

# Write down each direct report's top career drivers — and ideas to nurture them

## Why do it?



For many managers, there's always something more pressing to think about than what drives a direct report in his or her career. Until there isn't — and the person's work mysteriously starts to decline or he or she marches into your office and says, "I got an exciting new job opportunity that I can't turn down." Taking a few minutes now to consider your direct reports' top career drivers (and how their work can feed these) could not only boost their motivation and performance over time, but also save you from wondering later why they're headed for the door.

## How to do it:

### 1. Take a minute to review common career drivers.

People work — and find meaning in work — for many different reasons (and combinations of reasons — there's usually more than one). Here are five common career drivers (for more on them, check out [this Jhana article](#)):

- **Earning money**, which is a more complicated career driver than you may assume
- **Achieving social status**, including prestige, success, and the respect of others
- **Making a difference**, from helping society to making customers happy
- **Following a passion**, including a single passion, or many different ones
- **Using a talent**, because some people love doing what they're good at more than learning new things

## **2. Write down the main career drivers for each one of your direct reports.**

Jot down each direct report's name, and the top 1 to 3 motivators that you think drive each person's career decisions. To help determine these, try asking yourself questions like:

- What does my direct report seem most passionate about (i.e., when do his or her eyes light up)?
- Do they have a particular interest in a job title?
- Do they seem concerned about how they measure up compared to others?
- How excited do they get about helping others? Are they mostly drawn to things they're really, really good at?

There's no one-size-fits-all or definitive approach to sussing out career drivers — some people's may be clear-cut, others' fuzzy, and they may change over time. If you're not sure what's really behind someone's job satisfaction and career expectations, take your best guess and vow to start a conversation to learn more (see our [guide to becoming a better career conversationalist](#) for help).

## **3. Consider ways in which you can feed each report's top career drivers.**

If Mia gets excited by using a talent, think about giving her projects that maximize that strength, and ways to develop her expertise even further. If Miguel wants to make a difference, you might take extra care to explain how the project he's working on will improve the customer experience, or package reinforcing feedback in a way that highlights his work's broader impact.

Of course, you won't always be able to perfectly align your approach with each direct report's drivers. But simply factoring them into your thought process can help fuel your team's enthusiasm and sustain their performance over time.

### **More on career management for your team:**

- [11 ways to help your direct reports succeed in their careers](#) [What to do if a direct report doesn't have career goals](#)
- [10 common career management mistakes](#)