

# Career Guidance for Lawyers in the Federal Administration

**Warning!** Flash is not installed in your browser.  
Download from here



**Organisation:** Switzerland Federal Office of Personnel (FOPER)

**Country:** Switzerland

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Human Resources, Organisational Design

**Launched in:** 2010

**Overall development time:** 4 year(s)

# Description

---

On 11 December 2010, the Switzerland Federal Council approved the Federal Administration's personnel strategy for 2011 to 2015. One element of this strategy concerns the topic "instruments and models for specific career paths". The project created a concept that provided a guidance and development framework on career development for technical and managerial staff, as well as project leaders.

---

## Why the innovation was developed

- As the stated aim indicates, at the start there was a broad-based need to be able to offer career paths and specialist career paths to personnel. It soon became clear that a clear definition was required to avoid false expectations.
  - In the current situation, many of the public servants interviewed felt that their further development can only be influenced to a limited degree. The reasons described for this are due to the strong focus of management on daily business, a limited willingness which is primarily needs-oriented and often restricted to one's own office to promote employees in their development and an overall lack of transparency of development possibilities for lawyers.
  - In particular, the relationship with the superior and their commitment to the further development of their employees is mentioned as the central factor in public servants' career advancement. But it is also up to employees to be recommended for the next step through their own initiative and corresponding performance.
- 

## Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve user satisfaction

- The goal of this project was to draw up a concept which provided a guidance and development framework on career development for technical and managerial staff as well as project leaders.
  - It was thus a matter of more precisely defining the career term, which all too often is understood as career path. It should be possible on this basis to show the important personnel categories individually differentiated development possibilities, without them having to culminate in a hierarchical management position.
  - Using the example of the position of lawyer which is present in all departments, concrete expectations and guidance for this occupational category were recorded based on the professional development of this category within the federal authorities.
- 

## Main beneficiaries

Government bodies, Government staff

- Civil service lawyers
- Government

# Results

---

## Results not available yet

- In their current situation, many of those interviewed reckon that their further development can only be influenced to a restricted degree.
- The reasons described for this are above all due to the strong focus of management on daily business, a limited willingness which is primarily needs-oriented and often restricted to one's own office to promote employees in their development and an overall lack of transparency of development possibilities for lawyers.
- In particular, the relationship with the superior and his/her commitment to the further development of his/her employees is mentioned as the central factor in one's own career advancement. But it is also up to employees to be recommended for the next step through their own initiative and corresponding performance.

# Development

---

## Design

This innovation on instruments and specific models for career paths came about as part of the new Federal Administration's personnel strategy for 2011-2015, approved by the Switzerland Federal Council.

---

## Testing

- No methods were used to test the innovation.
- 

## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Qualitative, occupational biographical interviews with lawyers from various departments and specialist offices to gain a differentiated understanding of work and career guidance for lawyers.
  - Three expert interviews were conducted with line managers to be better able to appreciate the current framework conditions and possibilities in the career path development of lawyers.
  - With the result, there are now essential substantive requirements available to be able to demonstrate attractive development opportunities to lawyers.
  - The qualitative sample was composed in such a way that we obtained as balanced a mix of interviewees as possible in relation to criteria such as sex, age, job experience, duration of employment at the Confederation, rate of employment (full-time/part-time), language (German, Italian and French) and personal situation (children/no children). The result highlighted four career types.
- 

## Challenges and solutions

- The Federal Administration as an employer is perceived as progressive with regard to opportunities for part-time work. However, a culture change should be sought for the broad acceptance of part-time work in managerial roles.
- Many of the interviewees had the impression that a high degree of flexibility and job commitment is expected from managers in the Federal Administration (even to the point of being constantly reachable), and it is precisely this assessment which discourages many lawyers who have ambitions of advancement and/or management potential from taking on personnel responsibilities given that this would involve major sacrifices in one's private life.
- In particular for the self-development career type, however, a balance-oriented understanding of management seems to be required.

# Lessons Learned

---

## Lessons Learned

- In summary, it can be said that the Federal Administration as an employer is perceived as progressive with regard to opportunities for part-time work. However, a culture change should be sought for the broad acceptance of part-time work in managerial roles.
  - Many of our interviewees had the impression that a high degree of flexibility and job commitment is expected from managers in the Federal Administration (even to the point of being constantly reachable) and it is precisely this assessment which discourages many lawyers who have ambitions of advancement and/or management potential from taking on personnel responsibilities given that this would involve major sacrifices in one's private life.
  - In particular for the self-development career type, however, a balance-oriented understanding of management seems to be required.
- 

## Conditions for success

- The four career types identified provide clear indications that probably the majority of lawyers in the Federal Administration do not aspire to classic paths of promotion but want to gain in-depth specialist knowledge or broaden their skills profile. The willingness for example to acquire new knowledge on task switching and activity changes, job rotation or job enrichment and to move at right angles to the classic paths of advancement is immense.
  - Overall, the majority of those people we interviewed were guided by a personal career insight: to incorporate their own talents and abilities in their work, to be able to tackle challenging specialist tasks both autonomously and in a team-focused manner and to remain open to future tasks (always in line with the desire to reconcile career and personal life as far as possible). These are the core factors of a modern career concept spanning work and private life satisfaction for lawyers.
  - These findings will be used on the one hand to increase the attractiveness of the Confederation as an employer from the point of view of lawyers in the area of career development possibilities. The same approach can also be used for development paths in other jobs. This can include for example personnel specialists, IT specialists and engineering technical experts.
- 

Copyright OECD. All rights reserved.