

# Forging Career Pathways & Propelling People

How an Engine Manufacturer Site Drove Engagement by Linking Career Progression to Objective Skills Evidence in Covalent

## Summary

An American engine manufacturing site wanted to improve employee recruiting, engagement, and retention. One initiative was to implement clear, transparent pathways for **career progression and upskilling**.

The challenge wasn't tracking completion, it was defining and enforcing consistent business logic for how employees advance from one level to the next. Without standard criteria and process, progression was subjective and inconsistent.

The site implemented a structured operating model - enabled by Covalent - so the team could **focus on skills development** rather than administrative busywork.



## Challenge: Driving Engagement Required Defining Clear Progression Logic First

The site was looking to **improve employee engagement and retention** by establishing standard pathways for career growth and upskilling. But before they could do that, they first needed to define the business logic for moving from one level to the next.

Previously, progression tracking existed, but the criteria varied by role, leader, or department. Without standardized requirements and a systematic workflow to validate completion, advancement decisions risked being influenced by relationships or perceptions rather than **objective evidence**.

Their goal was to create clearer **upskilling pathways** that would drive stronger engagement by making progression provable, not perceived.

## Solution: Defining the Logic and Operationalizing It with Workflows

The site's approach started with defining what progression should look like, then implementing Covalent to operationalize that logic through auditable workflows:

- **HR and Operations** defined leveling expectations for each role
- The **Training team** worked with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) on site to define the process for obtaining and maintaining each skill
- The **Training team** configured the business logic and processes in Covalent
- **Trainees and Trainers** (e.g., Senior Operators) executed the new processes in Covalent, including training tasks, evaluations, and multi-stakeholder sign-offs
- **Supervisors and HR** review the objective evidence to track and confirm progression

The key insight: progression became defensible not because of what Covalent does, but because the criteria are written down, consistently enforced through workflows, and fully auditable.

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## Role-Specific Progression Requirements

Every role participating in progression has its own defined set of requirements because each job family requires different evidence.

### Example: Press Operator Progression

Earning **Level 2** requires:

- 100% completion of all objectives in a "Basic Knowledge" objective group
- Operator demonstrates ability to consistently and safely perform one (1) task/process
- No "Operator at Fault" scrap parts for 6 months
- Minimum time-in-role 12 months
- At least one additional skillset at 100% completion
- Disciplinary status review (write-ups or warnings)

Earning **Level 3** requires:

- Operator demonstrates ability to consistently and safely perform three (3) tasks/processes
- No "Operator at Fault" scrap parts for 12 months
- Completion of Train-the-trainer course
- Minimum time-in-role 18 months

Earning **Level 4** requires:

- Operator demonstrates ability to consistently and safely perform five (5) tasks/processes, including at least three advanced
- No "Operator at Fault" scrap parts for 12 months
- Minimum time-in-role 18 months

The structure the site has designed thoughtfully incorporates knowledge, breadth and depth of skills, experience, performance and behavior.

## Implementation and Impact

### Benefits of Training Workflows

Moving to a more systematic process is delivering several key benefits:

- **Stronger engagement:** Employees can see exactly what's required to advance, making upskilling goals tangible and achievable
- **Evidence-based decisions:** Written criteria and enforced workflows reduce favoritism and make requirements transparent across departments with an auditable trail
- **Speed and self-service:** Employees and supervisors can track progress in real-time rather than waiting for manual reviews
- **Scalability:** Each department can define its own criteria without rebuilding the workflow system

### What's Next

The foundation is in place - clear logic, auditable workflows, and visible pathways - creating a system that drives engagement by making career progression something employees can actively pursue and achieve.

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### About Covalent

Covalent is the global leader in Workforce Operations solutions for complex manufacturing. The company enables hundreds of critical factories and repair shops to systematically administer and optimize workforce planning, development, and deployment for tens of thousands of workers worldwide – empowering Manufacturing and Quality leaders to make credible decisions that improve production performance. Covalent customers include multiple jet engine manufacturers, Mercury Marine, Polaris, MasterCraft, and Great Dane.

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