

Clarity in Transition. Growth with Purpose.

From Guesswork to Growth Path:

Building a Compensation Framework That Finally Made Sense

HR Strategy

Compensation

People Strategy

Org Design

~80

Staff across Canada

\$3–5M

Organization revenue

3

Job families with clear progression

THE SITUATION

A growing Canadian consulting firm had a compensation problem hiding in plain sight. With only four levels — from coordinator to director — and salary jumps of \$15,000 to \$20,000 between each one, the structure was too blunt to be fair and too rigid to be sustainable. Annual salary reviews had become significant cashflow events, with large increases hitting all at once and leadership having little room to reward performance incrementally.

Worse, staff had no visibility into how compensation decisions were made. Without a clear framework, perceptions of inequity were inevitable — and the organization had no formal process for an employee who believed they were being paid incorrectly. High performers, especially younger staff, couldn't see a path forward. And experienced professionals who didn't want to move into management felt like they'd hit a ceiling on what they could earn.

WHAT WE DID

The first step was understanding the full scope of work happening across the organization. A job evaluation process was designed from the ground up — examining each role through the lens of risk, responsibility, financial oversight, and people management. This gave the organization a consistent, defensible way to assess the relative value of every position.

From that foundation, three job families were established: professional, management, and administrative. Each family was mapped to a clear progression structure. Critically, every level was further divided into four stages of

progression, each with defined competencies and concrete examples of what moving to the next stage looked like in practice.

This created a compensation architecture that could flex. Rather than jumping \$15,000–\$20,000 all at once, employees could progress through stages within their current level — earning recognition and modest increases tied to demonstrated growth — before making the larger leap to the next level. A formal job evaluation process was also established so any employee who believed their role was incorrectly placed had a clear, transparent mechanism to raise it.

Finally, a performance management process was built to connect day-to-day development directly to compensation progression — so employees always knew exactly what they needed to demonstrate to move forward.

THE OUTCOMES

- ▶ Compensation increases became smaller and more frequent — reducing the cashflow impact of annual reviews while still meaningfully recognizing performance.
- ▶ Younger and earlier-career staff felt motivated by a clear growth path within their existing roles — progression no longer required waiting for a promotion.
- ▶ Experienced professionals who didn't want to move into management could continue to grow and earn within their job family — removing the feeling of being capped.
- ▶ Hiring and promotion decisions became faster and more consistent — every role had a defined level, stage, and compensation band, giving managers a clear framework to work within.
- ▶ The formal job evaluation process gave employees a fair, transparent avenue to raise compensation concerns — reducing informal complaints and building trust in leadership's decision-making.

“Good compensation design isn't just about pay. It's about giving people a clear line of sight from where they are today to where they can go — and making sure the path there is fair, visible, and achievable.”

— Zakeana Reid, Founder, Elios Collective

Does your compensation structure tell a clear story?

If your team can't see where they're headed — or your managers dread compensation conversations — there's a better way. Let's build it together.

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