



HRDIGITALPLAYGROUND • JOB ARCHITECTURE 101

What People Ask

The everyday questions from employees, managers, candidates, and the wider world that lead back to job architecture.

IN THIS DECK

Employees

Managers

Candidates and the market

Leaders and the world

Repeated questions

Answering well



September 2026
© 2026 HRDigitalPlayground | Job Architecture

Before You Start

What you will be able to do, the example we use, and the words you will meet.

YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- ✓ Name the questions employees, managers, candidates, and leaders bring
- ✓ Find where each answer lives in the architecture
- ✓ Read repeated questions as signals
- ✓ Answer questions in a way that builds trust

MEET THE EXAMPLE



Brightside Bakery

About 350 people making fresh bread and cakes. It grew fast without a plan for its jobs.



Bakery plant



20 shops



Delivery team



Head office

Made-up example

WORDS YOU WILL MEET

Job profile

A job's description, level, and range in one place

Level description

What the work looks like at each step

Signal

A pattern that points to a problem

Exception

A request to go outside the rules

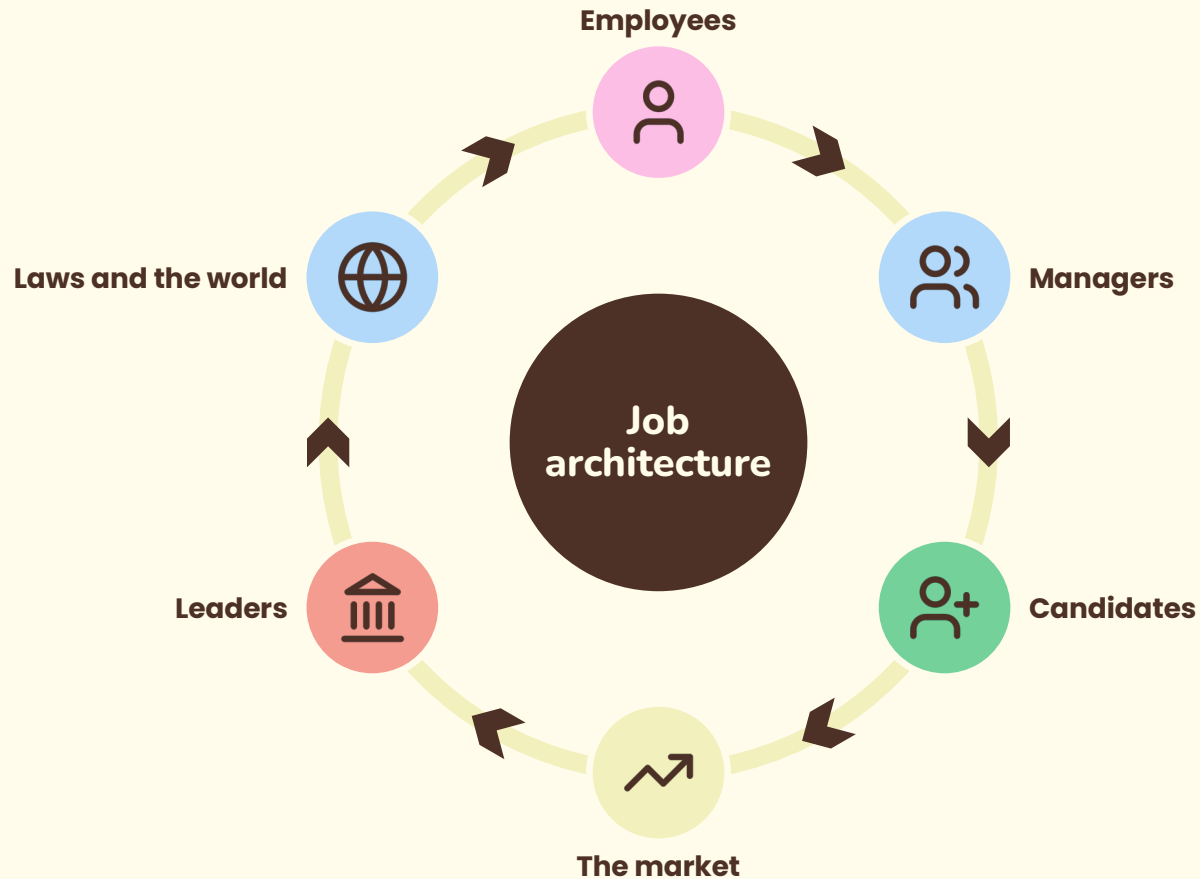
Transparency

How much people can see about jobs and pay

The colored tag on each page tells you what it is: an idea, an example, a practice, a warning, or a check.

Questions Are the Front Door

People rarely ask about job architecture by name. They ask about titles, pay, and promotions.



WHAT THEY ACTUALLY SAY

"Why is my title different from hers?"

"Can I promote Sam this year?"

"What does this job pay?"

"Competitors pay analysts more. Do we?"

"Are we paying fairly?"

Every question about a title, a promotion, or a pay range is a question the job architecture should answer.

What Employees Ask

The questions employees bring, and the part of the architecture that answers each one.

THE QUESTION

WHERE THE ANSWER LIVES

"What does my job actually involve?"

Job description

"What does my level mean?"

Level description

"What do I need for the next step?"

Next level description

Career paths

"What is the pay range for my job?"

Grade

Pay range

"Why does my colleague have a different title?"

Family and level

Title rules

"Can I move to another team?"

Career paths

Lateral moves

MY JOB PROFILE

Shift Lead

Family Stores

Level S4, Lead

Grade Grade 4

Pay range Shown to you

Next step Assistant Shop Manager

One place for every answer

Employees mostly want to know three things: what my job is, what comes next, and whether my pay is fair.



What Managers Ask

Managers bring the most requests. Each one should have a clear, consistent answer.

THE QUESTION

WHERE THE ANSWER LIVES

"Can I promote Sam this year?"



Next level description

Promotion rules

"What should I offer this candidate?"



Pay range

Hiring guidance

"Can I create a new role on my team?"



New job request process

"Why is someone paid below the range?"



Pay range

Compa-ratio

"How do I explain a level to my team?"



Level descriptions

Talking points

"Is my team leveled like other teams?"



Calibration

Give managers the level descriptions, the ranges, and a clear process, and most requests answer themselves.



What Candidates and the Market Ask

Outside questions arrive two ways: candidates ask directly, and the market signals change.



CANDIDATES ASK

“What does this job pay?”

Answered by: The pay range in the job ad

“What does Senior mean here?”

Answered by: The level description

“Where could this job lead?”

Answered by: The career paths



THE MARKET SIGNALS

Competitors pay more for a job

What to check: Re-check market data and the range

A new skill is in hot demand

What to check: Consider a new job, or even a new family

Turnover spikes or hiring stalls

What to check: Check range position, level, and career path

Candidates expect clear answers up front, and market signals are an early warning that a job needs a fresh look.



What Leaders and the Wider World Ask

Leaders ask about fairness and cost. Regulators, investors, and the public ask too.

LEADERS AND THE BOARD ASK

“Are we paying fairly?”

Pay equity by family and level

“Do we have too many layers?”

Spans and layers by track and level

“What will this reorg cost?”

New jobs mapped to grades and ranges

“How do we compare with peers?”

Market pricing of benchmark jobs

THE WIDER WORLD ASKS



Regulators

Pay ranges, pay gap reports, and fair hiring.



Investors

How the workforce is managed. US public companies report on it yearly.



Works councils and unions

In many countries, a say in how jobs are graded.



Salary sites and the public

What people post about pay, titles, and fairness.

Leaders, regulators, investors, and the public all ask versions of one question: can you explain your jobs and pay?

When the Same Question Keeps Coming Back

One question is a conversation. The same question many times is a signal worth following.

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Why is my title different?"

May signal: Titles drifted from jobs

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"What does my level mean?"

May signal: Unclear level descriptions

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Can I have an exception?"

May signal: Rules no longer fit

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Why was I mapped here?"

May signal: The mapping may be wrong

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Why can't we hire for this?"

May signal: Range or level may be off

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Where can I go from here?"

May signal: Career paths not visible

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Is this job still the same?"

May signal: The work may have changed

ASKED AGAIN AND AGAIN

"Too many managers?"

May signal: Layers may have crept in

Keep a simple log of questions. Patterns become evidence.

Track the questions people ask. Patterns point to the part of the architecture that needs a look.

Who Sees What

Decide what each group can see, then make it easy to find. Most companies are moving toward more openness.



Everyone

Families, levels, level descriptions, career paths, and how pay is set



Each employee

Their own job profile, level, and pay range



Managers

Their team's jobs, ranges, and where each person sits in the range



HR and leaders

The full structure and analytics, like pay equity and spans and layers

each layer also sees everything above it

Decide what each group sees and make it easy to find. A structure nobody can see cannot build trust.

THE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

More open, every year.



Job ads now show ranges in many places



Employees can ask for ranges in some places



Some companies publish every range

What Changes for Employees and Managers

When a company adopts a job architecture, daily life changes a little for everyone. Here is how.



FOR EMPLOYEES

See your level and the next step

Often for the first time

Maybe a new title

Usually because titles were combined

Pay checked against the range

A title change alone does not cut pay

Clear promotion criteria

The same rules for everyone



FOR MANAGERS

New tools

Level descriptions, ranges, and hiring guidance

Explaining placements

Answering the team's questions first

Following the process

No new titles outside the rules

Joining calibration

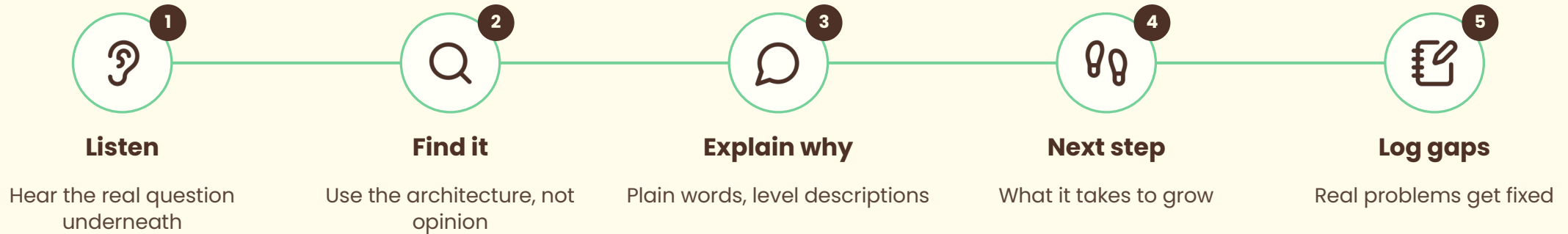
Comparing placements across teams

For employees it brings clarity. For managers it brings tools and responsibility. Both need to hear it plainly.



Answering a Question Well

Five steps that turn a worried question into trust. Here is one worked through.



WORKED EXAMPLE

A SHOP ASSOCIATE ASKS

"Why is Priya a Senior Shop Associate when we do the same work?"

THE MANAGER ANSWERS

"Priya's job is S3: she handles exceptions and trains new people. Yours is S2. Here is the S3 description. Let's pick two skills for you to build."

Listen, find the answer, explain the why, show the next step, and log any gap. Every good answer builds trust.



Where Does the Answer Live?

Six questions. Match each one to the part of the architecture that answers it, then turn the page.

1 "What does this job pay?"

2 "What do I need for the next step?"

3 "Can I add a new role to my team?"

4 "Do competitors pay more for this job?"

5 "What does this job do day to day?"

6 "Where could I move from here?"

WHERE ANSWERS LIVE

Job description

Level description

Pay range

Career paths

New job request

Market data



Decide on your answers before you turn the page. The model answers and the reasons are on the next page.

Knowing where each answer lives is what lets managers and HR answer quickly and the same way every time.

Where Does the Answer Live: Model Answers

Compare with what you decided. The reason matters more than the label.

1 What does this job pay?

Pay range

Set by the job's grade and range.

2 What do I need for the next step?

Level description

The next level's description shows what changes.

3 Can I add a new role?

New job request

It first checks whether a job already fits.

4 Do competitors pay more?

Market data

Survey matches for comparable work.

5 What does this job do?

Job description

Purpose, duties, requirements, and scope.

6 Where could I move?

Career paths

Promotions, lateral moves, and growth moves.

Knowing where each answer lives lets managers and HR answer quickly and the same way every time.



Quick Check

Three questions. Answer from memory first, then look back if you need to.

1 QUESTION 1

A manager asks if they can promote Sam. Where does the answer start?

- A** How long Sam has been in the job
- B** The next level's description and the promotion rules
- C** What Sam's peers earn

2 QUESTION 2

Many employees keep asking why their titles differ. What might it signal?

- A** People are simply unhappy
- B** Titles may have drifted from the jobs
- C** Nothing. Titles never matter

3 QUESTION 3

What is the first step in answering a worried question well?

- A** Quote the policy
- B** Listen for the real question underneath
- C** Escalate it to HR

Answers, with the reason behind each one, are on the next page.

Remember

The whole deck in three lines, plus the quiz answers.



THREE THINGS TO KEEP

- 1** People ask about titles, pay, and promotions. The answers live in the architecture.
- 2** Questions that keep coming back are signals. Follow them.
- 3** Clear, consistent answers, easy to find, are what build trust.

Every question is a chance to build trust.



CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

1B

Promotion is about the work of the next level, not time served or peers' pay.

2B

A repeated question points to a pattern, here titles that no longer match the jobs.

3B

A title question is often really a question about value or fairness.

When every question has a clear home in the architecture, people trust the answers and the company.





Job Architecture 101: What People Ask

© 2026 HRDigitalPlayground | Job Architecture. All rights reserved.
Published September 2026 · hrdigitalplayground.com



Keep learning. More plain-language guides at hrdigitalplayground.com.

Brightside Bakery is a fictional company, and every name, number, and example in this deck is illustrative. This material is general education. It is not legal, tax, or financial advice. Laws and practices change, so check current rules before acting.