

# Your flight path

Boeing employees pursue many paths for career advancement and success *By JoAnn Houlihan*

Dashan Craft's career path at Boeing has been about balance—a combination of experience and knowledge and being a father.

A systems engineer with Defense, Space & Security, Craft started his Boeing career as a structural mechanic and used the Learning Together Program, Boeing's tuition assistance program, to gain degrees in both information systems and systems engineering. This education, combined with knowledge gained through a leadership development program and work with a mentor, opened the door to his current position. "I talked with a few people who were mentoring me and they gave me some great advice—sometimes you have to take a step back to go forward," Craft said.

"The systems engineer position did not allow me to earn overtime. But it had more long-term potential for where I want my career to go."

Craft's four children also played a big role in his career path. "I kept asking myself, what kind of example am I going to set for my kids?" Craft said. "The best way for me to do

that was to take the time and complete school, and then get the experience I need to be competitive."

Boeing offers employees such as Craft numerous opportunities for growth—including making a lateral career move, attending education and training programs, volunteering in the community, participating in mentoring, or taking a temporary assignment.

Norma Clayton, who began her career at Boeing as an engineer, has made a number of lateral moves across business units and locations before landing in her current role as vice president, Learning, Training and Development.

"The most important tool for career advancement is having a learning map, which defines some end state that you as an individual are trying to achieve and then building a career path to get you there," Clayton said. "That career path has to include a balance of both your experience and your knowledge."

Natasha Kuleshova's career at Boeing has taken her from Russia, where she began working for Boeing as a receptionist, to the Middle East, where today she is a Human Resources leader.

The secret to her success can be found in a Russian proverb that says, "You cannot pull a fish out of a pond without labor." And achieving career success requires hard work.

As a receptionist in the company's Moscow office, Kuleshova began to pursue her Ph.D. in economics from the renowned Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, which earned her the respect of her peers and opened doors to new opportunities, including her move into Human Resources.

"Earning my Ph.D. taught me to think logically. It changed the way I do my work," Kuleshova said. "In addition, I studied international labor migration. How ironic that I now find myself in the middle of it!"

Three years ago, she left her native Moscow for a lateral move to a position in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. "I was so interested to learn a new culture and live in a new environment," Kuleshova said. "While it may be viewed on paper as a lateral move, I see it as a completely new experience."

A company the size of Boeing can offer employees



**"Before you move into another area, you really have to find a balance between experience and education. I'm doing that right now."**

—Dashan Craft, systems engineer, C-17 Program, Boeing Defense, Space & Security

PHOTO: SALLY ARISTEI/BOEING



**"Earning my Ph.D. taught me to think logically. It changed the way I do my work."**

—Natasha Kuleshova, Human Resources leader, Middle East and Africa

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multiple career paths and ways to develop and grow. Just as Kuleshova did, some employees have gone back to school, some have taken on new roles, and some have been guided by mentors.

In one of her mentoring relationships, Kuleshova was able to spend a week in the United States shadowing her mentor. She listened to her mentor talk to her team about the organization and watched the leadership skills she was working to cultivate on display.

"I could ask my mentor anything," Kuleshova said.

Steve Watkins has also moved laterally in his career path with Boeing Commercial Airplanes—several times.

He has moved across production lines at the Everett, Wash., plant, going from the 767 to the 747 to the 777; he then went outside Boeing for a while and is now back on the 777 line as a team leader in Wing Body Join. These moves have also taken him through three job codes—electrician, plumber and mechanic.

Along the way, he has been careful to align his career

goals with his obligations as a father of three young children.

"I made career choices that have allowed me to be home with my family in the evening," Watkins said. "I am even holding off on a move to management because I would have to work a rotating shift—something that is not a good fit for my life right now, but it might be down the road."

Watkins was laid off after five years at Boeing and used the time as an opportunity to go back to school to get a degree in welding technology.

"I really wanted a skill that I could fall back on," Watkins said.

After a stint putting his welding skills to use building catamarans, he returned to the 777 line working on systems installation. He also plays a number of other roles, including peer coordinator, where he works with the Skills Process Center to integrate new employees to a line by providing job assignments, ensuring certifications are attained and creating job shadowing opportunities.

"When I see these people doing their jobs right," he said, "I know I had something to do with that."

***"I made career choices that have allowed me to be home with my family in the evening."***

— Steve Watkins, team leader in Wing Body Join, Boeing Commercial Airplanes

PHOTO: GAIL HANUSA/BOEING

Another way to gain experience is through community volunteering.

Rashara Givhan has cultivated her leadership skills through the work she does as an Amateur Athletic Union basketball coach for school-age girls in the St. Louis area.

"A lot of discipline and hard work has to be done in those years to get academic and athletic scholarships," Givhan said. "Helping them get to the next level motivates me to do what I need to do to get to the next level."

Givhan has also used education—balanced with experience—throughout her career as a catalyst to new opportunities. She started her career at NASA as an aeronautical engineer and left after three years to pursue a master's degree in electrical engineering.

"My goal was to open more doors, and I did," Givhan said.

Today, working as a deputy program manager in Defense, Space & Security, Givhan is using the Learning Together Program to pursue a Ph.D. in engineering management and wants to use her knowledge to improve Boeing's competitive edge.

Givhan's experience, and that of Craft, Kuleshova, Watkins and many other Boeing employees, shows there's more than one way to catch a fish.

"You really have to find a balance between experience and education," Craft said. "I'm doing that right now." ■

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***"Helping them get to the next level motivates me to do what I need to do to get to the next level."***

— Rashara Givhan, deputy program manager and systems integrator, Integrated Product Data Management, Boeing Defense, Space & Security

PHOTO: RON BOOKOUT/BOEING



# Where do I want to be tomorrow?

A lifetime of learning prepares employees and the company for the future

**N**orma Clayton, vice president for Learning, Training and Development, and Dianna Peterson, director of Strategic Workforce Planning, discuss work force readiness and lifelong learning.

#### Why is work force planning important?

**Peterson:** Like many technology-based companies, Boeing faces an impending skills shortage due to fewer workers being prepared to replace seasoned and skilled workers nearing retirement. By understanding business requirements and forecasting the associated near- and long-term skill needs, we can ensure employees develop in the right areas and also maintain our focus on hiring and retaining talent that matches our innovation and growth strategies.

#### What are some of today's strategic skill needs?

**Peterson:** Strategic skills vary by business unit and even by function. At Commercial Airplanes, strategic skill needs include several in the engineering discipline, such as structural analysis, payloads design and industrial engineering, among others. For Defense, Space & Security they include network communications, systems and software engineering. Across the company, we will continue to have strong needs for business developers and market strategists. Cybersecurity also is an area with significant opportunity as Boeing continues to grow its cybersecurity solutions business.

#### How are you growing strategic skills among employees?

**Clayton:** We analyze skill areas and identify what's needed to achieve a high level of proficiency in them. Once we have that intelligence, we review what formal curriculum exists in our portfolio to support development, and if one doesn't exist, we create new training to support it.

#### What role do employees play in keeping their skills current?

**Peterson:** It's up to each employee to set goals and manage his or her career. We provide the tools to do it—Performance Management, Learning Together Program, certification training, and opportunities for mentoring and special assignments, among others.

**Clayton:** There are also certain things that are done to execute a job that are not necessarily captured in any formal learning program or process. I'm talking about the knowledge in the index card in somebody's pocket that tells you how a machine runs. That's knowledge that can be tapped into by expanding your network and building relationships.

## Career development tools

Boeing employees have many ways to advance their careers. Here are some helpful ideas:

- **My Learning:** Accessed through Boeing TotalAccess, My Learning is Boeing's single learning management system.
- **Learning Together Program:** Information about Boeing's tuition assistance program can be found by visiting <http://learningtogether.web.boeing.com> in the U.S. and <http://ltp-intl.web.boeing.com> for employees outside the U.S.
- **Lateral moves:** Talk to your manager about opportunities that might fit into your career path. You can also visit the Boeing Enterprise Staffing System for a list of current positions available. <https://bess.web.boeing.com>
- **Leading projects:** Volunteer to take a lead role on projects.
- **Mentoring:** Be an informal mentor to someone in your group and share your unique skills. To learn more, visit <http://hr.web.boeing.com/index.aspx?com=12&id=96>.
- **Volunteering:** Expand your horizons and benefit the community at the same time. Visit Boeing's Employee Volunteer Program website at <http://community.web.boeing.com/volunteerevents.cfm?gcc=volunteer&news=volunteerevents>.
- **Development planning:** The Continuing Education Advising Toolkit was developed to help managers and employees identify learning opportunities to enhance career development. To learn more, visit [http://ltd.web.boeing.com/cea/cea\\_index.htm](http://ltd.web.boeing.com/cea/cea_index.htm).

#### What is being done internally to increase strategic skills knowledge?

**Clayton:** What we're finding is that traditional skills like network systems and electrical engineering provide foundational knowledge needed for emerging skill areas. So there are certainly opportunities for employees to adapt to new technologies and skill sets by going back to school and learning new areas that have a foundation in their primary skill area. We also invest \$131 million annually in learning programs internally and \$75 million in tuition assistance. There's also an investment of 1.3 million hours in on-the-job training, ranging from industrial skills to engineering to quality to supplier management.

#### Does this play into the concept of lifelong learning?

**Clayton:** Yes. Lifelong learning is absolutely critical because we are facing critical skill shortages and increased competition. Each of us needs to ask ourselves a few tough questions. Where am I today? Where do I want to be tomorrow? And what skills do I need to be successful in the future at Boeing?

#### Has the way we learn changed?

**Clayton:** It's always changing. That's why learning is a foundational component of the Boeing Management Model: Maximize learning across the enterprise and from outside, and adapt and apply it in clearly defined businesses. We do this a number of ways, including leaders teaching leaders and workplace coaching, where leaders are serving not only as leaders but as coaches for employees. We also have teams like the Moscow Design Center using interactive tools and portals—like virtual lectures and mentoring—to learn from engineers who are in Seattle, literally watching them as they design products. Fostering a lifelong learning mindset means we must continually define the tools, the methods and the social sciences that facilitate learning. It's become part of our culture, and it's ingrained in the way we manage our business. ■

**PHOTOS: (From left)** Norma Clayton, vice president for Learning, Training and Development. RON BOOKOUT/BOEING  
Dianna Peterson, director of Strategic Workforce Planning. MARIAN LOCKHART/BOEING

