idea was appealing it was challenging to activate due to its length and scalability. The interest in the idea has led us to explore 'Squiggly Secondments' as an alternative (currently in exploration for phase 2 of Squiggle and Stay).

Experiments & Insights



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Squiggle & Stay Experiments

Click each one to skip to the details

Squiggly job specs



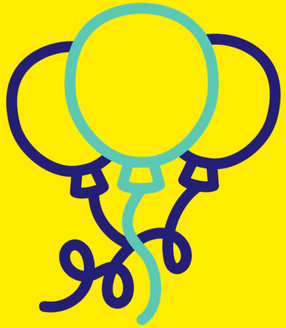
Squiggly safaris



Move mentoring



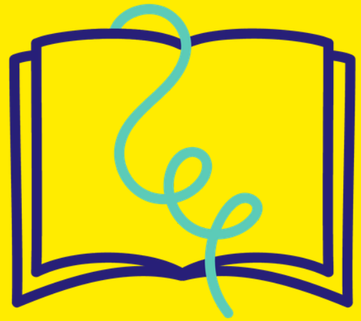
Career moments



Progression projects



Squiggly stories



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Squiggle & Stay Results

Click each one to skip to the details

Squiggly job specs

Hypothesis
Committing to skills-based, 'squiggly' hiring on internal adverts will increase applications.

Result
+35% increase in internal applications (Specsavers)

Squiggly safaris

Hypothesis
Creating 'try before you apply' opportunities will increase internal mobility.

Result
+11% increase in internal moves (Welsh Water)

Move mentoring

Hypothesis
Developing career conversation skills will increase employees confidence to make a move.

Result
26% of colleagues applied for an internal role, following mentoring conversations. (NHS PS).

Career moments

Hypothesis
Creating career-focused moments will result in people thinking differently about development.

Result
95% of attendees agreed that *"hearing about other business units increased my curiosity" (Pfizer)*

Progression projects

Hypothesis
Matching people's talents to projects will increase opportunities for learning and development.

Result
BBC filled 11 progression projects in in their marketing function with very positive feedback .

Squiggly stories

Hypothesis
Sharing employees' career journeys will increase consideration of non-linear opportunities.

Result
96% said stories shifted their perspective on what a successful career looked like (Danske Bank).

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Squiggly job specs



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Squiggly job specs:
Experiment outline

Hypothesis

Changing job adverts to include a commitment to skills-based and 'squiggly' hiring will increase the number of internal applications for roles.

Design

Choose a team or function that is open to skills-based recruitment.
Add a paragraph at the top of job adverts encouraging a wide range of applications, emphasising skills over specific experience.

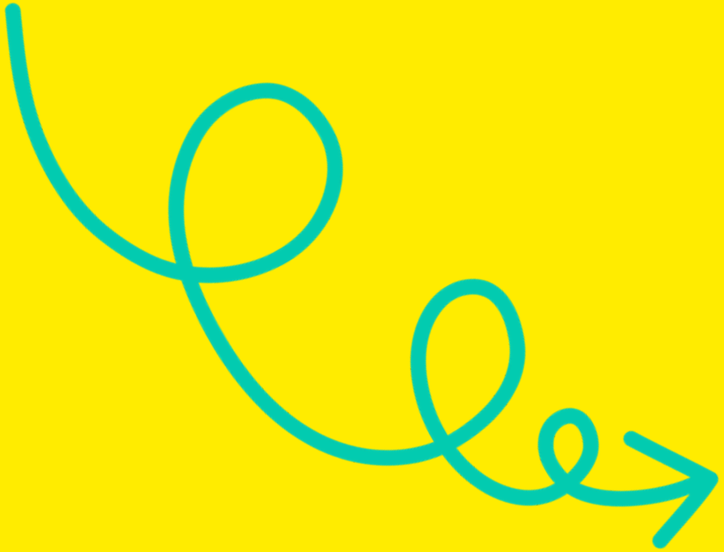
Example: *We support squiggly careers and we're interested in your talents rather than whether you tick every box for this role. We know it can feel hard to try something new, so get in touch if you'd like to talk more about the role before applying.*

Metrics

- Average number of internal job applications before and after the change
- Number of applicants outside of advertised team or department
- Number of successful applicants from outside of team or department

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From ticking every box before you apply



To permission to transfer your talents

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Squiggly job specs:
Experiment in action

Specsavers

Specsavers added a paragraph to their internal job adverts which encouraged people to explore career opportunities across the business and emphasised the importance of talent over expertise.

"At Specsavers, we are passionate about squiggly careers, and enabling our people to access new and diverse opportunities to progress their career. That's why we're most interested in your talent and what you as an individual can bring to the role (you don't have to tick all the boxes!). Your ability to learn and adapt are crucial and we'd encourage everyone to explore a range of career opportunities across the business."





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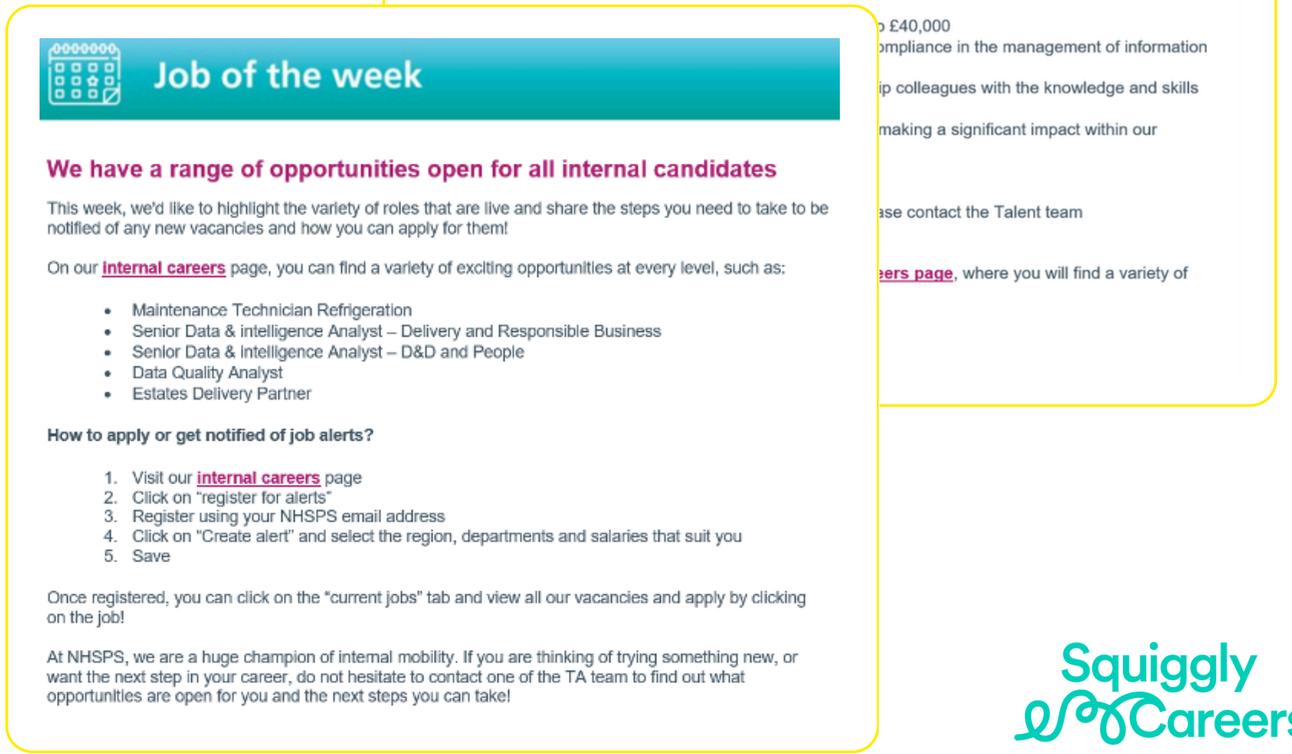
Squiggly job specs:
Experiment in action

NHS Property Services

NHS Property Services experimented with changing the language on the job adverts in their weekly Colleague Newsletter, emphasising a culture of career curiosity

They wanted to move away from language that implied 'moving up the ladder' to enable colleagues to be curious about squiggly careers within the business.

"At NHSPS, we are huge champions of internal mobility. If you are thinking of trying something new, or want the next step in your career, do not hesitate to contact one of the TA team to find out what opportunities are open for you and the next steps you can take!"



Career opportunities

We want you to feel encouraged to grow and learn in your role, or other areas of the business that you have an interest in

As an internal candidate, you already understand the culture, values and expectations of the company very well, which will allow you to seamlessly transition into a new role here.

We're seeking an Information **Governance Lead** to join our London-based team.

£40,000
mpliance in the management of information
ip colleagues with the knowledge and skills
making a significant impact within our
ase contact the Talent team
eers page, where you will find a variety of

Job of the week

We have a range of opportunities open for all internal candidates

This week, we'd like to highlight the variety of roles that are live and share the steps you need to take to be notified of any new vacancies and how you can apply for them!

On our internal careers page, you can find a variety of exciting opportunities at every level, such as:

- Maintenance Technician Refrigeration
- Senior Data & intelligence Analyst – Delivery and Responsible Business
- Senior Data & intelligence Analyst – D&D and People
- Data Quality Analyst
- Estates Delivery Partner

How to apply or get notified of job alerts?

1. Visit our internal careers page
2. Click on "register for alerts"
3. Register using your NHSPS email address
4. Click on "Create alert" and select the region, departments and salaries that suit you
5. Save

Once registered, you can click on the "current jobs" tab and view all our vacancies and apply by clicking on the job!

At NHSPS, we are a huge champion of internal mobility. If you are thinking of trying something new, or want the next step in your career, do not hesitate to contact one of the TA team to find out what opportunities are open for you and the next steps you can take!

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Squiggly specs:
Experiment results

Specsavers

35%

increase in internal applications
over a 6-month period

NHS Property Services

67%

of roles were filled internally
compared to 35% the previous year

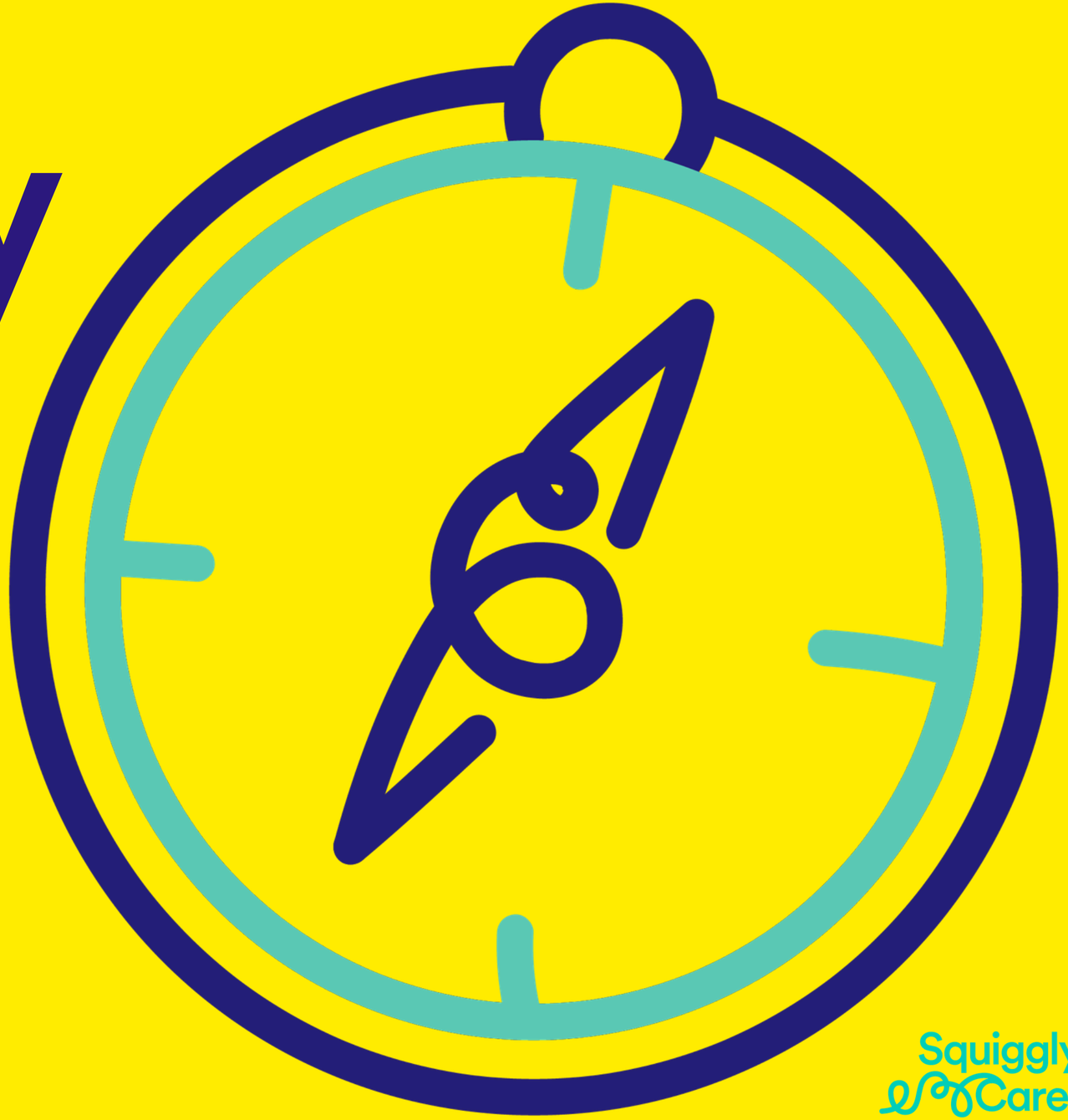
Insight:

The career language we use makes a big difference to how people look at their development.

Replace ladder like words with simple squiggly swaps.

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Squiggly Safari



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Squiggly safari:
Experiment outline

Hypothesis

Creating ‘try before you apply’ opportunities will help people explore potential career moves and increase internal mobility.

Design

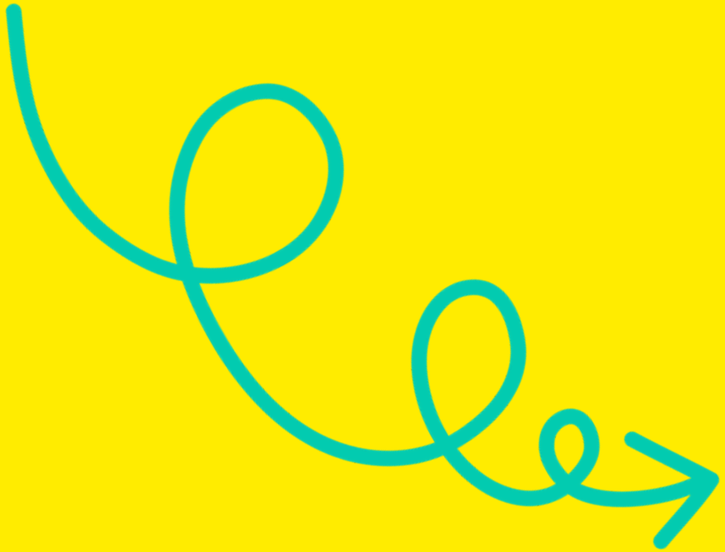
Develop a programme of short experiences where an employee spends time working in a different team and gains insight into the reality of different roles (ranging from a one-off day to one day a week for six months).

Metrics

- Number of people who applied for a safari
- Number of safaris completed
- Number of internal moves made by employees who have been on a safari.

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From fear of making the wrong career move



To try before you apply

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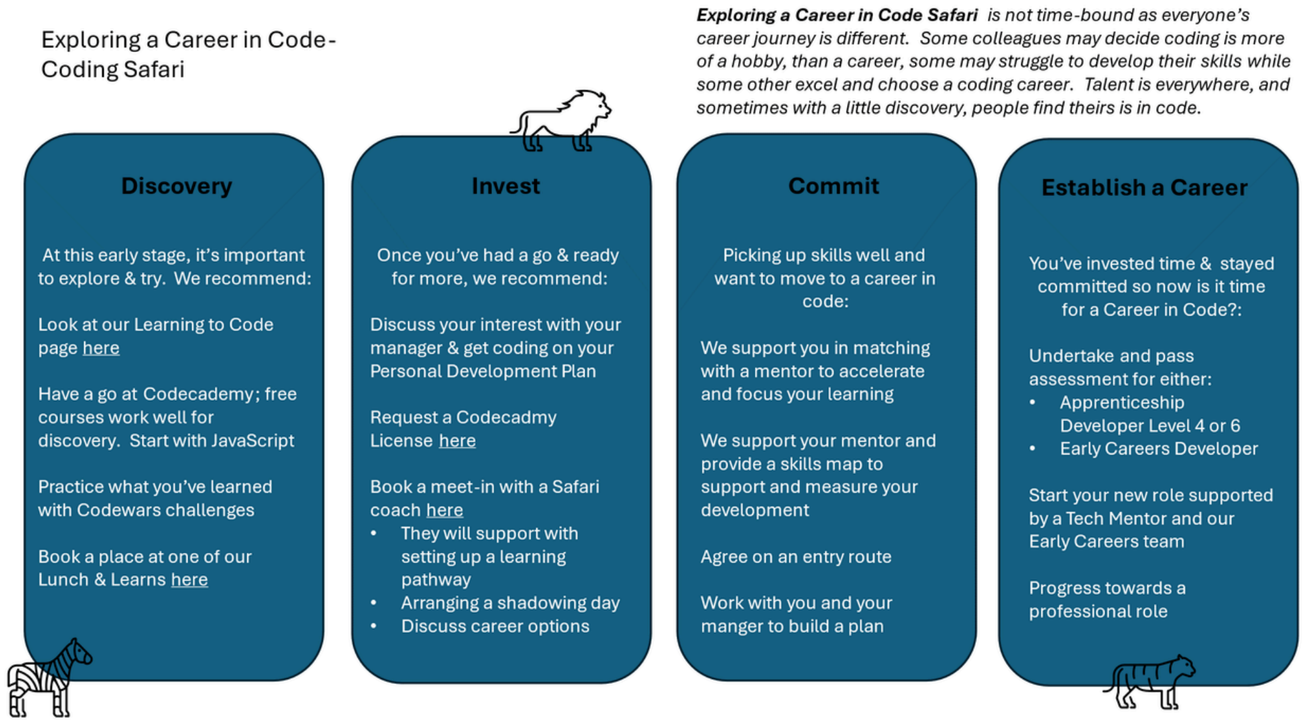
Squiggly safari: Experiment in action

AutoTrader

Auto Trader set up a Safari journey for Coding as a career, featuring four stages: Discover, Invest, Commit, Establish.

In the Discover stage, people could attend an introductory session and shadow for a day. If they were interested to learn more, they would be matched with a mentor and given access to Code Academy.

The final stages of the Safari involved establishing a new career for them in the department, with several roles held for Safari participants.



Safari Example Software Developer

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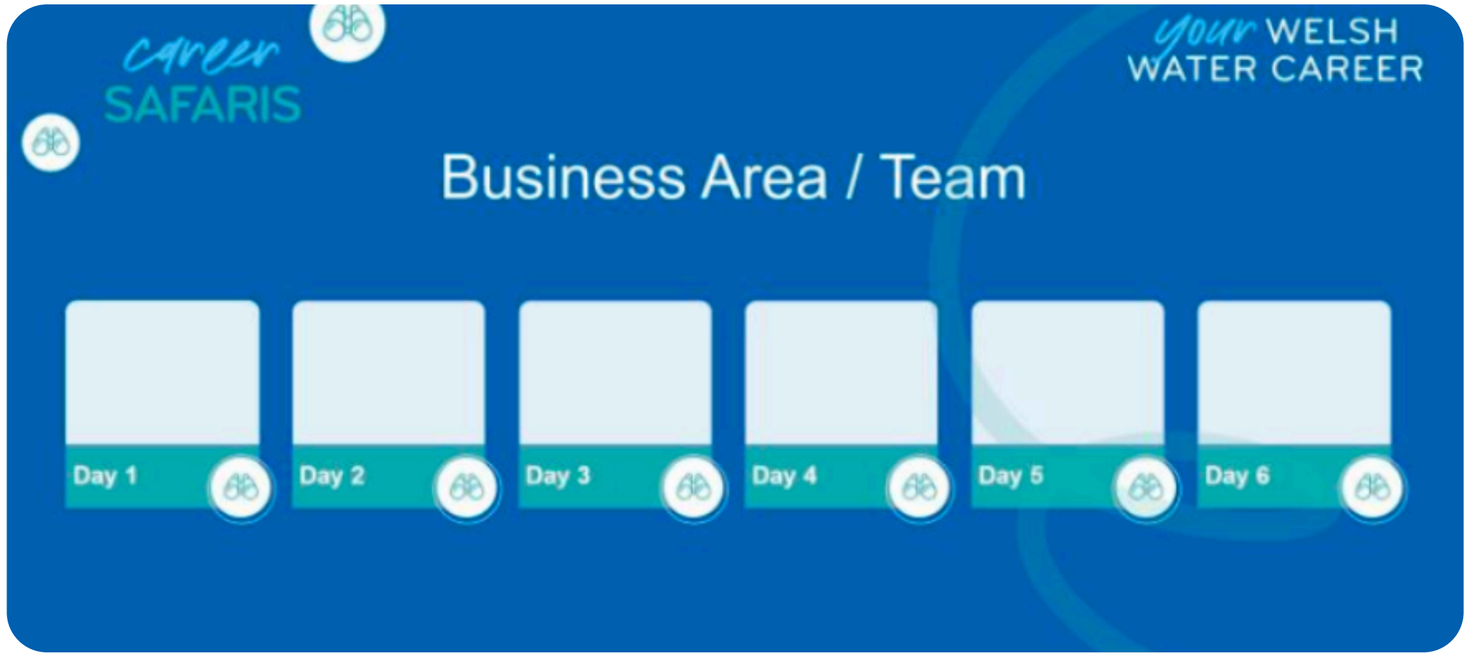
Squiggly safari:
Experiment in action

Dŵr Cymru
Welsh Water

Colleagues were given the opportunity to explore new roles and gain experience by going on a 'safari' to a different department.

In total, Welsh Water ran 34 safaris across 4 functions with an average length of 5 days.

"I would definitely recommend it [a safari], the exposure is invaluable."



Safari template

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Squiggly safari:
Experiment results

AutoTrader

7

colleagues will squiggle into new roles in 2024 as a result of a **Safari.**

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

11%

increase in internal applications as a result of Career Safaris.

Insight:

Helping people learn before they leap, increases consideration and commitment to progression.

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Squiggly safari:
Employee experience

"Because of the knowledge from my safari, I was able to confidently answer those tough technical questions at interview without having any working experience in the business area, which I think is quite impressive! These safaris are absolutely vital for those wanting to change their career path and gain experience in these different areas for them to be able to decide if it is the right route for them, and for me it was."

Employee, Welsh Water

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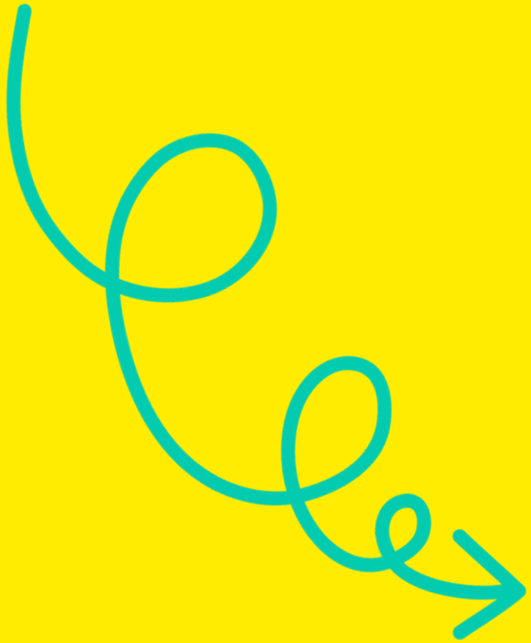
Move mentoring



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From career conversations that focus on promotion



To exploring progression possibilities

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Move mentoring:
Experiment outline

Hypothesis

Upskilling managers and mentors on career conversation will increase employees clarity and confidence to explore moves beyond where they are today.

Design

Provide career conversation training and tools to employees, managers and mentors. Set expectation for everyone to have a career focused conversation.

Metrics

- Number of career conversations
- Feedback on quality and usefulness of conversations
- Career moves made as a result of a career conversation.

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Move mentoring:
Experiment in action

NHS Property Services

NHS Property Services combined a career development programme with mentoring, to provide colleagues with tools, skills and support required to drive their own career development.

The career-focused mentoring conversations led to individuals being more proactive about their development and increased the number of people applying for internal roles.

London Business School

London Business School set out to ensure that every colleague had a growth conversation with their manager, resulting in a personal development plan with their career aspirations.

Each department had a growth review to connect individual career aspirations with internal opportunities.

This approach helped them to support people's development in different directions and create succession plans for significant and strategic roles.

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Macmillan hosted training on how to conduct career conversations on their development marketplace. This was connected to their internal development programme.

The development marketplace was viewed over 7000 times.



Move mentoring:
Experiment results

NHS Property Services

26%

of colleagues **applied for an internal role,** following mentoring conversations

London Business School

+12%

increase in the number of people who believe they can grow their career at LBS following career conversations investment.

Insight:

Investing in career conversation skills pays back.

People consider a broader range of roles and are more likely to apply for an internal move.

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Move mentoring employee experience

"My mentor has helped me figure out the highs and lows of my career journey, which has highlighted where I truly want to be. From coaching me during interview preparation to being my biggest champion, 'Driving Your Own Career' has matched me with an amazing mentor and provided a safe space for open and honest career conversations."

NHS PS
Colleague

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Career Moments



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Career moments:
Experiment outline

Hypothesis

Creating moments across an organisation for everyone to focus on career development will encourage more people to consider their career and think about their progression.

Design

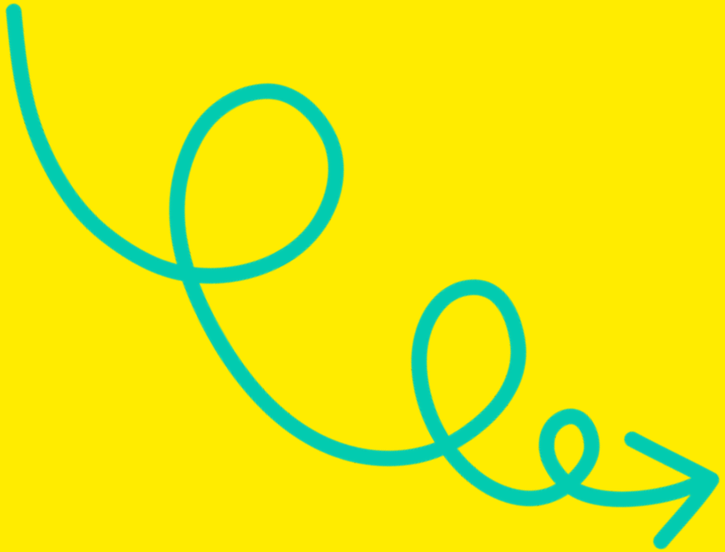
From festivals to fairs the format is flexible to fit with the organisation. Aim is to design career moments that are inclusive and accessible so everyone has the chance to get involved.

Metrics

- Engagement in and feedback from the events
- Uplift in applications for advertised roles within 1 month of the moment
- Increase in career conversations.

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From formal and infrequent career development



To creating a culture of career curiosity

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Career moments:
Experiment in action

NHS Property Services

NHS PS ran a month-long programme of events for their Careers Month. Talks included functional spotlights, interview preparation, building career confidence, building your personal brand and career conversation training.

The key aim of careers month was for colleagues to invest in their career and inform them about the opportunities available at NHS Property Services. Additionally the month was intended to develop new skills and support talent retention.



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Career moments:
Experiment in action

London Business School held a Festival of Growth for colleagues across the School. The three day festival included exhibitions, wellbeing and career focused talks and workshops from it's world leading faculty, alumni and external partners.

The event provided colleagues with the knowledge needed to make the most of the resources available at the School to support career growth and development whilst taking care of their wellbeing.

Pfizer's 'Zig Zag' Career Fair was designed to encourage colleagues to think differently about their own career journey and to consider non-linear career experiences.

Leaders shared personal stories about their own careers and different departments were hero'd, sharing more about what they do.

5000+ colleagues joined and they received over 150 questions.

Danone held virtual and in-person career talks inspiring people with stories and advice. The events were focused on inspiring and engaging employees in career development, with employees across a variety of levels, functions and different career paths sharing their journeys and potential new possibilities that colleagues may not have known existed.

Danone ran 3 talks in 2023 with over 600 employees in attendance.

Career moments:
Results

NHS Property Services

1,852

colleagues signed up **(82% increase** from the previous year)

4%

increase in internal applications since introducing Careers months.

Pfizer

82%

agree *"The **non-linear growth options are clear** and easy to understand"*

95%

agree *"Hearing about other business units at Pfizer **increases my curiosity** about diagonal experiences"*

Insight:

Putting career development in the spotlight creates momentum for internal mobility.

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Progression projects



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Progression projects:
Experiment outline

Hypothesis

Short-term projects give employees the opportunity to increase the transferability of their talents, develop their network and learn about a new function.

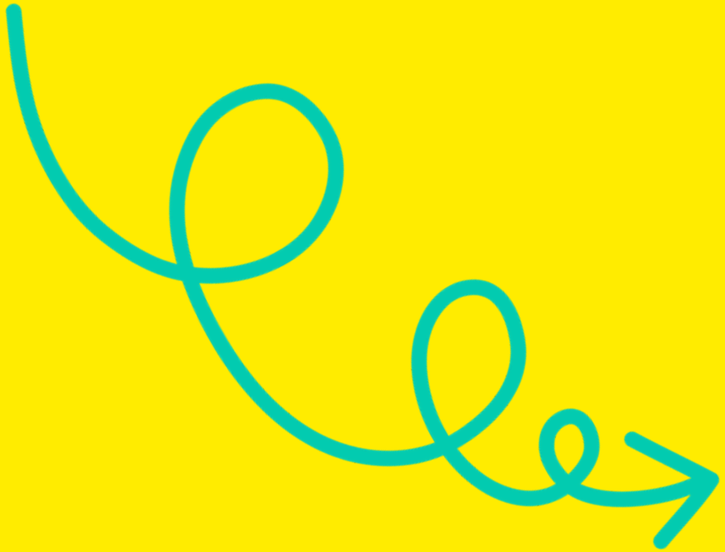
Design

Work with managers and teams to identify short-term projects and the specific skills required to deliver them.
Create a central place for internal projects to be hosted and invite people to apply for a skills-based development opportunity.

Metrics

- Number of projects sourced
- Number of people who apply.
- Project review and feedback on the development opportunity.

From job titles
determining development



To people's talents
creating opportunity

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Progression projects:
Experiment in action

AutoTrader

Auto Trader's experiment will open opportunities that might typically have been difficult to access or hidden so that everyone across the business can apply, with the help of an opportunities board.

They highlighted the skills that people would develop on the projects. Employees will be able to register their interest and asked to consider how the opportunity aligns with their PDP.

BBC

The BBC's 'Projects Noticeboard' was designed to help marketers widen their network and broaden their skills by giving them an opportunity to work on a project in another marketing team, using their transferrable skills and bringing a fresh perspective.

The application process was light touch, with the focus on what applicants would like to learn and what they can bring to a new team.



Progression projects:
Experiment results

BBC

16
projects offered

20
marketers applied

11
projects filled

Insight:

Making it easy for people to stretch their strengths builds their self-belief and helps them to see what else they can be.

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Progression projects:
Employee experience

*"My experience working with the Dave team at UKTV has been very **insightful and fun!** I'm supporting the team on the media campaign for the new season of World's Most Dangerous Roads, and I recently attended a shoot day which was very exciting to see the creative vision come to life. This project interested me because of the media planning experience, and I have **already gained new knowledge** on processes and how media can support big campaigns like WMDR."*

Brands & Marketing Exec,
BBC

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Squiggly Stories



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Squiggly Stories:
Experiment outline

Hypothesis

Sharing employees' career stories will show that success isn't a straight line and increase consideration of non-linear development opportunities.

Design

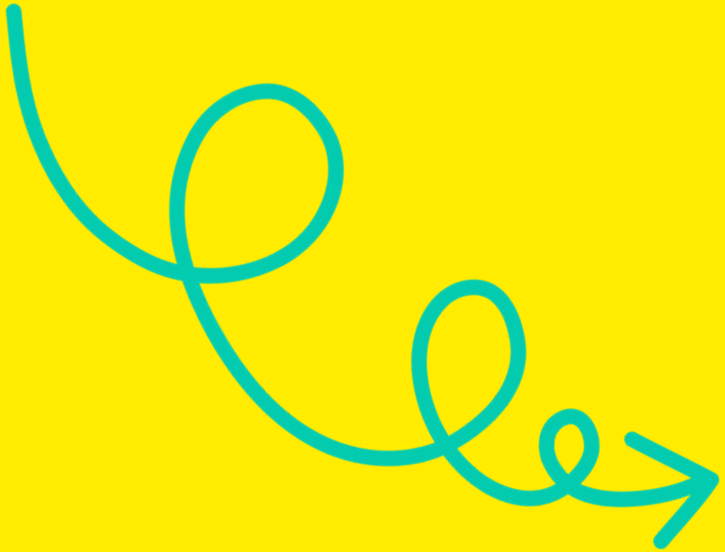
Publish a range of employee stories that demonstrate the different journeys people have taken as part of their progression. Showcase these stories in presentations, events and across high-visibility platforms.

Metrics

- Views / engagement with story content
- Feedback on progression perceptions
- Reference to squiggly stories in career conversations.

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From seniority is the only way to succeed



To celebrating the different directions people develop in

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Squiggly stories:
Experiment in action

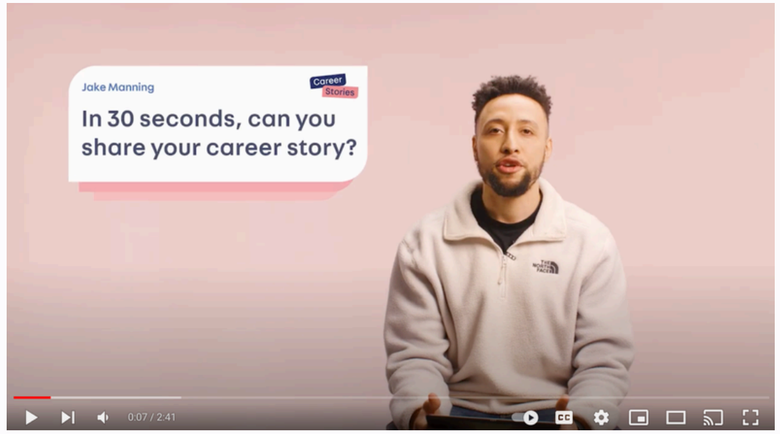
Working with

British Red Cross

British Red Cross invited colleagues with non-linear career paths to share their squiggly stories.

They published the stories as blogs on their intranet over the course of a week in March, coinciding with National Careers Week.

AutoTrader







Auto Trader have used stories to celebrate and highlight career success and opportunities internally and externally

Squiggly stories:
Experiment in action

Danske Bank

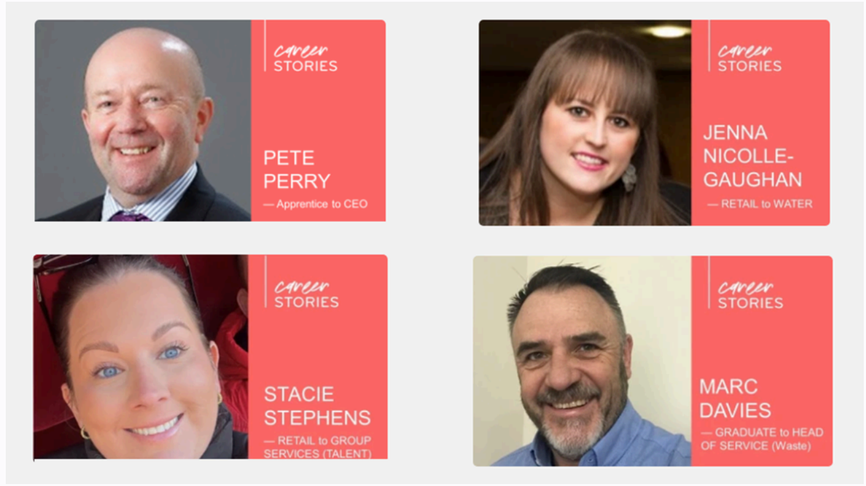
Danske Bank UK launched Career Stories with high profile events including a Learning at Work Week.

A member of the Board and the Executive Committee shared squiggly career stories to over 100 attendees. This was then supported by additional story events accessible on their colleague intranet.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Welsh Water captured 25 stories across the business.

They ranged from the CEO's journey from an apprentice to the board room, through to examples of internal moves within Welsh Water.



Stories were used to support career paths on their development platform.

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Squiggly stories:
Employee experience

"As someone in the early stages of my career, I've found that it can be very easy to think about linear career development, focusing on progressing to the next pay grade. After attending Squiggly Stories and hearing from colleagues about their experiences and moves, progression for me is now about developing my skills and seeking diversity of experiences to take my career forward. I benefited from this approach last year by progressing to a role I wouldn't have previously thought about."

Employee, Danske Bank

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Squiggly stories:
Experiment results

Danske Bank

96%

said it **shifted their perspective** on how to progress.

AutoTrader

1200

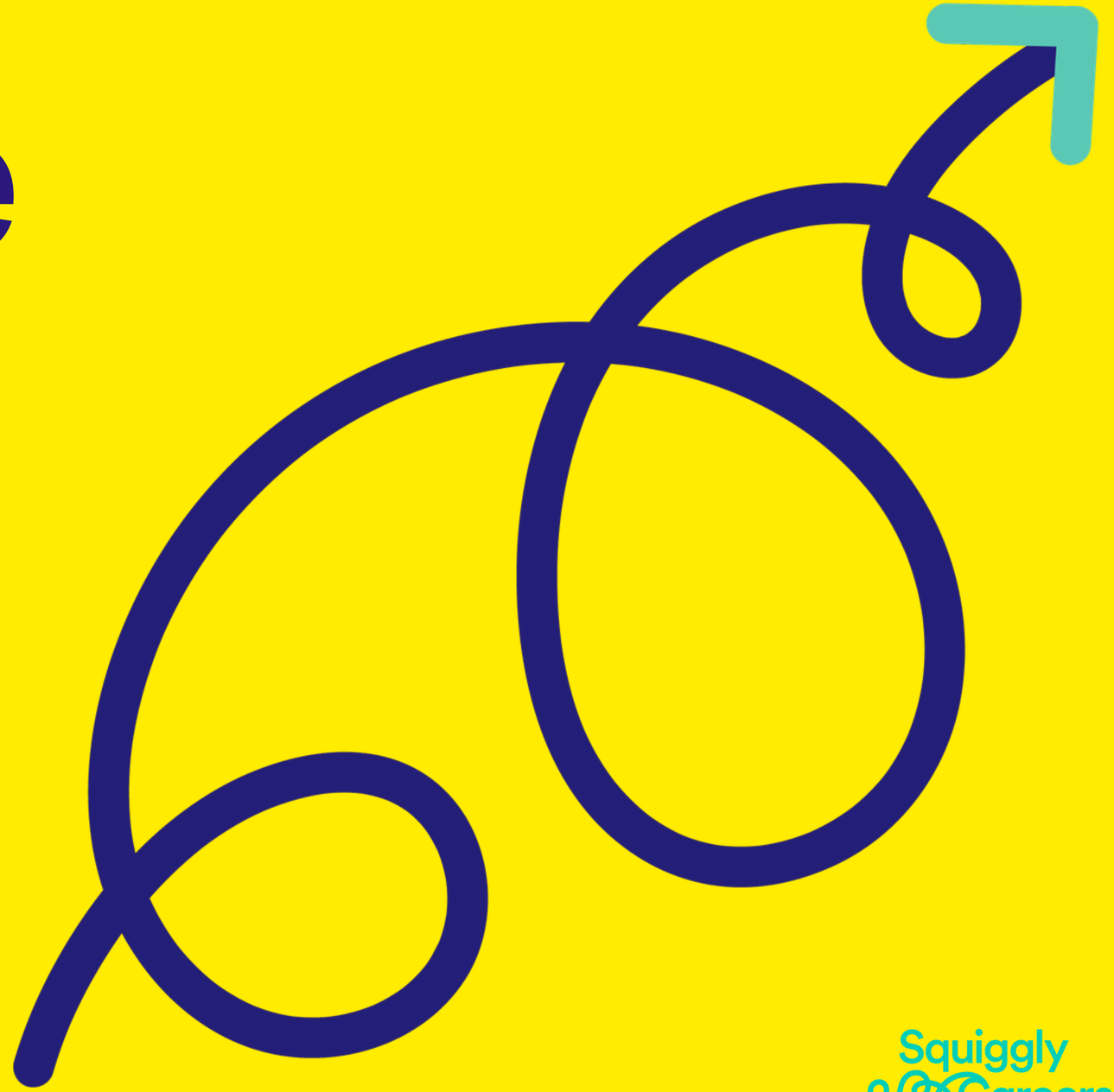
views of Career Stories page on Junction (intranet)

Insight:

Career stories are a simple way to shift people's perspective on their possibilities.

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Squiggle & Stay Learning Library



Squiggly Swaps



Career Conversations Podcast



How to reimagine retention



Blockers & Unlockers



Career Canvas



4 Experiments to Encourage Employees' Career Progress

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About Squiggly Careers

Our mission is to make careers better for everyone.

We work with organisations to develop the skills and support to help everyone succeed in their squiggly career.

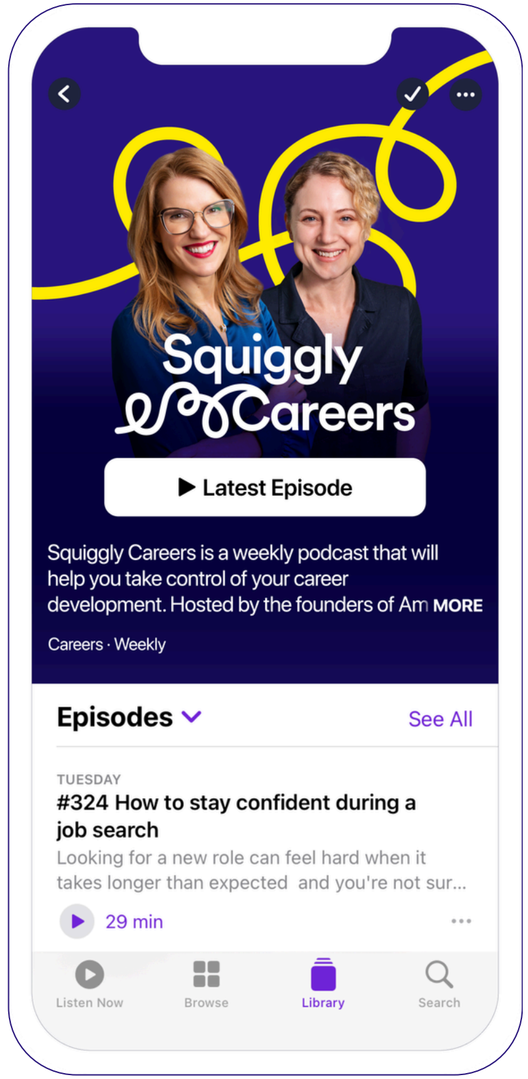
Talk to us about how we can help you
helenandsarah@squigglycareers.com



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Thanks to our Squiggle & Stay Experimenters


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Becs Barnham


Alecia Birthwright


Elaine Donnelly


Jill Ford


Andrew Stark


Lindsey Steinberg


Lauren Stevens


Shoab Iqbal


Beth Stewart


Laura Clays


Susan Shenberger


Rebecca Weathers


Annabel Phelps


Emma Lowe


Joanne Horton


Emily Louden


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Sarah Brooks-Pearce


Helen Marriott


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