

# What's a sideways move, and why should I make one?

Sometimes we can get stuck thinking about career growth in terms of moving up the ranks, or getting promoted. But have you ever considered shifting sideways?

Whether you call it lateral, horizontal or sideways – this kind of career move basically means you're moving across a company or industry to another role, but at a similar level of responsibility and pay. And it can be just as beneficial to your career as moving 'up'.

In the past, career progression was often looked at in terms of moving up a ladder – starting out in a job in a particular field, then working your way to a more senior position in that same field – perhaps even the same company. But things are more complex now, and a ladder isn't necessarily the best way to think of growing your career.

To explain why a sideways career move can be good for you, we asked Sian Havard, Founder of Milkshake Group, and Sam Chisholm, Human Resources Manager at [Cotton On Group](#), to shed light on some of the benefits.

## **Develop your breadth and depth of skills**

A horizontal career move allows you to keep building on your skills, instead of staying in the same role and waiting for a 'big break'. "Making a move internally into an area you're interested in is a great opportunity to ignite your passion and learn new things," Havard says.

It's also a way to make a positive impression on your boss. "Employers value someone who has enthusiasm for what they're doing and pushes themselves to grow." Chisholm adds, "One specialist skill set will seldom be enough to get a corner office today. Businesses need a breadth – as well as depth – of skills." Adding newly developed

skills to your [SEEK Profile](#) will also help you stand to future employers.

## **Become more resilient to change**

“By working across different areas in an organisation, or moving to a different type of organisation to do the same role (for instance from a multinational to a start-up, or from a pharmaceutical company to a technology company), you’ll challenge yourself and learn what you’re capable of,” says Havard.

In doing so, you can also try out new ways of thinking and working, and trial new approaches to problem-solving. This will help you become more resilient to workplace changes and confident in your abilities to manage change in future.

## **Gain fulfilment and networks**

Having different experiences and meeting new people as a result of a sideways move can also make work more enjoyable. Havard says, “You may find more meaning in your work, whether this is due to the type of work you’re doing, the type of people you’re working with, or the fact you’re learning something new each day.”

Working with a range of people is beneficial for you and the business. “Success in a modern organisation is achieved through people who are connected and know who to go to in order to get things done,” Chisholm explains. That’s why making a sideways career move and extending your network increases your chances of success. “When the time comes for a promotion, you’ll have more than one group championing your cause.”

## **Open the door for more opportunities**

“A horizontal move can be a valuable decision when it comes to your future,” says Havard. “You may not have the skills right now to be able to successfully apply for a different role externally, but once you develop your skills you may find yourself fielding approaches from companies about opportunities, and will be able to confidently apply for external opportunities.”

You may also find that as a result of your move, you progress into a higher pay packet, as your increased skills and experience means you can offer more value to an employer.

Chisholm has seen many people make positive moves within the Cotton On Group. “We often move people from smaller jobs in bigger markets to bigger jobs in smaller markets, which really helps round out their experience.”

Havard too has seen successful horizontal career moves during her time in HR. “This includes someone who moved from a tech support role to being a software developer, someone who transitioned from a blogger outreach position to a sales role, and someone who moved from a sales management role to a B2B marketing position,” she says.

Ultimately, moving ‘up’ isn’t the only way to bring new skills and achievements into your work. Progressing your career can take all sorts of forms – including a sideways move. If this sounds promising for you, speak to your manager or boss about how you can take on opportunities internally, or set up a job search to see potential sideways moves you could make elsewhere.