

# The Dual Ladder

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:Review and personal perspective

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# Why do we need the Dual Ladder?

- Professional specialists have own set of attitudes and aspirations
  - Their values and definitions differ from traditional managerial setting
  - Dilemma with companies to develop compensation and career systems that recognize both employee and corporate needs
  - Companies adopt dual-ladder to provide career paths for professionals separately from those for managers or administrators.
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# Do all professionals prefer a technical ladder?

- Degree of preference
    - varies with the nature of work performed by the individual professional
    - varies with the level of education of the individual (B.S., M.S., Ph.D.)
    - Varies with the age of the professional
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## Are companies implementing the dual ladder?

- Selected 2 companies of 2 different industry
    - Computer product and services firm
    - Chip design and manufacturing firm
  - Sent questionnaire with 6 questions to the HR of those firms
  - Followed it up with interviews with the HR representatives
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# Q1: Describe the Dual ladder mechanism.

## Why do we want it?

### ■ Computer services firm's HR

- There is no fixed ladder for technical persons.
- The company tries to identify key talents within every business unit
- Exposes them to areas of the business.
- This gives opportunities to the technical people to develop skills needed for the next step

### ■ Chip design and manufacturing firm's HR (only focus on the difference)

- Tradition has been valuing technical persons higher than traditional business type of employee by
    - Technical department has more power
    - Promoting engineers faster than business unit's employee
    - More general managers with engineering background than business background
    - Many of high profile technical position peoples does managements
  - Not only normal business persons in the technical department but also entire company's business persons need paths to grow up
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## Q2. Why do we want the dual ladder?

### ■ Computer services firm's HR

- It depends upon skills and requirements.
- The company recognizes the senior individual contributors.
- There are people who like to work on cutting edge staff and that are what they are most interested on.
- Company values their contribution and encourages them further by recognizing their contributions.

### ■ Chip design and manufacturing firm's HR (only focus on the difference)

- We need a growth opportunity in the organization as engineers do.
  - “Many other tracks simply stop at a much lower level (e.g., QA, support, operations, tech writing)”
  - “I have looked at the Principal Engineers in my area. And they are all almost without exception managers - and have been managers of large groups (20-100) - I feel like I should be able to be a leader and a technical expert without having to do that”
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# Q3: How should it be run?

## ■ Computer services firm's HR

- Need to look at the business and business model.
- It is only from there that you can determine how to handle people skills and their individual requirements.
- Some people view a career path as higher salary and promotion
- Some see a career path as being involved in cutting edge technology.
- Ladder should be aligned with the requirement of the business model in mind.

## ■ Chip design and manufacturing firm's HR & technical persons discussion

- “The evaluation processor is inconsistent since we may have super group A and inferior group B but ranked with the group” (technical person)
  - “There is no way to accommodate this. You may not agree with how the org was sliced/diced into these rank groups, just as you may not agree with the latest & greatest re-org, but there is reason behind the madness” (HR manager)
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## Q4. Do we deviate from the ideal?

### ■ Computer services firm's HR

- Our goal is to support the business by hiring and retaining the best and the brightest people working for the organization.
- So employees would also look into the requirements of the business and give their best for the organization

### ■ Chip design and manufacturing firm's HR & technical persons discussion

- “Just because there is a "documented" technical ladder doesn't mean it is functional” (technical person)
  - “statement there is no technical ladder is flat out wrong as Principal Engineers are in all organizations.” (HR manager)
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## Q5. Do you think that people are satisfied?

### ■ Computer services firm's HR

- Do not feel extremely qualified to answer this.
- I know of people who are very happy in their jobs and have been with the company for a long time and enjoy what they do.
- I also know that some are not so happy.
- The not so happy is for a variety of reasons, not necessarily only career path

### ■ Chip design and manufacturing firm's HR & technical persons discussion

- “if there is so much confidence from HR teams on the managers practicing fair promotion, why don't they attempt to conduct a employee satisfaction survey” (individual contributor)
  - “Without this process, We would not be the company it is today. Anyway, you guys are valued higher” (HR manager)
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## Q6. If you think we should change anything, what would be that?

### ■ Computer services firm's HR

- Things look good as it stands with scope of improvement.
  - One proposal is to identify key talents at every business unit and nurture them to gain skills needed for the next step.
  - The other is to create better opportunities for technical people to train themselves in the latest technologies as may be required by their job function.
  - The third is to create a process to constantly review benefits and pay structures so that employees are self motivated.
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# Takeaways

## ■ Computer services firm

- This company understands the requirement of dual ladder
- Very focused on alignment with the business needs
- Ladders are often found in organizations where research is highly visible or strategically important
- Since this is a computer services firm, more emphasis on management ladder.

## ■ Chip design and manufacturing firm

- Technical department has been at the powerful position but power seems to move to finance and marketing department
  - Understand the need of dual ladder but slightly different interpretation between HR and engineering
  - May need more research on dual ladder regarding how it is implemented, what level of satisfaction upon people's desire and so on.
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