

StandOut[®] and Career Growth



What Is This Position?

This Position explores the insights that StandOut coaches and researchers have captured about careers, and points out the ways that StandOut offerings can help people navigate career growth.

I. Introduction

What is StandOut's approach to career growth?

The topic of career is relevant to everyone who works. Some people may not regularly use the term "career," referring to the long-term development of the activities they get paid (or volunteer) to do simply as their jobs or their work. But whatever we may call it, we spend a lot of time working, and most of us want to ensure that what we do is enjoyable and rewarding.

Ordinarily, to begin a Position on a particular topic, it makes sense to offer a basic definition of the key term involved. And it's certainly possible to do this with the word "career." We could begin with a simple dictionary definition:



A career is the time spent by a person while committed to a particular profession.

We could, if we wanted to dig a little deeper, use a definition identified by our StandOut Strengths Coaches, boiled down from the thousands of hours of career coaching they have done with people around the world:



A career is the progression of an individual's professional work life.

These definitions are practical and potentially useful in capturing a basic sense of what is involved in the topic of careers. An interesting challenge emerges, however, when we expand our topic to the concept of career growth.

When it comes to career growth, defining what we mean by the term is not a common starting point; instead, defining career growth is the *whole* point for each individual.

While career journeys will typically include some familiar elements — applying for jobs, changing job roles, increasing responsibilities, building networks, developing skills, or even shifting professions or industries — what matters most to each person at a given time will vary.

Career growth means significantly different things to different people at different points in time.

In addition to outlining the specific StandOut offerings that support career growth, this Position will summarize our research about the different things that career growth means to people and explore what leaders and organizations can do to meet distinctly different needs in this area. Because the StandOut Approach is based on treating people as unique individuals, StandOut is well suited to help address people’s needs as they look to grow in their careers.

II. StandOut Offerings That Support Career Growth

The StandOut Platform

The StandOut Platform is our core technology product, providing tools that enable people to embed the StandOut approach in their day-to-day work and pay continuous attention to people’s uniqueness and contribution. It offers several features that can be leveraged in service of career growth:

Conversations

The StandOut Platform includes a Conversations feature that provides templates featuring several questions for reflection, followed by a simple conversation guide.

Career Discovery

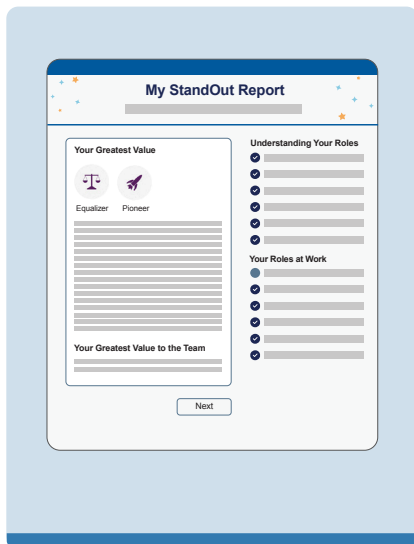
The Career Discovery Conversation is an interactive guide to help individuals discuss (with a team leader or any trusted partner) what matters most in growing their careers. Since career growth is unique to each individual, this conversation is a great way for people to discover what is most important to them personally.

Milestone Connect

Milestone Connect gives team members an opportunity to discuss their recent wins and challenges, set expectations, and examine how their strengths have helped them succeed. These conversations can illuminate performance and help identify new challenges and opportunities.



StandOut Assessment



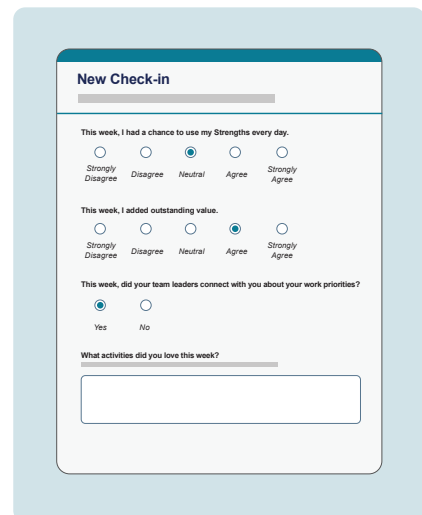
The StandOut Assessment is a 15-minute situational judgement test that measures people against 9 “Strength Roles” and identifies their Top 2. StandOut Assessment results include a section titled “Your Career Advantage,” tailored to each person’s Top 2 Roles. This section does not provide specific advice on what career path an individual should take, simply because the research behind the assessment has never revealed a linear connection between any Role and a specific field. Practice has shown over time that people can succeed in any job with any Role combination. StandOut does not predict *whether* someone can succeed in a given field, but rather describes *how* a person might leverage specific Roles to thrive. To that end, StandOut does provide broad, high-level tips and insights about how a person’s Roles might have a positive impact in different careers.

Check-Ins

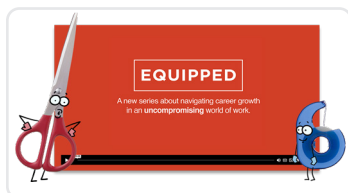


Check-Ins are frequent 1:1 strengths-based connections about near-term future work.

The StandOut Platform provides a sustainable, easy-to-use Check-In tool that allows team leaders to pay frequent attention to their team members. As we have seen in [StandOut research](#) (see section below), this attention correlates strongly to team leaders having career conversations regularly. But in and of themselves, over time, Check-Ins can help generate insights about where team members have growth potential by revealing what they love working on. They can also give team members an opportunity to ask for the help they need.



Enterprise Content Subscription Offerings



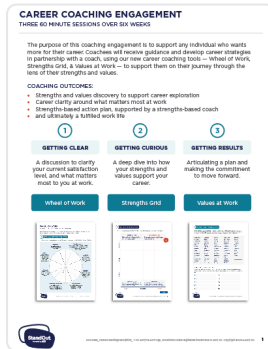
Equipped Short Video Series

StandOut’s Enterprise Content Subscription includes an engaging career-themed micro-coaching series titled *Equipped*. Offering a unique and quirky slant on people’s biggest career challenges at work, this all-new collection of short animated videos addresses tough topics with a light, strengths-based touch. Presenting a series of situations to prompt discussion, *Equipped* will keep people engaged and get them thinking about careers through the lens of their strengths.

StandOut Workshops & Certifications

Because all StandOut workshops and certifications are designed to help individuals discover and use their strengths, they can be valuable tools in exploring where people thrive best and where they may want to focus their work in the future.

Career Coaching



StandOut Career Coaching provides intensive, 1:1 attention from world-class coaches to support individuals who want to explore what's next in their careers. Coachees will receive guidance and develop career strategies using dedicated career coaching tools that generate clarity about how to pursue their career goals through the lens of their strengths and values.

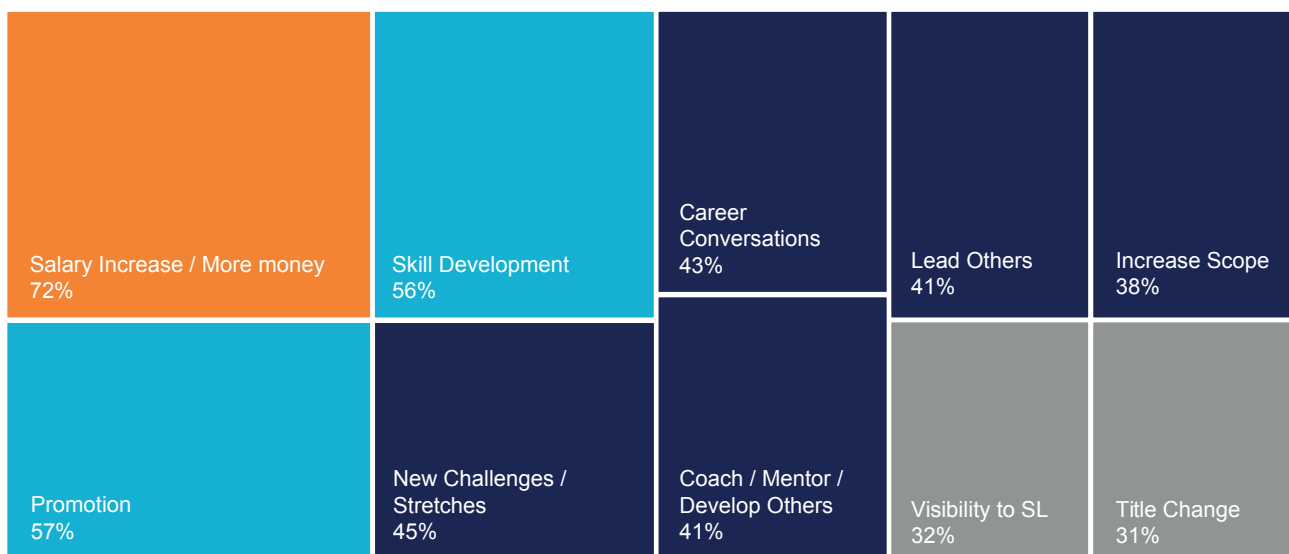
III. StandOut Research on Career Growth

What Does “Career Growth” Mean?

One way to find out what career growth means to people is to ask them. StandOut surveyed a stratified random sample of workers about which elements of career growth were most important to them.

To me, career growth means _____.

% of respondents who rate each element as “Very Important”



While some factors in the survey emerged as important to a higher percentage of respondents, the most relevant thing to note is the wide range of factors that did have significant importance to a large percentage of people.

Painting with a broad brush, we can divide these factors into two groups:

1. Desired **Outcomes** of career growth — tangible results of having progressed in one’s career (e.g., salary increase, promotion, title change)
2. **Drivers** of career growth — ways to foster one’s development (e.g., career conversations, skill development, increased scope)

Many of the factors could be categorized as both drivers and outcomes. For instance, an increase in the scope of responsibilities could be either the spur that causes someone to be promoted, or the result of a promotion, or both. Nevertheless, the distinction is important for the purposes of this Position, because it helps to identify which factors in career growth the StandOut Approach can help to influence.

Regarding career **outcomes** — decisions about promotion, salary, and perks — because these will be determined by resource availability and policy within a given organization, StandOut offerings do not provide any particular guidance in this area.

But where the **drivers** of career growth are involved, StandOut can help individuals, leaders, and organizations identify things that people can do to position themselves in the best way possible to find the fulfillment they are seeking from their careers.

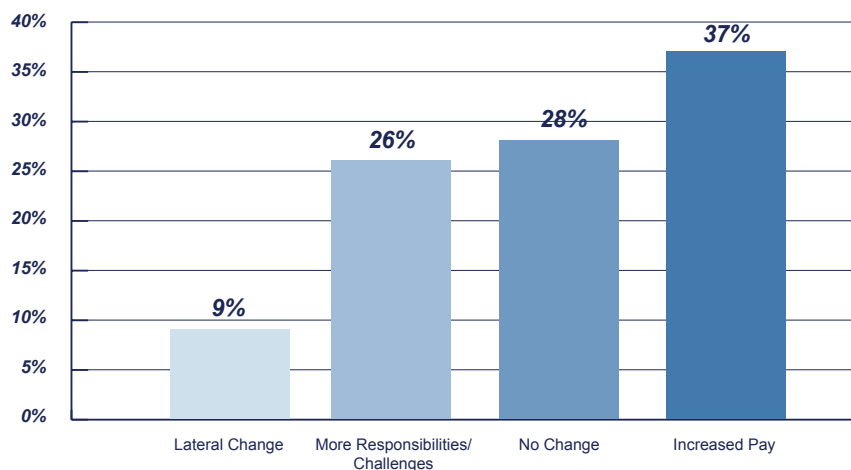
As our StandOut strengths coaches have observed based on guiding thousands of people , “a lot of what people measure success by in their career is not in their control. But that doesn’t mean that preparedness doesn’t give them a better chance. And so working with people to define what success means in their career is vital.”

Future Career Intentions

What are people seeking from their careers? StandOut research reveals some interesting results.

Intentions for Future of Career

When you think about the future... which best describes your intentions?



One element of career growth that may sometimes get overlooked: many people are simply content with where they are at a given moment. In this survey, over a quarter of respondents indicated they were not looking to make any particular change. That “no change desired” group is one of four identified in StandOut research, based on what they are most interested in for the future of their careers:

- Those focused on receiving an increase in pay (37%)
- Those who don’t seek any change from their current work (28%)
- Those who want more responsibilities or challenges in their work (26%)
- Those who would like a lateral change (9%)

How can we support people in each of these groups to position themselves to feel fulfilled in their careers? Because StandOut helps people gain insight into their strengths (and actions they can take to make the most of them), it is useful to map these groups against how much the people within them feel they are playing to their strengths.

Playing to Strengths

As a simple way to understand where people are playing to their strengths, we can map the activities people do along two axes: **Appetite** (how much they love doing something) and **Ability** (how good they are at doing it). When we do that, we can see that they can fall into one of four “zones” that capture how strengthening the activities are.

Strengths Mapping

“Strength Zone”

High Appetite + High Aptitude.
Things I love and am great at doing

“Hobby Zone”

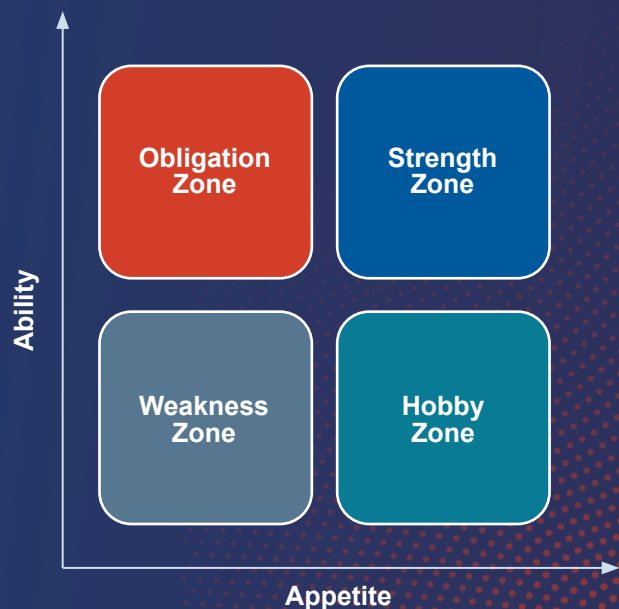
High Appetite + Low Aptitude.
Things I love but have to work at to do well.

“Obligation Zone”

Low Appetite + High Aptitude.
Things I don’t love but am great at doing.

“Weakness Zone”

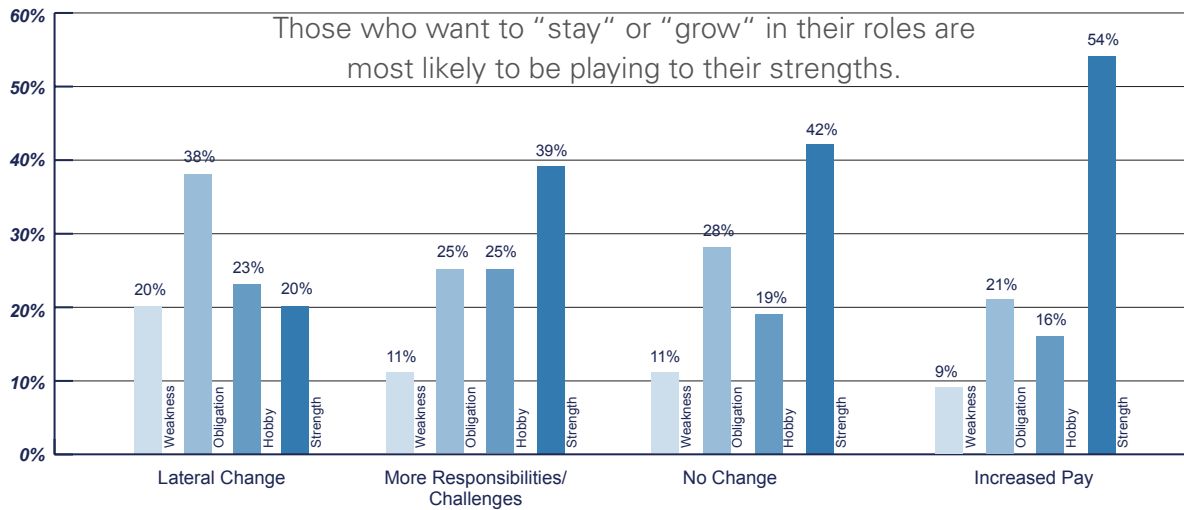
Low Appetite + Low Aptitude.
Things I don’t love and have to work at to do well.



Based on this simple mapping, we asked people to describe where they spend most of their time at work. We then compared their assessment of how often they use their strengths to their career intentions.

Strengths Use and Career Intentions

Strengths use by intentions for future of career



We found that those who want to “stay” or “grow” within their roles were most likely to be playing to their strengths. Conversely, we can see that a high percentage of people who desire lateral change — that is, change for the sake of change rather than for the sake of better perks or more responsibility — are operating in the areas where their love for what they are doing is lower (what StandOut labels as Obligation or Weakness Zones).

Note especially the prominence of time spent in the “Obligation” category (activities that people are actually good at doing, but do not enjoy) for people who desire change. This is one of the tricky situations that a strengths-based approach is meant to counteract. These Obligations show up for many people as things they *should* do, but StandOut founder Marcus Buckingham points out the dangers of “should” for career development:

Should-ing can be heard in that faint but unmistakable voice in your head saying, “At this stage in my career, I should want to be responsible for other people’s work.” Or... the should-ing voice says, “If I want to get promoted, I really should be making regular presentations to my team.”

“

This voice is powerful and persuasive, but you must not listen to it. If those activities make you feel drained, frustrated, or burned out, you should not be doing them, or at least not much of them and not for long.

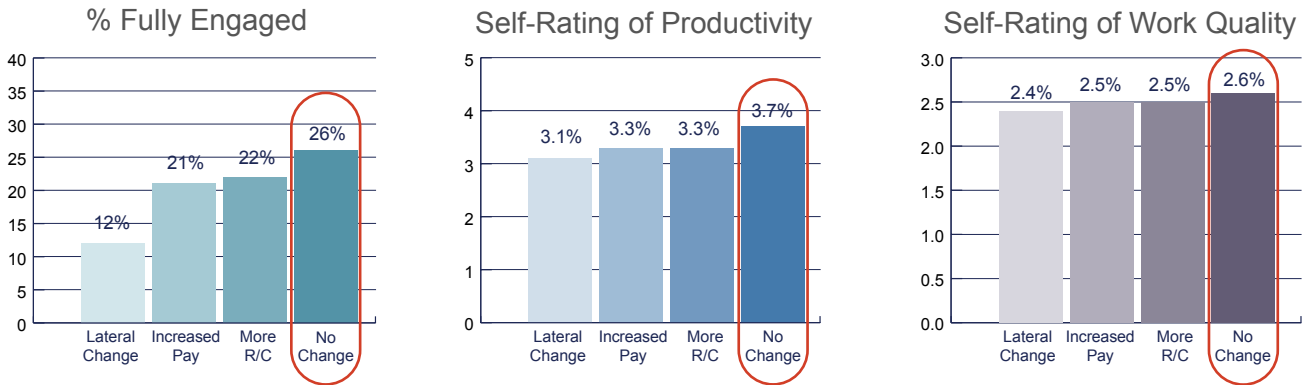
Marcus Buckingham
Go Put Your Strengths to Work

Conversely, those who spend the most time in their Strength Zone are those who are content in their current positions — even if, like most people in this survey (safe to say the world), they would be happy to be paid more.

This matters because when people are happy at work, they tend to... be happy at work. Which is important in and of itself. But they also tend to be more productive.

Happy People Thrive

Those who are “Happy doing what I’m doing” are more likely to be Fully Engaged, be more productive, and produce work that exceeds expectations.



This pattern of results is observed for all subgroups of participants based on available demographic information

So, how do you ensure that people are able to spend more time in that “Strength Zone” that allows them to be more fulfilled and productive in their careers? As always, the first step we take is to ask them.

What People Need to Grow Their Careers

The survey asked people directly what they need. And once again, the first thing to note is the wide variety of elements that are important to at least some people.

To grow in my career, I need _____.

% of respondents who rate each element as “Very Important”



There are many things an organization could focus on to meet people’s desires for help growing their careers. Skills and training, for instance, are certainly valuable to anyone interested in growth.

What further research reveals, however, is that one element showed a strong correlation to the strengths and engagement that drive success. It can be summed up in one word: **conversation**.

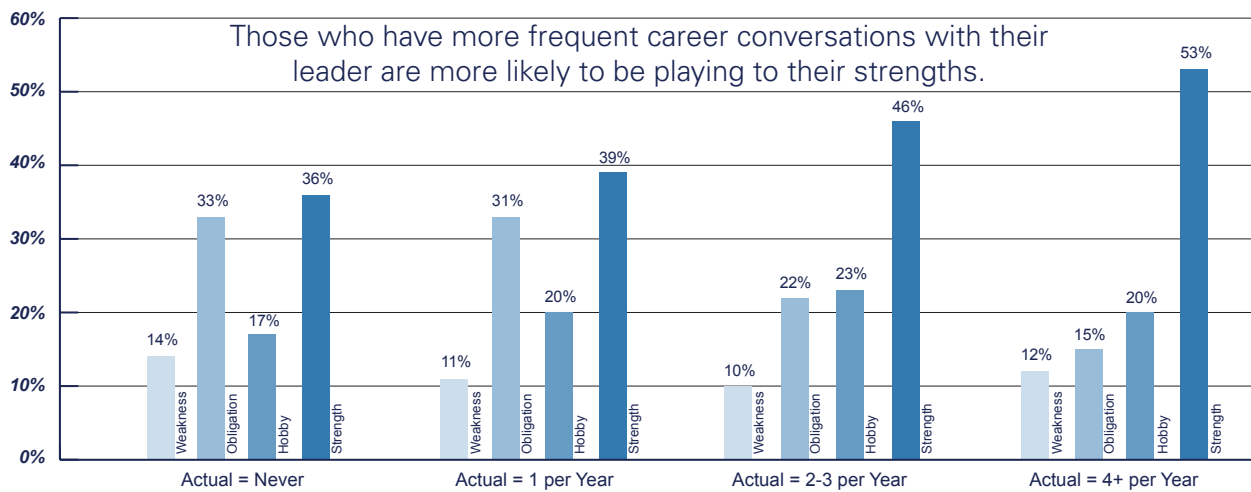
When it comes to growing in their careers, respondents placed a high value not only on having direct career conversations with their team leaders, but also on having performance conversations with them. (Career conversations with dedicated advisors also made the list.)

Impact of Conversation

We found that those who have more frequent career-related conversations with their team leaders (in this case, including what they considered “performance conversations”) are more likely to be working in the “Strength Zone” more regularly than others — 53% compared to only 36% of those who never have such conversations.

Strengths Use x Career Conversation Frequency

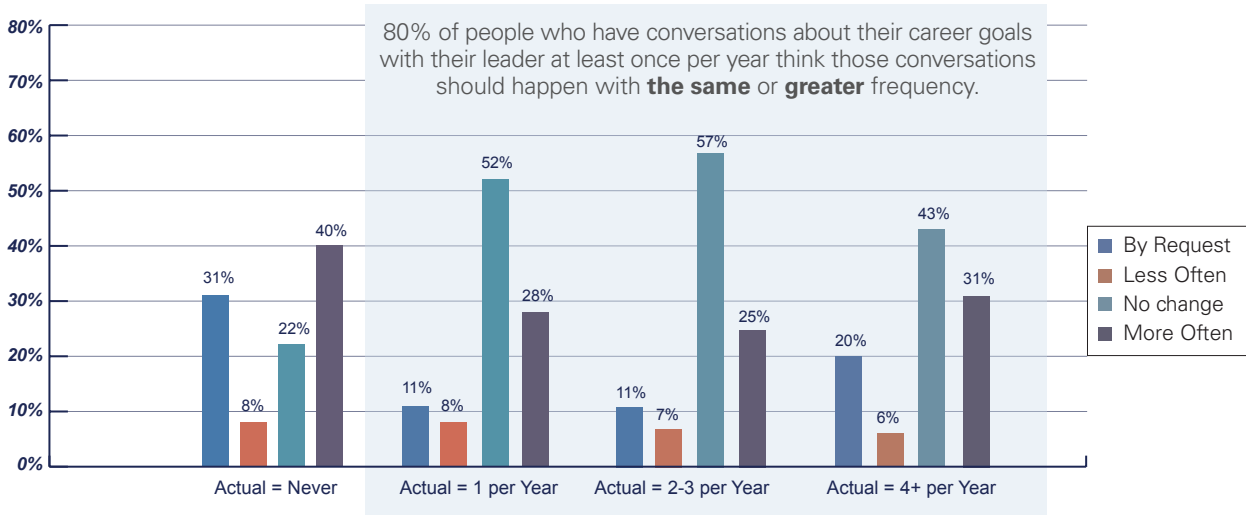
Strengths use by actual frequency of career conversations



What’s more, people are hungry to have these kinds of conversations. Even those who have them already would like to have them as often, or even more frequently. (The interesting exception to the trend is that a fairly high percentage of people who do not currently have regular conversations are content only to have them by request rather than on a specific cadence.)

Desired Frequency x Actual Frequency

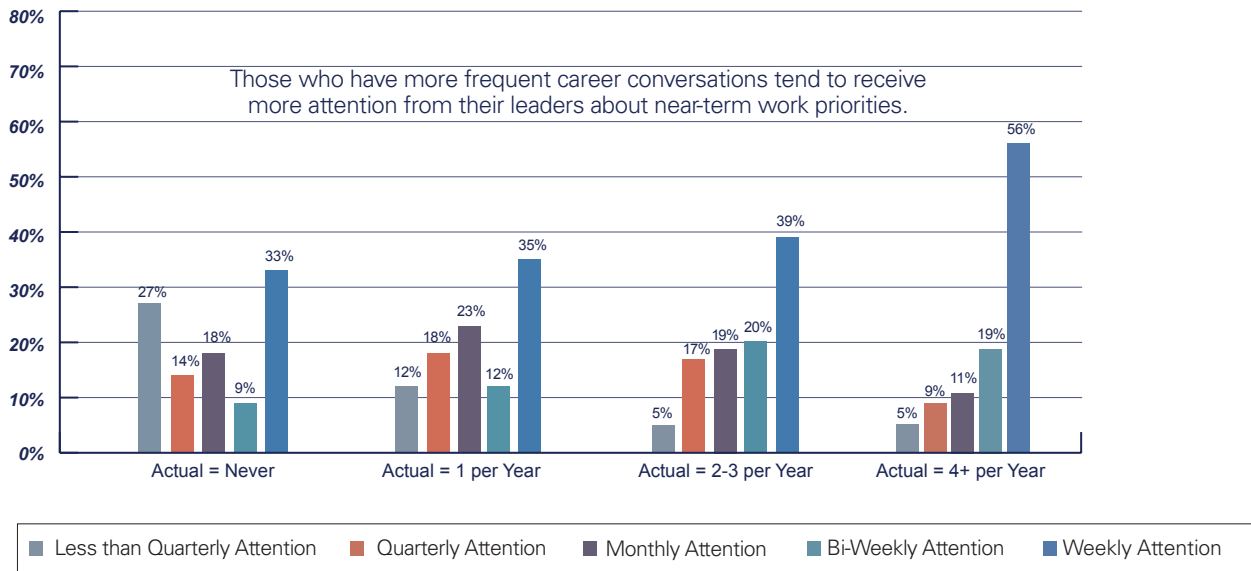
Career conversations: desired frequency x actual frequency



Finally, we also see that having frequent career conversations goes hand in hand with receiving regular attention from one’s team leader about near-term priorities — the Check-Ins that StandOut data continually reveals are crucial to creating engaged team members.

Attention x Career Conversation Frequency

Frequency of team leader attention by actual frequency of career conversations



The summary of this data is straightforward: an organization cannot overshoot the mark in encouraging team leaders to have conversations with their team members. Both in the form of ongoing Check-In and deeper career explorations, these conversations are strongly correlated to the strengths usage that keeps people engaged in their work.

IV. Conclusion

Every individual's career is unique. Rather than being a problem for organizations to overcome, this actually represents an opportunity to tap into where people feel most powerful and engaged.

From its beginnings, StandOut's strengths-based approach has empowered people to navigate their own career journeys. People can often struggle to unpack the various factors that go into their career choices, and they look to their organizations for help. But those organizations may have difficulty accounting for each individual's specific situation, leaving leaders intimidated at the thought of broaching the subject. The strengths-based coach approach solves for the problem of the individual the only way possible: by tapping into the individual's own resources. Dedicated precisely to helping people access the best of themselves, it can show people new ways to find fulfillment and satisfaction in their work.

StandOut offerings are designed to leverage this individualized coach approach to help people achieve clarity on what matters most to them, so they can align their decisions and actions to what will serve them best. StandOut coaching, tools, conversations, and content spark reflection and insight in a way that helps scale the power of individualized attention to every corner of an organization.

