BLUEPRINT 02 · PILLAR 2 OF 4

The Retention Blueprint

From attrition you can't explain to development people can feel. Retention outcomes appear when people see clear pathways, managers actively support growth, and learning connects to progression, not just participation.

BUYING TRIGGERS

- High or rising attrition rate
- No visible development pathways
- Manager capability gaps
- CHRO pressure on people outcomes

WHAT THIS PILLAR COVERS

- Attrition gap analysis
- Visible progression pathways
- Manager capability enablement
- Internal mobility activation

THE OUTCOME CHAIN: Define → Map → Activate → Prove → Scale

HOW TO READ THIS BLUEPRINT

Retention moves through five stages, from attrition you can't explain to a measurable outcome the business can value. Most organisations recognise themselves at **Stage 3**, the most common entry point, where the pathways and plans exist but manager behaviour hasn't caught up yet. Find the stage that sounds most like you today, then use it as your starting point. Each stage sets out where you are, the moves that take you forward, and the leading and lagging measures that prove it's working.

1. **Unsure why people leave**
2. **Can't connect to retention**
3. **Development visibility**
4. **Driving retention**
5. **Measurable outcome**

1

RETENTION · STAGE 1

People leave and we're not sure why

> *"We do exit interviews, but honestly it feels like everything: salary, progression, management. We don't have a handle on it."*

WHERE YOU ARE

Attrition is a visible problem but an invisible cause. People are leaving but the organisation doesn't have a clear picture of why, or which interventions would make a difference. L&D exists alongside this problem without being meaningfully connected to it.

WHAT YOU DO

- **Map attrition to learning activity**
  Pull your people leaving data and overlay it against their learning engagement. Are people who are leaving less engaged with development? At what tenure point are most departures happening? This is your baseline hypothesis.
- **Talk to managers about development barriers**
  Survey or interview line managers about the development conversations they're having, or not having. Where are they struggling to support their people? What would give them more confidence?
- **Identify your highest-attrition roles and teams**
  Don't try to solve retention everywhere at once. Identify the roles and teams where attrition is most costly and most preventable. These are your starting point.
- **Baseline your current development offering**
  Honestly assess what development you're currently providing for the people who are leaving. Is it visible? Is it relevant to their progression? Do they know it exists?

HOW YOU MEASURE IT

LEADING

Learning engagement rate for employees in first 12 months

LEADING

% of managers having regular development conversations

LAGGING

Attrition rate by role, team, and tenure band

LAGGING

Exit interview theme analysis: development cited as a factor

MOVING TO THE NEXT STAGE You're ready to move to Stage 2 when you can identify at least one pattern connecting learning engagement (or its absence) to retention outcomes, even if it's directional rather than proven.

2

RETENTION · STAGE 2

We deliver learning but can't connect it to retention

> *"We deliver a lot of learning. People seem engaged. But I can't connect any of it to whether people stay or go."*

WHERE YOU ARE

Learning activity is happening. People are completing programmes. But the connection between that activity and people staying, growing, and contributing is invisible. You're doing the work but can't show the impact, which means you can't improve what isn't working.

WHAT YOU DO

- **Make development visible to employees**
  Create a view of each person's development history, current pathway, and next step that they can see for themselves. Development that's invisible to the person receiving it has no retention value.
- **Build visible progression pathways**
  For your most critical roles and highest-attrition points, define what growth looks like: what skills, experiences, and milestones mark progression. Make these visible to both employees and their managers.
- **Connect learning to performance conversations**
  Integrate development into your regular performance review or 1:1 process. Development should be a standing agenda item, not something that happens separately from the conversation about performance.
- **Measure early-tenure engagement more precisely**
  The first 6 to 12 months is when most preventable attrition happens. Build specific measurement around learning engagement during this window, and track whether it correlates with who stays beyond 12 months.

HOW YOU MEASURE IT

LEADING

% of employees with an active, visible development plan

LEADING

Learning engagement rate in months 1 to 12 vs 12 to 24

LAGGING

Retention rate at 12 months for employees with active development plans vs those without

LAGGING

% of leavers who cited lack of development in exit interviews

MOVING TO THE NEXT STAGE You're ready to move to Stage 3 when you can show a directional correlation between learning engagement and 12-month retention, even if it's not yet statistically rigorous.

3

RETENTION · STAGE 3 Most common entry point

We're trying to make development visible

> *"We've built career pathways but managers don't use them. The tools are there but the behaviour hasn't changed."*

WHERE YOU ARE

The infrastructure exists but hasn't yet changed behaviour. Pathways are built. Development plans are in the system. But managers aren't using them, employees don't see them as meaningful, and the connection to retention outcomes is still theoretical rather than evidenced.

WHAT YOU DO

- **Make manager capability the lever**
  Managers are the single biggest variable in whether development is real or performative. Build a targeted programme for your managers focused on development conversations, not just appraisals, but the ongoing, informal conversations that make people feel they're growing.
- **Reduce the friction in the development process**
  If managers aren't using the tools, ask why. Usually it's because the process is too complex, too time-consuming, or disconnected from how they actually work. Simplify until adoption happens.
- **Activate internal mobility**
  Create visible internal opportunities (stretch assignments, project involvement, secondments) that give people a reason to stay and grow. Internal mobility is one of the highest-return retention interventions available.
- **Build manager accountability into performance measurement**
  Include retention metrics and development conversation completion in manager performance reviews. When managers are accountable for it, behaviour changes.

HOW YOU MEASURE IT

LEADING
Manager development conversation completion rate

LEADING
Internal mobility rate: % of open roles filled internally

LAGGING
Retention rate in teams where managers are most active on development

LAGGING
Employee survey score on 'I can see a clear path to grow here'

MOVING TO THE NEXT STAGE You're ready to move to Stage 4 when manager behaviour has visibly changed and you can show that teams with active development practices have meaningfully better retention than those without.

4

RETENTION · STAGE 4

Development is driving retention decisions

> *"We can see that people who go through our development programmes are staying longer. Now I need to prove the value of that to the business."*

WHERE YOU ARE

The connection is real and you can see it in the data. Development is working as a retention mechanism. The challenge now is translating that evidence into the language the business uses, and making the commercial case for continued and expanded investment.

WHAT YOU DO

- **Calculate the retention ROI**
  Work with Finance to calculate the cost of attrition (recruitment, lost productivity, knowledge loss, management time) and compare it against the cost of your development programmes. This is your headline ROI figure.
- **Build the retention narrative for exec level**
  Create a one-page view that connects development investment to retention outcomes to commercial value. This should be readable by a CFO or CHRO in 90 seconds.
- **Identify which interventions deliver the highest return**
  Not all development programmes retain people equally. Analyse which specific interventions (onboarding quality, management development, skills pathways) have the strongest correlation with staying. Invest more in what's working.
- **Benchmark externally**
  Compare your retention rates against your sector and ICP peers. Relative performance is a powerful exec argument, particularly if you can show you're retaining people better than direct competitors.

HOW YOU MEASURE IT

LEADING
Cost per attrition event (fully loaded)

LEADING
ROI ratio: development investment vs retention value delivered

LAGGING
Year-on-year retention improvement in targeted roles

LAGGING
Revenue per employee trend: a signal of capability building over time

MOVING TO THE NEXT STAGE You're ready to move to Stage 5 when your retention ROI is a standing item in exec reporting, and when investment decisions about L&D are made with reference to their retention impact, not just their cost.

5

RETENTION · STAGE 5

Retention is a measurable outcome

> *"We know exactly which development interventions reduce attrition in which roles. We use it to make investment decisions."*

WHERE YOU ARE

Retention is no longer a people problem that L&D supports. It's a measurable outcome that L&D contributes to in ways the business can quantify and value. Development investment decisions are made with reference to their retention impact. L&D is at the table.

WHAT YOU DO

- **Move to predictive retention modelling**
  Use your historical engagement and development data to identify early signals of disengagement before someone has decided to leave. Act on those signals proactively.
- **Integrate retention data across the business**
  Connect your L&D retention data into broader people analytics, HR planning, and workforce strategy. Retention is no longer just L&D's metric.
- **Build an advocacy programme from retained talent**
  The people who stayed because of development are your most credible story. Build a structured way to capture and amplify their experience: for employer brand, for internal culture, and for external proof points.
- **Extend to adjacent pillars**
  With Retention under control, the infrastructure and relationships you've built make it easier to activate Productivity or Revenue outcomes from the same foundation.

HOW YOU MEASURE IT

LEADING
Predicted churn score by individual: time to intervention

LEADING
% of at-risk employees who received proactive development intervention

LAGGING
Three-year retention trend vs sector benchmark

LAGGING
Employer brand score: development cited as a reason to join

MOVING TO THE NEXT STAGE You've completed the Retention Blueprint. You have the evidence, the infrastructure, and the commercial credibility to connect your development work to the next outcome, or to deepen the intelligence layer.