

Promotion Timing Guide

A starting point for when promotions and internal moves make sense

THE IDEA

In the chapter “Promotion Speed Limits,” I talk about the “right” time for employees to move positions. That doesn’t mean every employee *should* move within these timeframes. It means that when a promotion or internal move makes sense, there should be a reasonable point at which it can happen.

There’s a rhythm to this based on company size and maturity, and your organization’s flexibility around promotions and cross-department movement should fit that rhythm.



How to use this resource: Use these timeframes as a starting point, not a hard-and-fast rule. Review them with your leadership team, decide what makes sense for your organization, and use that conversation to establish a clear approach to promotions and internal movement.

Number of employees	When promotions could occur, if relevant
Fewer than 50	3–6 months
50–250	6 months–1 year
250–500	1 year–18 months
More than 500	18+ months

- 1 **Gut check the timeframes.** Does your leadership team agree with the timeframes above?
- 2 **If not, figure out why.** Is there a difference of opinion, or is there simply disinterest in establishing timeframes?
- 3 **If you disagree, create your own.** Develop timeframes that better fit your organization.
- 4 **If there's disinterest, talk about it.** Have a strategic conversation about why this isn't critical for your organization. (Remember, consensus doesn't mean "what the CEO says goes.")
- 5 **Create a policy.** Document the approach your team agrees on.
- 6 **Make sure leaders know it.** Distribute the policy to organizational leaders.