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Klaudija Riaukė

MASTER THESIS

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS	DARBUOTOJŲ ĮSITRAUKIMO Į PROCESŲ GERINIMĄ SĄSAJA SU KARJEROS GALIMYBĖMIS ORGANIZACIJOSE

Supervisor Dr. Laura Pilukienė

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic. The concept of a career has shifted significantly over recent decades. Traditional, linear career paths based on tenure and hierarchy are being replaced by more flexible, dynamic trajectories (Risal et al., 2023). Employees today are more likely to change jobs, sectors, or even professions, and career advancement often depends on multitude of factors (Loss & Renucci, 2020). Over the last few decades several holistic management philosophies have been emphasizing employees' role in contributing to the process improvement (Semrau, 2024). Nevertheless, the degree to which employees' contribution to process improvement impacts their career advancement remains an open question. Some studies highlight the growing importance of employee involvement in process improvement and innovation beyond routine operational performance, particularly in organizational contexts that value employee-initiated improvements (Medeiros et al., 2025). Halligan (2021) suggests that employee outcomes, such as career growth, are influenced by factors that cannot always be controlled. This means that even when achievements are evaluated, external circumstances can still play a role in their career advancement. This master thesis will aim to empirically test if the points of this debate are valid, with a focus on how organizations perceive and assess employee involvement in process improvement when making career advancement decisions, and whether such involvement meaningfully contributes to career growth.

The level of research into the problem. Whitchurch et al. (2021) examined career trajectories using the "concertina" model, which identifies boundaried, boundaryless, and niche career types. Although their work does not directly address process improvement, the boundaryless career type, characterized by proactive behavior, cross-functional involvement, and broader responsibility, resembles the behaviors often displayed by employees who engage in process improvement. However, their study does not consider whether such behaviors translate into managerial recognition or promotion decisions. Medeiros et al. (2025) propose that employees involved in process improvement may receive greater career development opportunities due to their contributions to organizational effectiveness and innovation. At the same time, their research does not examine how managerial perceptions and organizational acknowledgment transform these contributions into actual career advancement. These gaps suggest that previous research has not determined how participation in process improvement is evaluated, recognized, and rewarded in promotion decisions.

Research gap. This research builds on prior work by addressing the gap in understanding how contribution to process improvement directly impacts career advancement, managerial attention, or promotion.

The novelty of the master thesis lies in interaction between process improvement and career advancement, a relationship that has been examined in a fragmented manner in previous research. The study aims to explore how employee involvement in process improvement contributes to employees' careers. Organizational (managerial) orientation is adopted in this master thesis, with emphasis on how managers assess workers' involvement in process improvement and how those assessments determine career advancement. Literature included in this master thesis discusses process improvement, employee involvement, and career advancement topics. Most of the literature explores these topics separately.

Research problem is to what extent does employees' involvement in process improvement contribute to their career advancement in organizations?

The aim of the master thesis is to explore how employee involvement in process improvement contributes to employees' careers, presenting an empirical study of employees in the Fintech sector.

The objectives of the master thesis are:

1. To analyze scientific literature on the impact of process improvement on employee career advancement in organizations.

2. To identify additional factors that influence the relationship between process improvement and career advancement.

3. To conduct qualitative interviews with managers to understand how organizations assess process improvement and whether it influences decisions regarding employees' career advancement.

Research methods of the master thesis. The methods used in the master thesis are collection and grouping of scientific sources, analysis of scientific literature, qualitative research and data analysis. The research was conducted using semi-structured qualitative interviews with managers. Data was collected using pre-prepared interview questions, and processed using thematic analysis, including coding, categorization, and interpretation of results.

The structure of master thesis was created in accordance with the research aim and objectives. Chapter one is the theoretical background that introduces process improvement,

employee involvement and career advancement in organizations. The second section presents the framework and describes the qualitative research methodology. The third chapter analyses the financial sector's managers' responses. The conclusion section provides findings, conclusions and proposals of the master thesis.

Limitations: Internal motivation is a significant factor that drives employees to participate in process improvement, which is not discussed in detail in this master thesis. The choice of restricting the research to managerial perspectives was intentional considering that the promotion decisions and career advancement processes are subject to managerial evaluation and interpretation by organization. Future studies could consider the employee-based views, such as internal motivation and perceived employee impact on career advancement to receive additional insights on this topic.

Artificial intelligence use: In this master thesis Artificial intelligence was used to define search formula for literature analysis in different digital libraries and academic journals. Artificial intelligence was also used to define ideas, generate words, translate between Lithuanian and English languages. Additionally, AI tools were used to transcribe interviews conducted during virtual calls.

1. EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first part of the master's thesis presents the theoretical basis for empirical research. The literature review begins with concept of process improvement, definition of employee involvement in process improvement, opportunities of career advancement and the connections between these aspects.

1.1. The concept of process improvement

Various researchers define the concept of process improvement differently, emphasizing various elements like strategic change, effectiveness, and employee involvement (Table 1).

Table 1

Process improvement definitions

Author	Definition of process improvement
Fryer, Antony, and Douglas (2007)	Continuous contribution by organization members to improve processes and reduce errors, aiming for productivity, agility, streamlined workflows, security, and operational excellence.
Loshin (2011)	A strategy that involves process knowledge and creating lasting changes via automated process modification and employee involvement.
Harmon (2019)	Minor, focused changes introduced within an existing process requiring continuous managerial oversight.
Semrau (2024)	A set of procedures aimed at measuring, analyzing, and optimizing processes. Improvement is an essential element of process management and involves a holistic approach.
Maulana (2024)	Tool for managing activities and their relationships efficiently and effectively in an organization.
Fehrer, Moder, and Rögliner (2025)	A tool to assist processes by designing and generating improved process, focusing on changes.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of analysis of scientific sources, 2025

Process improvement is a strategic tool of aligning organizational processes with the changing market needs, compliance needs, and competitive forces (Dumas et al. 2018). It is a continuous and deliberate contribution to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability of processes across organizations. According to Semrau (2024), it is a systematic process of measuring, analyzing, and optimizing processes in the business process management system. In his model, improvement of processes is presented as a key phase in the natural cycle of process management, influenced by strategy, culture, structure, and competencies (Figure 1).

Figure 1

The place of process improvement in the process management system
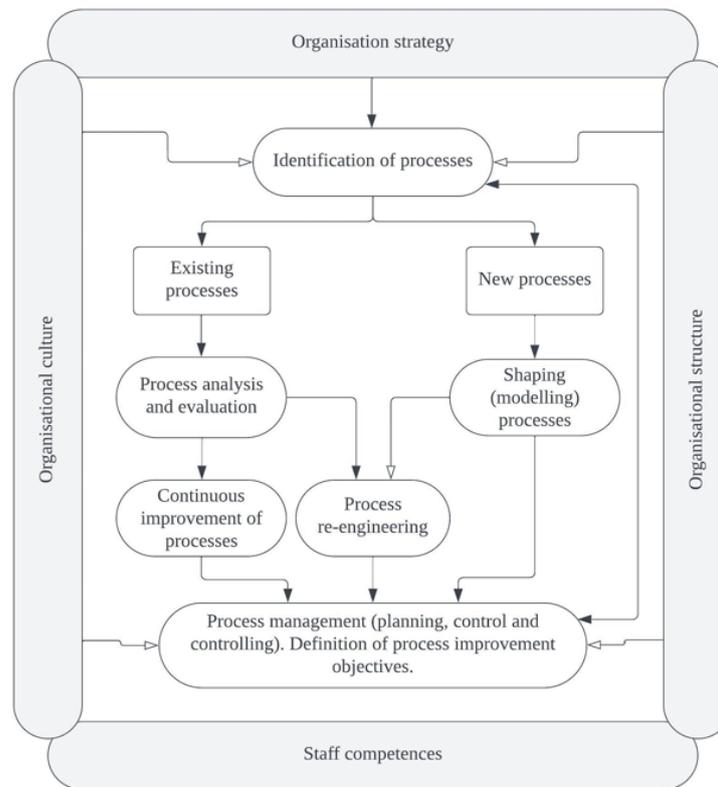
Source: Semrau, 2024.

This model reflects the view that process improvement is not a one-time event but an essential element of long-term operational upkeep and business resilience. Fehrer, Moder, and Rögliner (2025) discuss the classification of process improvement and innovation systems and define that process improvement is a tool that assist employees by designing processes that focus on creation of improved process strategies and support for tasks performed. Additionally, Maulana (2024) clarifies that processes are the most critical aspect in the management of activities and relationships. The author adds that these processes play a key role in managing operations and their interconnections. In today's competitive environment, organizations must perform operational processes efficiently. Loshin, (2011) states that a holistic strategy must understand the interactivity of processes and implement continuous improvement by way of modifications in both automated processes and their interaction with the employees. Table 2 indicates the most important points of process improvement, including alignment with changing business goals, process mapping, or process elimination.

Table 2

Aspects of process improvement

Aspect	Description
Aligning business objectives with existing processes	Ensuring that identified business objectives align with the current processes.
Mapping and documenting end-to-end processes	Mapping and documenting processes, especially those involving external entities like customers, suppliers, and vendors.
Collecting data from critical process points	Gathering data from key process points to measure productivity and operational performance, increasing visibility into process.
Adjusting functional and data management infrastructures	Modifying infrastructure to address overlaps, dependencies, and data replication that improve process maintenance and development.
Optimizing the processes for efficiency and effectiveness	Reducing or eliminating bottlenecks to enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness in processes.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Loshin (2011)

Process improvement is a generic term. However, it generally follows a sequence: identifying areas of improvement, analyzing the existing workflows, mapping the improved processes, making changes, and measuring outcomes. These steps ensure that the improvement is not random but placed systematically into processes (Nikiforova & Bicevska, 2020). Based on Harmon, (2019) process improvement refers to incremental, focused changes within an existing process, which managers overseeing the process should continuously assess. Semrau (2024) adds that the improvement also requires modifications in the tasks and responsibilities of individual employees. Fryer, Antony, and Douglas (2007) state that process improvement is where the members of an organization work together continuously and removing mistakes to improve overall performance. Process improvement goals are typically a combination of any of the following: improved productivity, gained agility or visibility to maintain pace with market changes, streamlined workflows, maximized profits, repaired security vulnerabilities, achieved operational excellence, created better user experiences externally or employee experience internally. As an example, process improvement can be applied in customer onboarding, where mapping the current steps, finding bottlenecks, redesigning the process with automation, and tracking the new flow can be used to achieve the goal of making the process more efficient (Aamer, Alsaeedi, and Baig, 2023).

Building on the approach of Malinova, Gross, and Mendling (2022) and the definitions consolidated, this thesis will adopt a broad definition of process improvement, encompassing all contribution aimed at enhancing work processes.

1.2. Definition of employee involvement in process improvement

Employee involvement in process improvement is enabling employees at all levels within the organization to make meaningful contributions. Employees' involvement in process improvement can be defined as a philosophy of managing and leading people's activity in processes associated with successes at their workplace (Brajer-Marczak, 2014). As per Semrau (2024) to implement improvement, all the employees within the organization must be engaged, beginning from the top management to all employees. Based on Khan et al. (2011) employee involvement is the indicator of the extent to which an employee involves himself in his work and makes contributions to process management. Hackman & Oldham (1980) in the job characteristics model highlight how a job can impact the involvement of employees as it may encourage the internal motivation and autonomy of employees. Their model indicates that by giving employees autonomy in their job, it may lead to increased internal motivation to engage in process improvement. Authors believe that employees can experience increased job satisfaction if their tasks are significant, varied, and perceived as meaningful (Brown and Cregan, 2008). Employee engagement plays a key role in accomplishment, creating a sense of ownership and commitment (Brown and Cregan, 2008).

Schedlinsky et al. (2025) highlights that employees who are process experts possess detailed knowledge and are key to suggesting improvements. However, the tasks of searching for and implementing such improvements are usually not explicitly contained in the job description. Therefore, whether employees engage in such behavior is influenced by management controls that shape the working environment (Schedlinsky et al. 2025). Van Veenendaal (2024) highlights that strong leadership is important for process improvement, as it fosters employee engagement, ensures alignment with strategic goals, and drives innovation. This leads to a consensus that leaders must facilitate employee involvement and guide them through improvement processes.

Alsughayir (2016) notes that when an organization involves employees to day-to-day career decisions, organizational performance grows. Practice of engaging employees in decision-making, sharing relevant information, and engaging them in organizational activities for improving their commitment and overall performance (Mwangi & Waiganjo, 2019), is usually used on the premise that employees would be more dedicated to choices to which they were involved (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Employee involvement is also defined as the organized practice of involving employees in decision making and problem-solving to enhance their contribution to organizational objectives (Agunda et al. 2025). According to Wickramasinghe

(2016), employee involvement can be described as development of a psychological connection with assigned work responsibilities. These views highlight the importance of psychological and emotional commitment of employees to their working place and focus on the aspects of workplace engagement that extend beyond daily performance. This highlights internal motivation as important driver of employee engagement in process improvement. According to research by De Medeiros et al. (2025), involving employees in decision making helps developing problem solving skills, enhances innovativeness and enhances alignment with organizational goals.

Research shows that involvement enables employees in the decision-making process, giving them autonomy over daily performance. Employee involvement improves employee job satisfaction and productivity. Satisfied employees tend to work more efficiently and be more patient with monotonous tasks. High involvement tends to enhance decision-making capability, since the creation and sharing of practical knowledge is more evident in strongly involved employees. (Memon et al. 2017). The right attitude, teamwork, management dedication, and an organizational culture that emphasize seeking opportunities for change are essential, while identifying problems is a reason for celebration (Brajer-Marczak, 2014).

In this thesis, employee involvement is assessed not only through contribution to process improvement, but also through observable behaviors such as identifying problems and taking initiative to propose or implement solutions.

1.3. Opportunities of career advancement for employees

The concept of career has changed considerably over the years. Conventionally, careers were perceived as linear and hierarchical advancements within one organization, which were mostly based on tenure, official promotion systems, and organizational control (Lips-Wiersma and Hall, 2007). Career advancement was primarily understood as promotion to higher hierarchical positions and increased formal authority within the organization. Nevertheless, modern career literature focuses on more dynamic, flexible and individualized career paths, where employees are taking more and more ownership in their own career advancement (Whitchurch et al., 2021). Modern careers concepts emphasize employee involvement, development of skills and expanded responsibilities, rather than strict hierarchical progression (Risal et al., 2023). Consequently, career advancement is no longer restricted to formal promotions but can also be in terms of increased responsibilities, visibility, reputational and leadership opportunities in organizations.

Jiang and Klein (2000) highlight the importance of having a variety of career advancement opportunities within an organization. While some companies provide formal training programs for all levels, others only provide limited career guidance during yearly performance reviews, and some employees must forge their own career path (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). This suggests that while career advancement support systems exist, it is ultimately up to employees to identify and pursue them. Aziedjo (2024) states that by implementing career system support strategically, organizations can retain high-performing employees, increase employee engagement, and increase productivity. Although other sources state that training can increase the skills of employees in the workplace, the increased skills do not necessarily lead to promotion in their organization, its HR practices that connect employee involvement to opportunities (Jiang et al. 2012). Also, employees are dependent on managers for career support, but the managers may lack the necessary skills to deliver such support (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007).

An interviewee from Huesmann et al. (2020) study said that "I experienced that someone with the same qualifications immediately stepped into management. I had to stay on my level. I feel that he was introduced by someone, he was connected". This highlights the hidden advantages of informal networks. Actively involved employees in process improvement are more likely to be noticed by managers and possess cross-functional skills. They can be good internal promotion candidates through contributions as it demonstrates internal motivation, problem-solving, and strategic alignment to organizational goals. This is an indication of a change in the direction of internalizing career success not as a hierarchical advancement within a single organization, but as an active pursuit of growth. Employees who focus on enhancing their reputation through consistent contribution improve their chances of career advancement and promotions.

Employees with high tenure and a high commitment in their work are likely to achieve effective career management (Risal et al. 2023). Loss and Renucci (2020) identifies that employees who are ahead of the promotion threshold through job tenure and demonstrated performance are often more likely to advance. The process of change is driven by flexibility and results in flat decentralized structures and less focus on the tenure requirements (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). Also, employees hired from outside the organization tend to lack organization-specific skills, and although they might get bigger compensations, they quit at higher rates (Bidwell 2011). Therefore, internal promotion is often more effective than external hiring in terms of long-term success and performance, reinforcing the value of process improvement in career advancement. As per Risal et al. (2023) traditional career management practices, which were defined by organizational management, hierarchical promotion, and extended tenure, are gradually eroding.

Demonstrating that career advancement may cease to be strictly tenure-based or hierarchy-based and be more of a skill-based, flexible, and proactive career management process.

Erdiman and Pangaribuan (2025) state that organizational culture does not affect employee performance or job satisfaction in the context of transportation industry. On the other hand, Purnima and Sohana (2024) studying public and private sector, note that a strong organizational culture enhances working conditions and plays a major role in career accomplishment. This difference indicates that in contexts like transportation, tangible aspects such as office culture and career advancement have a less effect, and in other settings, culture drives motivation and innovation, which indirectly adds to career advancement. The literature suggest that the relationship between career advancement and process improvement may depend on whether an organization considers culture as a driving force behind recognition and promotion.

The advancement of employees might involve detours (Whitchurch et al. 2021). Established career structures do not always align with actual career advancement. Employees can climb the ladder in non-linear paths and tend to change their career schedules according to their own or organizational requirements. According to Abbas and Bakri (2015) employees are more likely to aim to achieve career advancement through internal motivation than organization help. Considering this, internal promotion culture may benefit from recognizing contributions that go beyond core job duties.

Therefore, while traditional promotion routes, like the ones based on tenure, might be reduced, employees can advance through involvement in assignments and adaptability rather than just seniority. HR is also in charge of starting and assisting with initiatives that offer chances for professional growth (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). Based on Aziedjo (2024), opportunities for advancement foster a driven, effective workforce and give the organization and its workers a solid foundation for long-term success. Showing that mentorship and managerial support can help or hinder promotion, depending on leadership capability. These different views highlight the importance of conducting more research to explain the role of process improvement in career development.

Based on the research summarizing the possible dimensions for career advancement, six main dimensions can be identified (Table 3).

Table 3.

Career advancement dimension

Authors	Dimension	Explanation
Jiang et al. (2012), Abbas and Bakri (2015)	Internal Motivation	Employees must actively seek growth through projects and skill-building.
Loss & Renucci (2020), Huesmann et al. (2020)	Reputation & Informal Networks	Reputation drives career advancement, with promotions influenced by informal networks.
Risal et al. 2023	Tenure	Long-tenure employees navigate careers better.
Lips-Wiersma & Hall (2007), Aziedjo (2024)	Career System Support	Motivation-enhancing HR strategies impact advancement.
Purnima & Sohana (2024)	Cultural Support	Organizational culture supports advancement and satisfaction.
Whitchurch et al. (2021)	Improvement vs. Operations	Distinction between improvement-oriented and operationally focused roles.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of analysis of scientific sources, 2025

The literature indicates that employee involvement, visibility through contribution and managerial support are becoming increasingly more important in career advancement than tenure or formal promotion systems. Process improvement can also enhance recognition and promotion opportunities especially in companies that appreciate initiative and skill building. These findings suggest that career advancement is a multidimensional process, which provides a foundation for understanding the dimensions explored in this research.

1.4. The link between process improvement contributions to career advancement

While many employees are expected to identify problems in work processes, their contribution is not always appreciated by managers (Brajer-Marczak, 2014). These employees can be recognized both formally and informally, raising their career visibility. If the employees introducing improvements receive feedback regularly, this can motivate the employees and foster their advancement (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). Semrau (2024) emphasizes that process improvement requires changes in responsibilities, their scope and the initiative of individual employees. As employees engage in process improvement, their roles often expand to include new tasks, which can serve as a pathway to promotion. Employees who are internally motivated and are involved in process improvement are often trusted with decision-making responsibilities, a key factor in developing leadership potential (Semrau, 2024). Prior literature suggests that visibility in the work process motivates employees to behave in ways that create a favorable impression (Leary

& Kowalski, 1990), which suggests that process improvement can help them get noticed for promotion.

According to Veenendaal (2024), process improvement owners may become powerful players in an organization even before they are appointed to leadership roles because of their experience in ownership taking. Ismail and Ramly (2011) found that continuous improvement practices and confidence contribute to employees feeling more secure in their career advancement and perceiving benefits. Risal et al. (2023) agrees to the overall hypothesis that employee engagement building competencies, or active contribution help shape career advancement. Authors identify training, managerial support, and organizational culture as primary drivers of career advancement, but do not confirm if organizations account for employee value added to processes and how they utilize these evaluations when making career decisions.

Whitchurch et al. (2021) describes a model of "concertina" career wherein employees accumulate and lose career activities from a pool of options depending on personal preference, organizational configurations, and opportunity externally. They described three career types in their research. Boundaried, in which employees pursue formal career advancement. Boundaryless, in which members create broad and varied experiences outside formal career streams. And niche, in which personnel concentrate on specialist domains. Typology parallels the distinction between employees engaged in process improvement and employees more engaged in operational tasks. Employees of boundaryless types can be linked to process improvement and innovation, may be more likely to receive reward, managerial attention, and career advancement, and niche employees have slower career advancement. This research helps to set the background to enhance this perspective with process improvement focused research to measure the impact for promotion and career advancement.

Medeiros et al. (2025) discuss how career opportunities can be improved by participation in process improvement by developing skills, getting recognition, and exposure, and therefore being noticed by managers. The research hypothesizes that employees engaging in process improvement could be more likely to receive additional career opportunities due to actively contributing to organizational effectiveness as well as generating innovation within the organization. Employees can earn formal and informal recognition, which can enhance their career visibility. Although literature has found that process improvement has the ability to increase employee visibility, leadership ability, and career success, it does not go far enough to determine whether these contributions automatically translate into promotions. Literature supports that process improvement increases job scope and decision-making but does not state whether

organizations formally recognize and reward such involvement over and above normal operational performance.

Although it can be seen in literature that reputation, informal networks, tenure and organizational culture can contribute to career advancement, it is uncertain whether organizations evaluate and use employee contribution to process improvement when deciding promotions. Therefore, the study will aim to investigate the relationship between employee involvement in process improvement (independent variable) and career advancement (dependent variable). The other factors influencing this relationship were identified as: internal motivation, reputation and informal networks, tenure, improvement vs operations, cultural support, career system support. These factors are treated as conceptual dimensions and categories for analysis in the research (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Framework
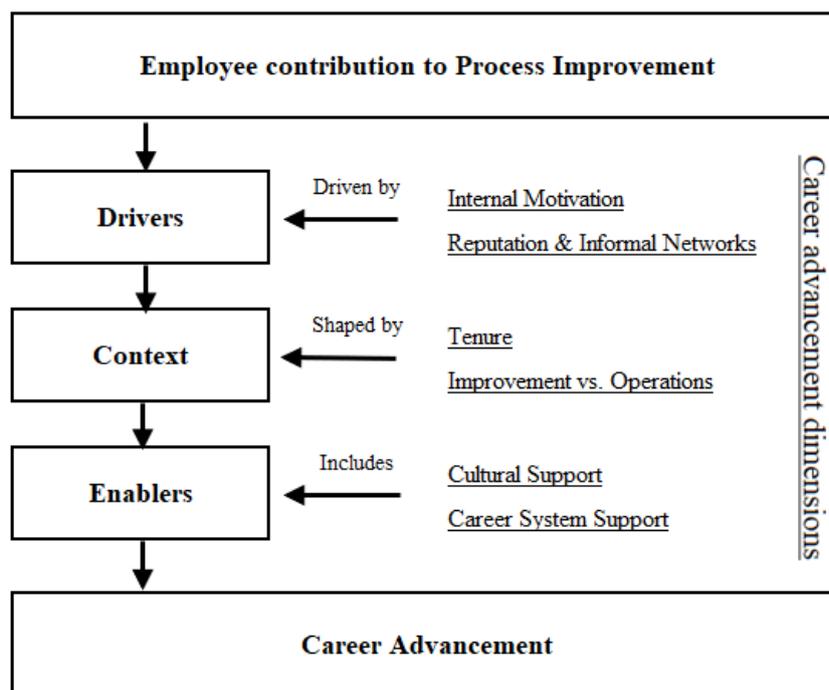
Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of analysis of scientific sources, 2025

This framework was based on the analyzed literature and observed gaps related to employee engagement in the process improvement and its possible impact on career advancement. Framework aimed to guide empirical investigation and form the foundation upon which interview questions were developed. It was built based on the identified dimensions to investigate how organizations measure contribution of process improvement and how such contributions link to

career advancement. Each step flowed out of key dimensions identified in the literature, which were shown alongside the respective framework layers.

The dimensions have been categorized into three segments: drivers, context and enablers. The research aims to analyze how these segments drive, shape and/or are included in career advancement outcomes. However, it is acknowledged that career advancement may not always follow a linear path through these segments. Whether or not identified career advancement dimensions lead to advancement will be explored in the research.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The second chapter of the thesis presents the methodology of empirical study. The qualitative research approach and strategy, method, data collection, analysis, validity, reliability and limitations are justified.

2.1. Qualitative research approach and strategy

Qualitative research is a methodological approach that aims at exploring and understanding social phenomena using subjective experiences and interpretations as opposed to numerical measurement. It is especially useful when the aim is to capture context, and complex perspectives of participants, making it appropriate for examining organizational behavior and career advancement processes (Whitchurch et al., 2021).

This thesis follows an interpretive research philosophy. The interpretive view is that career advancement and process improvement cannot be captured only through numbers or universal rules but need to be understood through people's experiences, perspectives, and interpretations (Risal et al., 2023). In this context, perspective is shaped by managers' views, organizational culture, and individual motivation (Fehrer, Moder & Rögliner, 2025). This perspective supports the use of qualitative methodology, such as interviews and thematic anysis, as it allows to discover how managers interpret process improvement and career advancement in their specific organizational environments (Huesmann et al., 2020).

The empirical part of this thesis is designed to meet the following research objectives:

- To analyze scientific literature on the impact of process improvement on employee career advancement in organizations.
- To identify additional factors that influence the relationship between process improvement and career advancement.
- To conduct qualitative interviews with managers to understand how organizations assess process improvement and whether it influences decisions regarding employees' career advancement.

These objectives guided the structure of the interview questions, the sample selection of manager participants, thematic focus of data analysis and creation of the research methodology stages that can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Research methodology stages

Planning & Design	1. Literature Review
	2. Define Research Aim
	3. Model Development
Preparation	4. Qualitative Research Design
	5. Interview Question Formulation
	6. Participant Selection
Data Collection	7. Conduct Interviews
Analysis & Interpretation	8. Thematic Data Analysis
	9. Confirmatory Interviews
Summary	10. Draw Conclusions
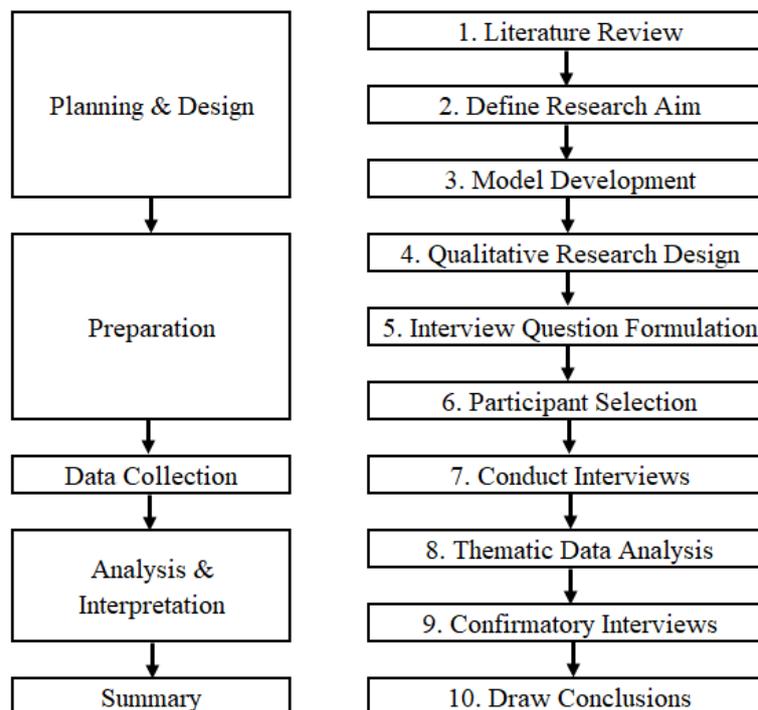
Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of analysis of scientific sources, 2025

Fehrer, Moder, and Rögliner (2025) in their semi-structured qualitative interviews posted open-ended questions that based on responses were adjusted. The necessity of additional changes diminished with time, displaying saturation and degree of consistency. Iterative structure enabled questions to develop at each stage, providing initial ideas and more in-depth insights of more experienced participants. Interviews began with less senior managers, gathering initial perspectives, followed by senior managers, who provided clarifications and deeper insights based on the preliminary findings. This structure allowed for early insights and later validation. The final phase included confirmatory interviews, where questions were adjusted based on earlier findings.

2.2. Method justification

This section explains why the qualitative research method, particularly the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, is the most appropriate for achieving the research objectives of this thesis. An interview is a structured or semi-structured conversation method that allows the researcher to gather in-depth insights, opinions, and examples directly from participants, while maintaining flexibility to explore emerging topics. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves identifying, coding, and interpreting recurring

patterns (themes) within interview data. It helps transform individual narratives into structured insights that can address the research objectives. The qualitative method was chosen due to the fact that the phenomenon of interest, i.e. managerial assessment of the contribution of employee improvement, is interpretive and context-specific by nature. Quantitative measures are unable to reflect the subtle logic and organizational politics that shape promotions. The participants selected are managers who have most power in converting the initiatives of the employees into the outcomes of advancement and they offer information that is not available in the data collected by the employees alone or through documents. Such methodological decision corresponds to the interpretivism approach and promotes the exploratory purpose of the study.

In the work of Storvang, Haug, and Nguyen (2020) it is shown how exploratory cases can help shape interview themes in qualitative research. In their own work, as themes emerged, the researchers refined their questions to dig deeper into specific patterns of user engagement in innovation processes. The systematic literature review approach followed by Malinova, Gross, and Mendling (2022) shows that qualitative research questions can be formulated based on the identified gaps in process improvement research. Thus, the qualitative analysis was guided by the creation of 20 interview questions based on literature review (Table 4).

Table 4.

Interview questions

Dimensions	Questions	Authors
Internal Motivation	Does your organization, including individual managers, actively encourage employees to contribute to process improvement? If so, in what ways?	Shepherd & McLeod (2020), Van Veenendaal (2024)
	How employees' involvement in process improvement is identified, supported, and/or rewarded?	Schedlinsky et al. (2025), Semrau (2024)
Improvement vs Operations	How does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? Does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?.	Brajer-Marczak (2014), Medeiros et al. (2025)
	How does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions, such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, when evaluating employees? If so, in what ways?	Brajer-Marczak (2014), Shepherd & McLeod (2020)
Cultural Support	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?	Purnima & Sohana (2024), Semrau (2024)

	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your opinion, is this something that depends on the organization itself?	Loshin (2011), Fehrer et al. (2025), Semrau (2024)
Reputation and Informal Networks	Does employee visibility or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization, influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?".	Huesmann et al. (2020), Loss & Renucci (2020)
	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?	Medeiros et al. (2025), Leary & Kowalski (1990)
Tenure	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? And are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?	Risal et al. (2023), Huesmann et al. (2020)
Career System Support	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?	Whitchurch et al. (2021), Medeiros et al. (2025)
	Does your organization have formal systems to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?	Medeiros et al. (2025), Lips-Wiersma & Hall (2007)
	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?	Jiang et al. (2012), Medeiros et al. (2025)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of analysis of scientific sources, 2025

The prepared questions were also grouped into career advancement dimensions that provided a structure for the qualitative interviews. The dimensions reflect both the concepts found in the literature and the gaps identified in existing research and were designed to help and group gathered information on how process improvement involvement is perceived in organizational practice. These questions were interpreted thematically to determine trends regarding how managers view process improvement involvement when it comes to promotions and career advancement.

Past studies justify the use of qualitative research in career-related research in organizations. Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) presented qualitative research, which interviewed 50 respondents, comprising of HR professionals, managers and employees in a two-year time frame. With an aim to capture the process of career advancement in the context of organizational change, they showed that a bigger sample size can be used to give an insight into various levels of an organization. Consistent with this, Stake (1998) pointed out that case study research is particularly most appropriate in real-life organizational phenomena and the integration of qualitative research with some quantitative dimensions is useful in assessing behavioral patterns

in a more holistic manner. Similarly, Whitchurch et al. (2021) carried out a two-year qualitative study of career advancement, interviewing 49 mid-career academics. Their data analysis covered predefined dimensions and emergent ones, demonstrating the way that structured qualitative inquiry could reveal organizational career dynamics. Given this research purpose and scope of the study to only the manager level and the timeframe of only one year, the approximate sample size to be used in this thesis is estimated to be 10-20 managers and will be revised according to the data saturation as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5.

Estimated sample of interview participants

Study	Number of Participants
Lips-Wiersma & Hall (2007)	50 semi-structured interviews (4 HR professionals, managers, and employees; exact number of senior position holders not specified, throughout 2 years)
Huesmann et al. (2020)	12 semi-structured interviews
Whitchurch et al. (2021)	49 semi-structured interviews (mid-career academics, throughout 2 years)
Fehrer, Moder, and Rogliner (2025)	5 semi-structured interviews
Estimated sample of interview participants	**10-20 managers (estimated)**

Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of analysis of scientific sources, 2025

In general, the qualitative research design and interview format were aligned with the aims of the study and the identified research gaps. This methodology provided a solid foundation for examining how managers evaluate employee involvement in process improvement and how these evaluations influence career advancement.

2.3. Data collection and analysis: validity, reliability, and limitations

During the qualitative interviews, managers were selected on the condition that they have the authority to influence promotion decisions, aligning with the organizational perspective of this research. Special attention was paid to understanding how organizations measure employee contributions to process improvement, through formal evaluations, recognition systems or informally. The managers were required to have at least three years of experience, which was captured in the questionnaire. Fintech industry was chosen because Lithuania is hub of fintech in Europe, especially big cities Vilnius and Kaunas. The availability of industry professionals helped in the collection of data and the sector being fast-paced and innovation-driven provided good environment to examine how process improvement can lead to career growth in office-based work

environments. Managers gave their views, personal experiences, and actual case scenarios about the process of improvement and career advancement on a voluntary basis. Data access was obtained through direct engagement with managers. The data was gathered through semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face, telephone, or online interviews. In the case of participants who could not arrange the sessions because of workload, the written questionnaire was offered, which the participants completed and sent back at their own convenience. Online and Questionnaire response formats demonstrate flexibility in meeting participants' schedules. The length of each interview was about 40-60 minutes, which was enough time to discuss the topic in detail without losing the attention of the participants. To ensure that the findings were valid, confirmatory interviews were conducted to validate the interpretations and maintain the validity of results. This gave the respondents an opportunity to expand on issues raised in the main interview if needed. The transcription of interviews was automated using AI-based transcription systems that were integrated into the virtual call systems. This choice was made due to practicality and reliability, as the tools offered correct real-time transcripts, allowing to handle data efficiently, reduced the chances of losing data and minimized the time spent on transcription. To maintain quality transcripts were checked right after every interview to confirm they were an accurate reflection of the responses. Transcriptions were coded and recurring themes and sub-themes examined. Thematic coding was conducted manually in Excel to ensure consistency across participant responses and was grouped by analytical categories. To increase transparency, an overview of respondents is presented in Table 6. The table summarizes key characteristics of the participants while preserving anonymity.

Table 6.

Respondents' information

Respondent Code	Role	Gender	Years of Managerial Experience	Interview Format	Additional Follow-up
R1	Compliance Manager	F	3	Online	–
R2	Team Leader	M	4	Questionnaire	Email clarification
R3	Compliance Manager	M	3	Online	–
R4	Talent Acquisition Manager	F	3	Questionnaire	–
R5	Head of HR	F	3	Online	Short follow-up call
R6	Finance Manager	F	3	Online	–

Respondent Code	Role	Gender	Years of Managerial Experience	Interview Format	Additional Follow-up
R7	Chief Operating Officer	M	5	Online	–
R8	Chief Process Consultant	F	6	Questionnaire	Email clarification
R9	Chief HR Officer	F	6	Online	–
R10	Chief Operating Officer	F	7	Questionnaire	–
R11	Strategy & Operations Manager	M	8	Online	–
R12	Head of Process Excellence	F	8	Online	–
R13	HR Manager	F	8	Questionnaire	Email clarification
R14	Founder	M	10	Questionnaire	–
R15	Board Member	M	20	Questionnaire	–

Source: Author, 2025

This table shows the 15 respondents and their role, gender, years of managerial experience, interview type and if follow-up was performed. Consistent data collection, transcription verification and similar coding procedures were employed in the process to ensure reliability. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was strictly maintained and all the data collected were kept and handled securely. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and gave their consent to participate. Codes were assigned to each participant, and only aggregated findings were presented in the analysis. Since it is difficult to measure employee participation in process improvement and its impact on career advancement, since contribution does not necessarily exist in formal or documented form, this thesis seeks managerial perspective and evidence in determining the extent to which contribution is recognized. This methodology was created for in depth exploration of managerial perspectives and for understanding promotion decisions in relation to process improvement.

While this qualitative approach allows for insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Manager perspective-based study can be subjective because of the interpretation of promotion requirements and contributions to process improvement. Even though the managers can comment on the promotional decisions, their opinions may not be comprehensive enough to reflect the experiences of the employees and their internal motivation dimension to this subject. The sample is also limited to Lithuania, with a focus on biggest cities like Vilnius and Kaunas, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to broader cultural or organizational contexts. The use of an iterative interview process, while useful for refining questions, could introduce slight

differences across participant answers. Additionally, responses may be shaped by social desirability, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as recognition and advancement. Despite these limitations, the study aimed to maintain methodology and transparency throughout the research process.

3. THE ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL SECTOR RESPONDENT EMPIRICAL RESULTS

This chapter introduces the empirical results of the qualitative study that was carried out among managers in the Lithuanian fintech industry. The analysis was conducted based on semi-structured interviews and in accordance with the dimensions identified in the research framework: internal motivation, improvement vs. operations, cultural support, reputation and informal networks, tenure, and career system support. The dimensions are discussed one by one to show how the perceptions of the managers relate to employee involvement in process improvement and career advancement opportunities.

3.1. Thematic analysis results

The findings were generalized to describe empirical data and to confirm the framework developed in the earlier chapters. To summarize the key findings, the results of all the six dimensions are shown in the table below. When analyzing the experts' answers for each question, many codes were identified. Their summary is shown in the table. Each dimension of the question is discussed in subsections 3.1.1-3.1.6. Table summarizes codes, categories and themes that were found in the analysis, demonstrating the connection between career advancement opportunities and the employee's involvement in the process improvement (Table 7).

Table 7.

Empirical research analysis results

Codes	First-Order Categories	Second-Order Categories	Themes Identified
Rewards, Metrics, Support, Ownership	Initiative beyond job description	Internal motivation	Internal motivation to improve the process is reinforced by leadership support and trust.
	Creativity & innovation		
	Managerial support & trust	Leadership support & Trust	
	Empowerment to take ownership		
Improvement, Ownership, Expertise, Visibility	Deep process knowledge	Process expertise	Process improvement comes from process expertise and fresh perspectives.
	Newcomers' fresh ideas	Newcomer insights	
	Challenging old approach		
Culture, Metrics, Ownership, Collaboration	Verbal and public recognition	Cultural support	Improvement efforts are connected to cultural support, learning and collaboration.
	Suggestion systems		
	Learning from failure	Learning & Collaboration	
	Cross-team collaboration		

Visibility, Improvement, Culture, Reputation, Leadership	Cross-team impact and visibility	Visibility & leadership awareness	Visibility and leadership awareness strengthen reputation and informal networks.
	Managerial awareness		
	Informal networks	Reputation & Informal networks	
	Improvement success history		
Ownership, Expertise, Improvement	Ownership mindset	Ownership & Transparency	Tenure builds credibility through ownership and transparency.
	Transparency & openness		
Metrics, Feedback, Reward	KPIs and score tables	Career System Support	Career system support helps link improvement to rewards and recognition.
	Performance reviews		
	Bonus & reward structures	Rewards & Recognition	
	Promotion decisions		

Source: Author, 2025

Table consolidates the thematic findings and form the empirical foundation for the updated framework presented in Figure 4 in chapter 3.2.

3.1.1 Internal motivation dimension

This section aimed to examine managerial views on the way organizations motivate, facilitate and maintain the internal motivation of employees, to make contributions beyond their operational responsibilities. First question presented from first dimension of "Internal motivation" to the respondents was "Does your organization, including individual managers, actively encourage employees to contribute to process improvement? If so, in what ways?". Respondents explained that organizations do encourage employee involvement in process improvement, and it is expressed in several ways. Companies provide structured channels such as suggestion systems, designated communication channels and weekly manager check-ins to offer a chance for employees to share their ideas face-to-face. Managers encourage these channels and process improvement is integrated into performance reviews, one-on-one feedback sessions, and quarterly OKRs, so that contributions are integrated into regular evaluation and career discussions.

Continuing to question "How employees' involvement in process improvement is identified, supported, and/or rewarded?". Respondents indicated that it is done using a mix of financial, developmental, and cultural mechanisms. The most common form of reward was bonuses. Varying from yearly bonuses for significant contributions to small rewards such as gift vouchers. Outside of monetary rewards, managers stated that managers assign additional time,

resources or attention for employees to focus on process improvement. Other organizations highlighted that they give opportunities to take ownership in improvements, encourage employees during performance reviews, provide feedback sessions or public recognition (Table 8).

Table 8.

Internal motivation dimension summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Support	Dedicated resources and time.	*"...we try to allocate resources and time accordingly"/ "...the 20% is left for either self-development or exactly these incentives."/" Leaders provide the necessary support and resources for employees to succeed in their efforts."*
Ownership	Encouraged to implement ideas.	*"Employee is encouraged to share ideas...they are expected to lead"/ "...it is often encouraged and incentivized."/" ...take leading roles and be a part of processes."/ "One of our cultural values is "own it"."*
	Ownership is enforced.	*"...a reward mostly comes in a way of leading this initiative on your own to its execution."/ "Trusted with more ownership or responsibility."/ "...giving the employees freedom to drive process improvements."*
Reward	Financial incentives.	*"There are yearly bonuses."/ "When overall goals are achieved, employees receive bonuses. "/" One-time bonuses may be granted"/Offering 20% from all profit..."/" Yes, with gift coupons".*
	Verbal or public recognition.	*"It is encouraged by praise and verbal promotion to partake in it."/" Employees who take the initiative to improve processes are recognized and rewarded, through public acknowledgment."*
Metrics	Structured programs and metrics.	*"Rewarded, through... formal recognition programs"/ "There are suggestion forms."/" ...in our organization we call it Continuous Improvement platform."/" ...add them into the personal OKRs."/ "Yes, it's included in the organizations quarterly OKRs."*

Source: Author 2025

Summarizing the internal motivation dimension, employees are encouraged to contribute to process improvement through formal mechanisms such as suggestion systems, OKR's and manager check-ins on a regular basis. Managers reinforce this by investing time, resources, and training, and cultural values such as "own it. Recognition works through verbal appreciation, public acknowledgement, and inclusion in performance reviews. Financial incentives are bonuses and vouchers. These results support Shepherd and McLeod (2020) argument that managerial encouragement helps align employee motivation with organizational needs, which suggests that organized recognition and empowerment practices can turn motivation into contributions to process improvement.

3.1.2 Improvement vs operations dimension

"How does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? Does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?". Respondents stated that those who

improve processes are seen as entrepreneurial and innovative, with leadership potential and suitable candidates for promotion or roles requiring innovation and creativity. Several managers noted that advancement often requires doing more than the job description, and employees who perform process improvement are more deserving of praise and opportunities for career growth. Operational excellence was stated as highly valued as well, particularly for roles where subject-matter knowledge is essential. It was stated that more senior roles involvement in process improvement is expected for the role, which further solidifies the relationship between improvement and advancement. 53% of respondents highlighted that there exists some difference between improvers and process experts in promotion decision-making, whereas only 20% stated that there is no difference, indicating a trend for preferring the process improvers rather than operators where career advancement is being considered. Although process improvers are more likely to be promoted to a leadership or innovation-focused position, it was also indicated that process experts are appreciated and prioritized for positions where consistency, quality, and mastery of the process are the primary factors.

Regarding "How does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions, such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, when evaluating employees?", respondents stated that organizations differentiate contribution to improvement by impact and visibility above other aspects. Over half of managers stated that contributions must bring actual value and create measurable change before rewards are given. Noticeable improvements typically carry more influence and positively influence performance reviews for advancement, than gradual or less visible change. At the same time, about a third of respondents indicated that their organizations make effort to flatten all contributions, no matter what the size, in the interest of maintaining inclusiveness and encouraging ongoing contribution. (Table 9).

Table 9.

Improvement vs Operations dimension summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Improvement	Initiative prioritized for leadership.	*"Innovative and creative employees are prioritized for roles requiring similar skills."/ "Employees who improve processes are often rewarded with promotions and leadership opportunities."/ "Proactive system improvers are seen as potential leaders."/" In senior-level positions, it is expected that employees will look for improvements. "*
Ownership	Going beyond the job description.	*"Process experts who don't suggest improvements are seen as satisfied."/ "A person has to do extra to show intention for career advancement."/" A person must do extra to show intention to achieve career advancement."*

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Expertise	Process experts for execution roles.	*"Process experts are prioritized for more analytical roles."/ "Exceptional executors can grow in seniority."/ "Some people like to be exceptional executors knowing "what every day will bring".*
Improvement	Based on value and significance.	*"Impact of the contribution is important; changes must be valuable."/ "Significant impact contributions are rewarded better."/" Has to be valuable, making a change."*
Visibility	Based on visibility and scale.	*"Bigger scale effected contributions are more noticeable by management and overall organization."/ "Major contributions that drive important organizational changes receive greater attention."*

Source: Author 2025

Summarizing improvement vs operations dimension improvers generally are seen as more innovative and better positioned for advancement. Career growth was linked with doing more than what is in the job description and generating measurable and visible impact on process improvement. While outstanding process performers are valued, particularly in analytics or executional roles, their output is less frequently associated with promotion opportunities. Newcomers are appreciated for their fresh perspective and initiative. The difference between operational and process improvement is similar to that Whitchurch et al. (2021) noted that proactive, role-expanding engagement beyond formal role boundaries can support career mobility. This is also consistent with Medeiros et al. (2025) who suggest that engagement in improvement programs improves organizational performance and employee visibility, which can improve career growth opportunities.

3.1.3. Cultural support dimension

This dimension assessed which cultural values, practices, and management attitudes encourage or discourage employees from participating in continuous improvement that may guide their career advancement. "How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area? ". 87% of respondents agreed that process improvement is critical for organizational culture. It was described as a key enabler of innovation, productivity, and organization expansion, with some highlighting that it gets increasingly relevant each year, mainly because of competitive pressures in the industry. For measuring metrics, performance management tools such as OKRs and KPIs are used in quarterly or annual reviews. Not all organizations apply structured measurements and some of the respondents indicated that measurement is informal or qualitative, made from the

observations by managers. This also confirmed the selection of managers as the participants in the interview, since they are the key to this assessment.

Analyzing "What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your opinion, is this something that depends on the organization itself?", organizational culture was emphasized by respondents as being the deciding factor on whether process improvement contributions are translated into career advancement. Employees who demonstrate initiative, drive change, and take greater responsibility are more likely to be seen as candidates for promotion, with some organizations even formalizing this into cultural principles such as "own it." Transparency and openness were also mentioned as cultural enablers, in the sense that those organizations that promote open communication, embrace failure as learning opportunities and practice honest feedback create a culture where improvement activities are rewarded. Another recurring theme was teamwork, with respondents noting that collaboration and a solutions-oriented mindset make contributions more visible and appreciated. Overall, while many agreed that cultural factors like ownership, openness, and collaboration form the foundation of the relationship between process improvement and career development, several respondents also remarked that the extent of this relationship varies by organization and even sometimes by manager, showing that cultural consistency is not always there (Table 10).

Table 10.

Cultural support dimension summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Culture	Process improvement is key.	*"Fundamental part of our organizational culture…"/ "Process improvement is an essential part"/ "Highly important, key driver of innovation and efficiency."/" Very important to organizational culture."*
Improvement	Importance increases over time.	*"It is getting more important with every year due to competition."/ "Operational teams have it in yearly targets."*
Metrics	Measured through OKRs, KPIs.	*"Individual/team/organizational OKRs…"/ "KPI improvements in quarterly/half-year/yearly goals."/" Metrics used are OKR achieved."/" Individual KPIs/metrics are set and assessed."*
Ownership	Ownership signals readiness.	*"Collaboration, solutions-oriented mindset are culturally valued."/" …drive initiatives on your own and there are opportunities to advance in career." /" One of the key cultural values we uphold is "own it."*
Culture	Open communication and transparency.	*"Failures do not influence blame, rather lessons learnt."/ "Transparency, a growth mindset, and leadership buy-in are critical."/" Full and honest transparency."/ "Open communication."*

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Collaboration	Collaboration links to visibility.	*"Collaboration and solutions-oriented mindset are culturally valued."/ ...everything is teamwork effort, that we are working for the better effort and to try to reward any enhancements."*

Source: Author 2025

In conclusion of the cultural support dimension, the results indicate that cultural support is a determining factor for career advancement. Majority of the respondents highlighted process improvement as a fundamental cultural value essential for innovation, efficiency, and organizational development. The cultural elements that were repeatedly pointed out as facilitators of career development included ownership and transparency. Respondents admitted that the intensity of such cultural support varies among organizations and managers, and the way the efforts are identified and rewarded. In most organizations, formal performance systems were employed whereas in others, in particular small organizations, evaluation was informal, and manager led. Process improvement activity results are not only individual, but also culture wide. These findings are in line with Fehrer, Moder, and Roglinger (2025), who emphasize the importance of a multi-level perspective on process improvement systems spanning individual, team, and organizational levels.

3.1.4. Reputation and informal networks dimension

This section asked: "Does employee visibility or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization, influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?". Respondents pointed out that employee visibility is a determining factor in whether process improvement contributions are valued and lead to career growth. Visibility at senior levels generally leads to employees being the first to be thought of for new roles or additional responsibilities. Changes that affect more than one department or that provide tangible value are more visible to senior leaders and more often rewarded. However, respondents also highlighted that visibility is only a part of it, career advancement is also dependent on whether there are career openings present at organization.

Regarding "Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?", respondents agreed that contributing to process improvement can significantly boost an employee's reputation and pave the way for leadership responsibilities if improvements are viable, completed, and produce clear value to the organization. With time, consistent performance earns a reputation, and employees

are seen as more responsible, motivated and capable of leadership. Reputation was defined as accumulative, each improvement adding trust in the employee's capability, enhancing the likelihood that they will be considered for career advancement (Table 11).

Table 11.

Reputation and informal networks dimension summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Visibility	High visibility and sharing of results.	*"...visibility strongly influences recognition and career advancement."/ "Heighten employees' chances to be thought of first. Especially if it's seen by different department or manager." "Yes. Those improvements that are shown in "all hands" or other larger scale meetings, get a lot of traction and attention."*
Improvement	Impactful improvement increase visibility.	*"Contributions that are known to senior leadership or impact multiple departments are more likely to be acknowledged and rewarded."/ "...especially when improvements impact multiple teams."/ "...the actual impact and effectiveness of the contributions are the primary factors considered in career advancement decisions."*
Culture	Opportunities in organization.	*"Yes, but there should also be opportunities for career advancement to happen."/ "Not merging process work with career."*
Impact	Clear value created.	*"It has to be completed projects...That means employee creates value."/ "Yes, if you prove yourself well leading those initiatives."/ "It could lead to leadership responsibilities on condition if it required to manage other team members and this was done successfully."*
Reward	Recognition and representation.	*"...representing the company for our partners and other external manners."/ "...may be seen as role models by their peers and managers."/ "You are dependable and an integral part of the overall team."/" ...entrusted with leadership roles or strategic projects."*
Reputation	Positive reputation builds over time.	*"...you prove yourself well leading those initiatives"/"...the reputation build over time - the more you get right, the greater it gets"/"It shows that you are willing and able to take on further responsibilities in a more senior capacity..."/"...involvement in process improvement positively influences an employee's reputation in the organization."*

Source: Author 2025

In conclusion, of the reputation and informal networks dimension the findings indicated that the visibility and reputation of employees are one of the determinant factors in the contributions to process improvement resulting in career advancement. Respondents noted that recognition is significantly boosted for improvements that can be seen throughout the organization. Improvements that generate tangible value, have multiple teams engaged or are visible to senior leaders, are more likely to result in leadership opportunities. But being visible is not enough, promotion possibilities also require career opportunities in organizations. Meanwhile,

earning a reputation is a key factor. When employees are perceived to be trustworthy and reliable in executing process improvements, they are more likely to be given additional responsibility and leadership roles. By doing so, process improvement does not just increase the visibility of an employee, but it also integrates them into the informal networks, earns trust and recognition that managers rely on when they think about a candidate to promote. Moreover, the results confirm the hypothesis by Loss and Renucci (2020) that reputation plays a central role in shaping promotion possibilities and career-related incentives.

3.1.5. Tenure dimension

This dimension explored "Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? And are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?". About half of respondents stated that employees with longer tenure are more likely to lead initiatives, as they possess deeper knowledge of processes, carry greater expectations from management, and often hold leadership positions that naturally align with improvement responsibilities. Others pointed out that capability and not necessarily tenure is what matters, as new, yet highly capable employees are also charged with leading significant initiatives if they demonstrate skill. One-fifth of the managers said that new employees are often more enthusiastic about initiating process improvements, because they bring new perspectives. Several respondents stated that involvement depends less on tenure and more on individual factors such as role, skills, motivation and organizational culture (Table 12).

Table 12.

Tenure dimension summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Ownership	Tenured process knowledge.	*"Yes, more likely. "/ "...more experienced people take more responsibilities and lead process improvement work."/ "Employees with longer tenure often play an important role in process improvement because of deep knowledge of processes."*
Expertise	Skill and expertise value.	*"More skilled, but not necessarily longer working employees are given opportunities to lead big initiatives. "/ "Experience often brings deeper process insight."*
Improvement	Fresh perspectives and energy.	*"Newer employees can bring fresh perspectives."/" ...new employees bring their new look to processes and are still energetic, to suggest the improvement ideas."/ "...new ones have more suggestions for a change."*

Source: Author 2025

In conclusion of the tenure dimension the respondents stated that employees with longer tenure had higher chances of leading process improvements because of their knowledge of the process and organizational expectations, whereas others emphasized capability, role, and motivation as more important than tenure in deciding who should be involved. It was stated that new recruits usually come up with new ideas, have more energy and are active participants in improvements. In general, tenure was regarded as a contributing, but not a determining factor. The present research supports the work of Risal et al. (2023) that career systems are no longer based on tenure-based promotion but rather on competence-based promotion. Although experience is still important, respondents noted that capability, initiative and process-improvement contributions were more important predictors of promotion than tenure. This helped to confirm the opinion that flexible, competency-based career structures are especially applicable in dynamic sectors like fintech.

3.1.6. Career system support dimension

The dimension of career system support aimed to determine whether organizations have formalized systems that tie process improvement initiatives to career advancement results. To "How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?" respondents stated that employee contribution to process improvement is measured through a mix of formal systems and informal evaluations, with approaches differing across organizations. Over half of managers indicated that improvements are considered during performance or annual reviews. In other organizations, objective metrics such as score tables, statistics or KPI's are used to track the impact of improvements. Regardless of method, contributions were expressed as markers of readiness for greater roles, often accelerating promotion decisions and career advancement.

"Does your organization have formal systems to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?" Respondents highlighted that most organizations have formal programs to reward process improvement effort, although the scope and consistency of the programs vary. Improvements typically are awarded where they provide value, achieve OKRs, or yield significant organizational benefits. On a few occasions, promotions were explicitly connected to impactful contributions, with process improvers being short-listed first when opportunities for career growth were presented. Public acknowledgement was mentioned as another impactful mechanism, ranging from praise in team meetings, newsletters and leadership boards. At the same time, several managers indicated that reviews are

not tied to a formal system, and that outstanding contributions are analyzed within the context of overall performance and not through specific criteria. This means that acknowledgements, promotions, and recognition do take place, but the degree of formality varies (Table 13).

Table 13.

Career system support dimension summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Metrics	Score tables, statistics, charts.	*"There is system to track process improvements, and there is a score table."/ "By looking at monthly/yearly statistics and comparisons of charts…"*
	Annual reviews, goals, and KPIs.	*"Employee contributions…linked to annual performance reviews as well as individual and team goals."/ "Considered as part of the overall performance evaluation process…through individual KPIs, participation in projects, and feedback from managers."*
	Broader evaluation considerations.	*"Recognition is integrated into the performance evaluation…"/" standout contributions can influence performance reviews."*
Feedback	Praise, meetings or public communications.	*"…publicly thanking and congratulating employees for important achievements during monthly all-hands meetings."*
Reward	Bonuses and financial reward.	*"Yes, when issuing bonuses or promotions, process improvers are prioritized…"/" …we do Bonuses and where applicable also Promotions."*

Source: Author 2025

Last question was regarding "What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?". One of the challenges connecting process improvement to career growth was difficulty assigning contribution fairly to individuals in group projects and measuring the actual impact of the improvements, especially when outputs are not measurable. As well, respondents noted that focus on quantity can dilute the real value of contributions. Similarly, minor improvements, though valuable, are less noticeable and were noted to be less likely to affect promotion. Finally, recognition itself was mentioned as an obstacle when employee contributions are overlooked, and motivation to pursue process improvement declines, weakening the link of improvement and career growth (Table 19).

Table 14.

Challenges summary

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
Challenge	Difficulty in isolating	*"One key challenge is attributing individual contributions in team-based improvements, many successful initiatives involve collaboration, making it hard to isolate who drove the change."*

Code	Description	Citations from Respondents
	individual contributions.	
	Improvements being intangible.	*"Not all process improvements can be easily measured or directly linked to results, which makes it harder to evaluate their impact on career advancement."*
	Quantity over quality.	*"There is an issue, when improvements are encouraged very much, that the focus is on quantities of suggestions and not their quality."*
	Smaller improvements going unnoticed	*"Employees contribute through smaller, incremental improvements that may be less visible, while others in large projects that are more easily recognized."*
	Failure to notice contributions may reduce motivation.	*"Same as with all other deliveries, failure to notice and failure to acknowledge."*

Source: Author 2025

In summary of the career system support dimension, it was seen that organizations rely on a mix of formal systems and informal assessments to evaluate and reward employee involvement to process improvement. Managers reported that they include contributions in annual reviews, OKRs, and KPIs, and others reported relying on soft evaluations. In both instances, high contributions were viewed as indicators of willingness to take up higher level positions. It was noted that while many organizations formally recognize process improvement efforts, the consistency and structure of these programs vary. Respondents highlighted the challenge of giving credit fairly in team-based improvements and focusing too much on the quantity instead of the quality. Furthermore, in cases where the contributions are not realized or appreciated, employee motivation may drop, weakening the link between process improvement and career development. These results are consistent with Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) view that organizational career support contributes to employee motivation and commitment. The connection between process improvement and promotion can be based on managerial interpretation, which contributes to theoretical knowledge in clarifying the visibility of improvement contributions.

### 3.2. The meaning of empirical evidence

The empirical study has shown how managers perceive employee contribution to process improvement and its relevance to career advancement in organizations, particularly in the fintech sector. It was confirmed that process improvement is widely embedded into organizational practices and cultures. The existing framework was updated to represent the results. The

framework summarized the empirical evidence in all career advancement dimensions, validated the existing dimensions and clarified their roles. The updated framework differentiates the dimensions by color coding: empirically confirmed elements are marked in green, while newly added or redefined elements are marked in red. Overall, the empirical results showed that participation in process improvement is associated with positive career advancement outcomes when the evaluated dimensions are present in organizations (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Updated framework
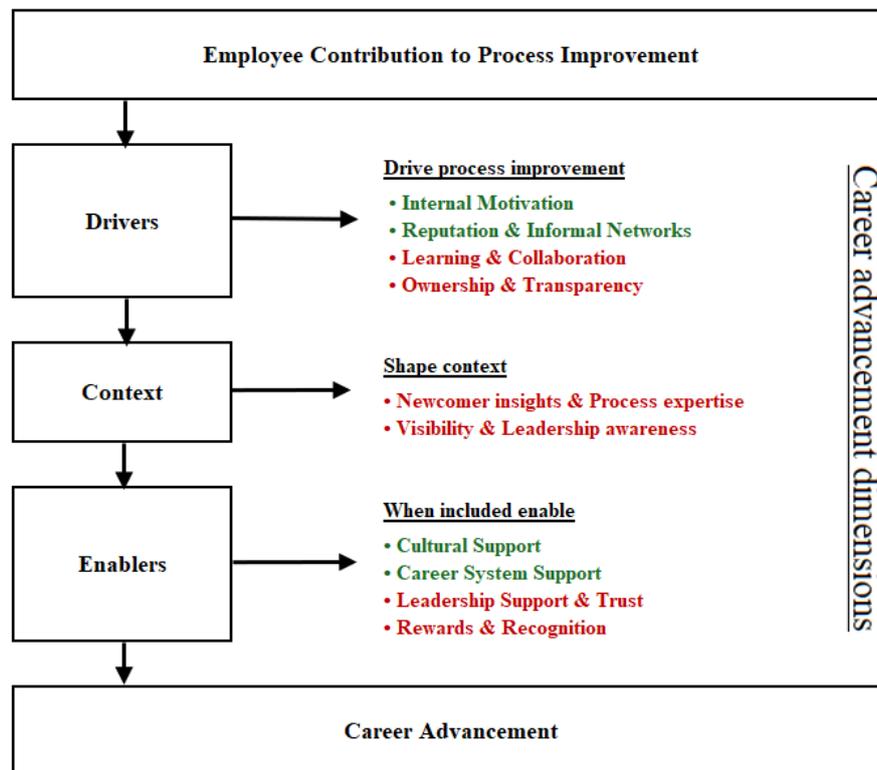
Source: Author 2025

In Figure 4, the Drivers layer describes the factors that influence and drive employee engagement in process improvement. Internal motivation as well as reputation and informal networks were confirmed by the empirical findings as important drivers. In addition, learning and collaboration, along with ownership and transparency, were expanded based on the research results. The Context layer represents the managerial perspective that shapes how process improvement contributions are interpreted and recognized. Visibility and leadership awareness were added as contextual factors that affect the perceptions of managers towards improvement behaviors. The Improvement vs. Operations dimension was redefined as newcomer insights and process expertise, with the focus on the fact that process improvement is not a result of tenure but a combination of new views and process knowledge. The Enablers layer reflects organizational

conditions that, when present, support the translation of process improvement contributions into career advancement outcomes. Cultural support and career system support were confirmed as important enablers, while leadership support and trust, as well as rewards and recognition, were expanded as distinct dimensions due to their significance in the empirical findings. Together, the three layers illustrate how employee contributions to process improvement are influenced, shaped and enabled to result in potential career advancement. The expanded framework clarifies different dimensions and could be used or expanded in future research.

The semi-structured interviews with managers of fintech organizations were the empirical source of the findings of this research. The findings showed that process improvement is encouraged and supported in most organizations, both formally and informally. Managers indicated that employees were encouraged to share ideas through suggestion platforms, performance reviews and cross-functional initiatives. Encouragement was usually given in terms of resources, training, and time. Reward mechanisms and recognition systems vary across organizations, but generally consist of financial rewards like bonuses, gift vouchers or rewards like public recognition and seen in organizational communications. In other instances, employees were given the responsibility of leading improvements, which in turn positioned them for further career advancement.

The results revealed that the visibility and reputation of employees were important in career advancement. The promotional decisions were more likely to be influenced by improvements that were made to organization-wide meetings or those that were recognized by the senior management. The employees who participated actively in the process improvement were often viewed as more responsible, motivated and able to lead, which improved their reputation and gave them more opportunities to be assigned leadership roles. Process improvement does not only make an employee more visible, but also makes them part of the informal networks, which earns them trust and recognition that managers can count on when they consider a candidate to promote.

The role of tenure was discovered to be subtle. The study concluded that although organizations did not necessarily draw a distinct line between process improvement and operational expertise, employees who went out of their job description and helped in improvement efforts were more likely to become visible and to be thought of in terms of career advancement. Although tenured employees were more experienced and, in some cases, led the process improvement, new employees were also valued, because they offered new ideas and fresh perspectives, which were equally important. Promotion was not therefore based on tenure alone

but on initiative, contribution and the visibility of outcome. Also noting that employees good at operational tasks are more likely to be promoted in analytical roles.

Organizational culture and leadership were significant factors in deciding whether process improvement contributions would be recognized or lead to career advancement. In organizations where values like ownership and process improvement were incorporated into the culture, the contributions of employees were more formally recognized. The involvement of leadership was also important. Managers are tasked with reinforcing the culture by providing resources, time, and acknowledgment for employees. Suggestion systems, performance reviews, and feedback sessions that foster employee initiative were all mentioned as important. Companies that encourage open communication, accept failure as a learning experience and engage in honest feedback develop a culture in which improvement efforts are rewarded. According to the respondents, contributions are more visible and valued through teamwork, collaboration and a solutions-oriented mindset. While not necessarily formally systematized, managers reported that individuals demonstrating initiative toward process improvement receive more visibility, and this in turn affects promotion decisions.

Altogether, active participation in the process improvement can improve career advancement, especially when the contributions are visibly valuable and meet the organizational objectives. When continuous improvement is underlying value in organizations, the efforts of employees are naturally incorporated into career evaluation. In smaller organizations, assessment of individual performance takes the place of formal systems, while in large organizations, formalized assessment systems exist more often. As well, in the study employee visibility and reputation emerged as key factors. The employees who have earned a reputation of innovation and ownership in organizations are more likely to be considered in future as leaders or for increased responsibility. Employees who initiate and lead process improvements become more visible, their reputation is boosted, and they are more often assigned strategic projects or promoted to higher positions. The results demonstrated how fintech organizations in Lithuania integrated such contributions into career choices, which was done formally in some cases and informally in others.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A review of theoretical literature showed that process improvement is mostly a strategic and ongoing method aimed at improving organizational efficiency, flexibility, and competitiveness. The literature also revealed that process improvement involves active employee participation in identifying, suggesting, implementing improvements and often going beyond formal job descriptions.

- Career advancement has been examined through multiple lenses, such as tenure-based promotion, reputation, informal networks and organizational culture. While prior literature highlights the importance of visibility and leadership opportunities in shaping career outcomes, it does not analyze how process improvement contributes to these dynamics. There were also gaps in the knowledge of whether such contributions were systematically evaluated and rewarded in promotion decisions in organizations.

- The results of the research show that employee involvement in process improvement contributes to career advancement primarily through increased visibility, increased ownership and readiness for greater responsibility.

- The framework created was supported and expanded based on the empirical findings, which indicated that identified dimensions help shape career advancement outcomes.

- However, the findings also indicate that employee involvement in process improvement does not automatically lead to career advancement, particularly in contexts where evaluation and reward mechanisms are informal, inconsistent or weakly linked to promotion criteria. Their contributions are less visible and organizational career structures can offer limited advancement opportunities.

- The findings demonstrate that employee contributions to process improvement are often not systematically or uniformly evaluated and rewarded in promotion decisions. While some organizations apply formal mechanisms, in many cases the assessment of improvement contributions remains informal and dependent on manager interpretation, creating subjectivity in how such contributions translate into career advancement.

- The study contributes to a broader understanding of career development by demonstrating how employee involvement in process improvement enhances employee visibility, reputation and perceived readiness for expanded responsibilities. From a scientific perspective, the study adds to the body of literature on career development and process improvement by empirically linking employee involvement in process improvement with career advancement outcomes.

- The research also makes contribution by enhancing the difference between improvement-oriented and operational roles not as a performance comparison, but as a managerial

interpretation mechanism, thus extending previous typologies of careers like boundaryless and niche careers into organizational decision-making situations (Whitchurch et al., 2021).

- The research results could be applied to other process intensive and controlled industries such as banking, insurance, telecommunications, and information technologies, where continuous improvement plays an important role in organizational operations.

- The study limitation is that the analysis is based on managerial perspectives and does not include the employee perceptions which may reveal different experiences of process improvement and career advancement. Manager responses may be shaped by social desirability, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as recognition and advancement.

- Overall, this master thesis demonstrated that in innovation-based settings, employees who contribute to process improvement can gain reputation, trust, and increased responsibility, placing them in a stronger position for career advancement. With appropriate managerial support and leadership systems in place, process improvement can function as a meaningful internal mobility tool. This is becoming increasingly relevant for organizations facing competitive pressures and aiming to build transparent career systems that recognize contributions and support long-term organizational resilience.

Recommendations made in this research were as follows.

- Firstly, clear criteria that assess employee involvement in improvement activities should be included in performance reviews and connected to promotion and development decisions. Organizations should aim to increase transparency and reduce subjectivity in career advancement decisions, indicating that competencies, such as initiative, problem-solving, and cross-team collaboration, are valued and rewarded. This is particularly important to avoid situations in which employees' efforts remain overlooked due to limited visibility, informal evaluation practices, or inconsistent managerial assessment.

- Secondly, leadership should be proactive and consistent in giving feedback and allocating time to improvement efforts, as leadership support and managerial encouragement were found to be one of the major factors in shaping career advancement.

- Thirdly, systems to increase the visibility of contribution should be implemented, so that both small and large-scale improvements can be recognized. This could help increase awareness and spread process improvement culture for improvement across the organization.

- Together, these recommendations aim to better align managerial behavior, recognition practices and career systems. So that employee contributions to process improvement are more consistently acknowledged and can more effectively support career advancement.

Future research directions.

- Future studies may be enhanced by increasing the number of respondents to include employee's internal motivation area or a mixed-method design to determine the effect of improvement participation on promotion patterns in the long term. Quantitative confirmation of the conceptual framework could also be performed to evaluate whether the dimensions of internal motivation, reputation and informal networks, learning and collaboration, ownership and transparency, newcomer insights and process expertise, visibility and leadership awareness, cultural support, career system support, leadership support and trust, rewards and recognition are applicable in other organizational contexts.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Klaudija RIAUKĖ

Master Thesis

Business Process Management Master Program

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Vilnius University

Supervisor Dr. Laura Pilukienė, Vilnius, 2025

SUMMARY

41 pages, 4 figures, 14 tables, 42 references.

The main purpose of this master thesis is to explore how employee involvement in process improvement contributes to employees' careers, presenting an empirical study of employees in the Fintech sector.

The Master thesis consists of three main parts: the analysis of literature, the research and its results, a conclusion and recommendations.

Literature analysis reviewed process improvement, employee involvement, and career advancement, systematized the previous research, and established the main dimensions, such as internal motivation, visibility, cultural support, informal networks, tenure, and improvement-oriented behavior. Which are the foundation for the framework applied in the empirical research.

Following the literature analysis, qualitative research design was utilized, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers from Lithuanian fintech companies for their insights on their experience with process improvement and career development.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the qualitative findings were grouped and dimensions in the created framework expanded. Empirical evidence showed that employees who were actively involved in process improvement were more visible, trusted, and given the opportunity to lead other initiatives. Participation in process improvement showed to impact promotion decisions, especially when the contributions are observable and in line with organizational objectives. However, career advancement is conditional rather than automatic, relying on cultural support, managerial encouragement, and formal or informal recognition systems. The findings also indicated that although experienced employees tend to lead the improvement process because of

their knowledge of the processes, new employees bring new ideas and energy, which indicated that promotion is more dependent on the ability and initiative than tenure.

The study adds to the literature by highlighting the link between process improvement practices and career advancement. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how process improvement behaviors can translate into career outcomes and provide practical insights for managers seeking to align employee development with organizational improvement objectives.

The study has limitations due to its focus on only managerial views. Its sample is limited to Lithuanian fintech managers, and possible biases due to the interpretive interviews and socially desirable responses.

In conclusion, this master thesis has shown that employee participation in process improvement can lead to career advancement when identified career advancement dimensions are present.

DARBUOTOJŲ ĮSITRAUKIMO Į PROCESŲ GERINIMĄ SĄSAJA SU KARJEROS GALIMYBĖMIS ORGANIZACIJOSE

KLAUDIJA RIAUKĖ

Magistro baigiamasis darbas

Verslo Procesų Valdymo magistrantūros studijos

Vilniaus universiteto Ekonomikos ir verslo administravimo fakultetas

Darbo vadovė Dr. Laura Pilukienė

Vilnius, 2025 metai

SANTRAUKA

41 puslapiai, 14 lentelių, 4 paveikslėliai, 42 literatūros šaltiniai.

Pagrindinis šio magistro baigiamojo darbo tikslas - išanalizuoti, kaip darbuotojų įsitraukimas į procesų gerinimą prisideda prie jų karjeros galimybių, remiantis empiriniu Lietuvos finansiniu technologijų sektoriaus tyrimu.

Darbą sudaro trys pagrindinės dalys: literatūros analizė, tyrimo metodologija ir rezultatai, išvados ir rekomendacijos.

Literatūros analizėje apžvelgiami procesų gerinimo, darbuotojų įsitraukimo ir karjeros galimybių teoriniai aspektai, sisteminami ankstesni moksliniai tyrimai. Taip pat išskiriamos pagrindinės dimensijos - vidinė motyvacija, matomumas organizacijoje, kultūrinė parama, neformalūs ryšiai, darbo stažas ir į gerinimą orientuotas elgesys. Literatūros analizė leido suformuoti teorinį modelį, kuris tapo pagrindu empiriniam tyrimui.

Atlikus literatūros analizę, buvo nustatyta, jog procesų gerinimas siejamas ne tik su organizacine verte, bet ir su individualiomis darbuotojo karjeros galimybėmis, ypač tuomet, kai įsitraukimas yra matomas ir pripažįstamas organizacijoje.

Tyrimas buvo atliktas taikant kokybinį pusiau struktūrizuotų interviu metodą, kuriame dalyvavo 15 Lietuvos finansų technologijų sektoriaus vadovų.

Atliktas kokybinis tyrimas atskleidė, kad aktyviai į procesu gerinimą įsitraukiantys darbuotojai tampa labiau matomi, jais labiau pasitikima, jie kviečiami prisidėti prie kitų iniciatyvų ir neretai laikomi tinkamesniais kandidatais į aukštesnes pareigas. Tačiau karjeros galimybes lemia organizacinė kultūra, vadovų palaikymas ir vertinimo mechanizmai. Nors didesnį stažą organizacijoje turintys darbuotojai dažniau inicijuoja procesų gerinimą dėl procesų supratimo, nauji darbuotojai pasižymi kūrybiškumu ir iniciatyvumu. Tad paaukštinimo galimybės labiau siejamos su iniciatyvumu ir gebėjimais nei su stažu.

Remiantis šiais tyrimo rezultatais teorinis modelis buvo išplėstas įtraukiant naujai identifikuotas dimensijas.

Tyrimas papildo mokslinę literatūrą parodydamas, kad procesų gerinimas darbuotojams kuria ne tik profesinį matomumą, bet ir stiprina jų reputaciją kaip patikimų bei atsakomybes galinčių prisiimti specialistų. Taip padidindamos jų karjeros galimybes organizacijos viduje.

Išvadose ir rekomendacijose pabrėžiama, kad procesų gerinimas gali tapti reikšmingas karjeros galimybėms, jei organizacijoje aiškiai apibrėžiami vertinimo kriterijai, užtikrinamas nuoseklus grįžtamasis ryšys ir puoselėjama iniciatyvumą skatinanti kultūra. Darbe taip pat pateikiamos praktinės rekomendacijos vadovams.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Respondent 1 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, employees are encouraged to initiate it. It is encouraged by praise and verbal promotion to partake in it.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, it is noticed in the company, usually it is rewarded with praise, increased visibility, support on the improvement ideas, trust in that employees' capabilities.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Yes, employees who are more innovative and creative when coming up with improvement, are prioritized for roles including similar skills, white process experts are prioritized for more analytical roles, that doesn't require same creativity. This impacts promotion decisions.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	Yes, the impact of the contribution is important, it has to be valuable, making a change. Just suggesting changes that do not make an impact or are not worth the work, compared to the results they provide, are less impactful.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	No formal metrics are used to evaluate it. It is important to our culture, because we aim to always strive for better, and process improvement is an essential part of it.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	How much organization promotes and values the process improvement, how much managers are willing to work with employees with them, how much time there is delegated to do it, in employees' workday.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Yes, if the improvement made a big impact, that increased visibility will heighten those employees' chances to be thought of first, for additional responsibilities or new projects or roles. Especially if its by different department or manager.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes, these employees are labeled as "doers", and with experience to take ownership, therefore, they are prioritized to take leadership opportunities or have at least suggested them first.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	I would say it depends more on the personality of employees and their approach to work. Tenured employees tend to be more static in their work, while new employees bring their new look to processes and are still energetic, to suggest the improvement ideas. The ideas themselves are perceived same from either employee, maybe only for newcomers, some ideas might not come to life, due to fact, that after working on process improvement idea, it turns out, it's not viable.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	It is evaluated by remembering the improvements made by the employee, or employee, presenting, what they did in that regard. It is evaluated case by case basis.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	Yes, when issuing bonuses or promotions, process improvers are prioritized, and organizations aim to reward them. Also, public acknowledgement and praise is issued to promote this behavior. Criteria to determine eligibility is only that the project was impactful and created value.

12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	Well, most likely that this is not a formal process, a manager's job is to consider these projects that employees do, and then to consider these while managing the employees and their promotion topics.

Annex 2 – Respondent 2 Replies

	Respondent #2
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, inside the company there are process improvement initiative programs. There are suggestion forms.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, with gift coupons and recognition wall.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	No, they are not differentiated. For promotion decisions it does, because the process expert who does not suggest additional improvements is not interested in improving things, he is that area expert, he is satisfied. A person has to do extra to show intention to achieve career advancement. Not doing anything outside job description is acknowledged as satisfaction.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	Yes, significant impact contributions are rewarded better. There is no difference on who initiates the improvement.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	Very important to organizational culture. Does it help company to save, better or enhance things. Is it wide impact change or small change.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	Yes, organization culture is a factor. *That everything is teamwork effort, that we are working for the better effort and to try to reward any enhancements.*
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Yes. If the visibility is from positive things.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes, it influences reputation, but it depends on the suggestions, it has to be completed or realistic projects. Not just a suggestion. Yes, some of them, if projects are completed. That means employee creates value.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	No, tenured employees usually do not lead project more often. All suggestions are acknowledged same.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	There is system to track process improvements, and there is a score table.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	Yes, there is a formal system to acknowledge these contributions. Practical, doable, and most useful improvement.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	Clear record keeping of the suggestions, how useful they are, realistic and creating value, importance to company. There is an issue, when improvements are encouraged very much, that he focus is on quantities of suggestions and not their quality.

Annex 3 – Respondent 3 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Everyone at organization is invited to express innovation , new ideas, improvements. This is communicated in "allhands" meetings, there's a dedicated slack channel for that, staff are encouraged to speak with their direct managers about such ideas if they have any, like in weekly calls or even informally. Suggestions are always also welcomed in email form. If new innovations or prototypes appear from any staff member, to continue supporting those ideas, we try to allocate resources and time accordingly and can even add them into the personal OKRs
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, with resources, time, attention with larger scale meetings, support mostly comes from the department where the employee is working at, and by management/board. There are yearly bonuses.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Theres no distinguishment
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	No, all contributions are highly appreciated and recognized with evaluations, no matter their scale. Most of the time, only impact is tagged with the improvements
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	It is getting more important with every year, this importance is scaling because of increasing competition on the market for our main products/services. Key metrics are individual/team/organizational OKRs that are implemented on every quarter and different statistics are tracked, like active customer numbers, % of profits and fees, coverage by automation, total transactions by our customers,etc.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	Full and honest transparency, not just with line manager, but also with board; Open communication, and safety net - failures do not influence blame, rather data and lessons learnt.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Yes. Those improvements that are shown in "all hands" or other larger scale meetings, get a lot of traction and attention from the rest of the staff.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes. If an employee shows signs of leadership taking role of managing new improvements, they are recognized and move higher up on the ladder in the org., or they become mentors for new employees, more often than not, take on the role of representing the company for our partners and other external manners.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	Yes, more likely. Contributions perceived in the same way on paper, but in reality, because they are more knowledgeable about our product and capabilities, their ideas can be perceived as more "wise" by some.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	By looking at monthly/yearly statistics and comparisons of charts, in customer impact, efficiency gained, costs reduced.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgement) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	There are bonuses, promotions, and acknowledgements for that. Criteria would be initiative, praise by managers, positive effect gained, OKRs completed.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?

| | *It could be attribution, since projects are different, some require one person, some the whole team, and it can be a team effort. Also balancing usual tasks with taking more resources and time to dedicate to improvements instead of every day tasks. Also some impacts are hard to measure.* |

Annex 4 – Respondent 4 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, one of our cultural values is "own it" which speaks about taking ownership of tasks and processes, here we value initiative and continuously seek to improve thing. Leaders play a crucial role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. They lead by example, actively participate in improvement initiatives, and provide the necessary support and resources for employees to succeed in their efforts. Employees who take the initiative to improve processes are recognized and rewarded, through either formal recognition programs, bonuses, promotions, or public acknowledgment – nominating employees or teams making an impact to company award.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Leaders are expected to actively engage with individual employees to understand their motivations and aspirations, including towards process improvements This can be done through regular one-on-one meetings, feedback sessions, and performance reviews, by understanding what drives each employee, leaders can tailor roles and tasks and recognize efforts accordingly.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Yes, our organization distinguishes between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes. This distinction influences promotion and career advancement decisions. Employees who engage in process improvement are often recognized and rewarded with promotions and leadership opportunities. However, those who excel at maintaining high standards in existing processes are also highly valued. It really depends on the role. In some roles, especially senior-level positions, it is expected that employees will look for improvements as part of their responsibilities. In general, both types of contributions are important and considered in career advancement decisions based on business needs and role specifics.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	Yes, our organization distinguishes between different types of process improvement contributions when evaluating employees. Contributions with significant impact are often given more weight in evaluations, as they demonstrate a higher level of innovation and effectiveness. However, we do not differentiate between employee or manager-driven improvements. Instead, the focus is on the overall impact on individual and team performance. This ensures that all contributions are fairly assessed based on their significance and effectiveness, encouraging a culture where both leadership and individual initiative are encouraged.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	Process improvement is highly important in our organizational culture. It is seen as a key driver of innovation, efficiency, and overall success. Employees at all levels are encouraged to continuously seek ways to enhance processes and contribute to the organization's growth. Regarding metrics and evaluation, it is more common in operational teams where efficiency and other metrics are being tracked, in my current and previous roles we didn't use any specific metrics to evaluate impact.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	In our organization, several cultural aspects significantly influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement. One of the key cultural values we uphold is "own it," which emphasizes taking ownership of tasks and processes. This value encourages employees to take the initiative in improving processes and continuously seek ways to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Leaders also play a crucial role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. They are expected to lead by example, actively participate in improvement initiatives, and provide the necessary support and resources for employees to succeed in their efforts. In general, employees who take the initiative to improve processes are recognized and rewarded through formal recognition programs, bonuses, promotions, or public acknowledgment, such as nominating employees or teams making an impact for company awards. The importance of process improvement is deeply ingrained in our organizational culture, as it is seen as a key driver of innovation, efficiency, and overall success. Employees at all levels are encouraged to continuously seek ways to enhance processes and contribute to the organization's growth without specifically expecting an impact on their career because of that. Regarding whether this depends on the organization itself, I would say that it mostly depends on direct leader as they are the ones observing employees efforts in process improvements, and the ones being able to influence their career advancement, thus I'd

	say it depends on company's culture but also it can vary a lot within same organization just because of the leader, or employee's role itself.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	In some situations, visibility can enhance recognition, but the actual impact and effectiveness of the contributions are the primary factors considered in career advancement decisions. Leaders are encouraged to ensure that all valuable contributions, regardless of their visibility, are recognized and rewarded appropriately. This approach helps maintain a fair and inclusive environment where every employee's efforts are valued.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Involvement in process improvement can influence an employee's reputation within an organization, or more specifically department they are at. When employees actively engage in improving processes, they demonstrate initiative, innovation, and a commitment to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. These qualities are often highly valued and can positively impact an employee's reputation. Moreover, employees who consistently contribute to process improvement may be seen as role models by their peers and managers. This recognition can lead to leadership responsibilities, as organizations often seek individuals who can drive change and inspire others to follow. Leaders are encouraged to work with every individual on their personal and professional development, thus, ig employee is seeking leadership path, additional responsibilities and involvement in process improvement will contribute to their career advancement towards leadership role.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	In our organization, employees with longer tenure often have a deeper understanding of existing processes and a wealth of experience that can be invaluable in identifying areas for improvement. As a result, they are more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement initiatives. Their extensive knowledge and familiarity with the organization's operations enable them to contribute effectively to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. While naturally longer-tenured employees may have more opportunities to lead such initiatives due to their experience, the organization ensures that all contributions are assessed fairly. This approach helps maintain a culture where both new and seasoned employees feel encouraged to participate in process improvement efforts. Additionally, in most of the situations, fresh perspectives can be even more important and valuable in driving innovation and improvement. Newer employees often bring fresh ideas and approaches that can challenge the status quo and lead to significant enhancements. Therefore, we actively encourage contributions from employees at all levels and tenures, ensuring that the best ideas are recognized and implemented, regardless of the source.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Employee contributions to process improvement are linked to annual performance reviews as well as individual and team goals. These contributions are evaluated at both the individual and team levels by the employee's direct manager when making career advancement decisions.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	In our organization, we do not have specific systems solely dedicated to recognizing process improvement contributions. Instead, we evaluate initiatives and overall performance on a higher level. However, employees who make significant contributions to process improvement can still be eligible for bonuses, promotions, and awards. These recognitions are based on the overall impact and effectiveness of their efforts, rather than being limited to process improvement alone.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	It can be challenging to attribute process improvements to specific individuals or teams in collaborative environments. This makes it harder to fairly reward contributions through career advancement. Measuring the direct impact of process improvement efforts on organisational success is not always straightforward. Improvements may result in intangible benefits like better collaboration, which are harder to translate into career advancement criteria. Some certain roles (e.g., operations or project management) may naturally focus more on process improvement, while others may not, creating inconsistencies in how such efforts are valued for career advancement.

Annex 5 – Respondent 5 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, our organization and managers actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement. For example, employees are involved in drafting instructions for the tasks they perform themselves, as well as in process improvement projects where they can contribute suggestions and ideas.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, employees' internal motivation for process improvement is supported and partly rewarded. It is included in performance evaluation, and when overall goals are achieved, employees receive bonuses. However, individual improvements are not separately rewarded. In cases where an employee contributes their expertise to a significant project or major change, one-time bonuses may be granted, although there is no formal system for this.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Yes, we always take performance evaluation results into account. Since our organization is relatively small, each employee's contribution is highly visible and does not require separate systems to identify. This visibility naturally influences career advancement, as it is clear how an employee contributes to the overall achievements of the organization.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	No formal distinction is made between different types of process improvement contributions. However, both manager-led and employee-initiated improvements are recognized, and the significance of the impact is naturally taken into account during performance evaluations. Major contributions that drive important organizational changes receive greater attention and may influence recognition or rewards.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	Process improvement is an important part of our organizational culture. The impact is reflected in each employee's performance evaluation, where individual KPIs/metrics are set and assessed. While these vary by role and are too numerous to list in detail, the general criteria include achievement of defined goals, contribution of ideas or know-how to improvements, and the measurable outcomes of implemented changes. For example, when we launched a new customer service program, the key metric was its successful implementation, and now customer feedback is used to evaluate its impact.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	In our organization, culture plays an important role — since the company is relatively small, each employee's contribution is highly visible. Process improvement efforts are naturally noticed and taken into account in career discussions, even without a formal system. Advancement depends not only on technical skills but also on how employees contribute to collective achievements and continuous improvement. In my view, the extent to which process improvement impacts career growth largely depends on the culture of each organization — in some companies it is highly formalized, while in smaller organizations it can be more organic and directly observed.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Yes, employee visibility strongly influences recognition and career advancement. This happens naturally through the performance evaluation process, regular 1:1 meeting with managers, involvement in projects, and participation in team or cross-functional meetings. These practices ensure that employees' contributions are noticed and acknowledged.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes, involvement in process improvement positively influences an employee's reputation in the organization. Active contributors are often seen as proactive and reliable, which increases their visibility and trust among colleagues and managers. Over time, this can lead to being entrusted with leadership responsibilities, such as leading projects, mentoring others, or coordinating improvement initiatives.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?

	Employees with longer tenure often play an important role in process improvement because of their deep knowledge of existing processes, and their contributions may be perceived as more experienced. At the same time, there are employees who feel very comfortable in their current roles and prefer stability over change, so their involvement in process improvement may be lower. Both perspectives are respected, and newer employees can also bring fresh ideas.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Employee contributions to process improvement are considered as part of the overall performance evaluation process. Their impact is visible through individual KPIs, participation in projects, and feedback from managers during regular 1:1 meetings. While there is no separate formal system, these contributions are considered in career advancement decisions, especially when they demonstrate initiative, collaboration, and measurable results
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	Our organization does not have a separate formal system dedicated solely to process improvement contributions. Recognition is integrated into the performance evaluation process, and bonuses may be awarded when overall goals are achieved. In exceptional cases, one-time bonuses can be given for significant contributions. In addition, we have a tradition of publicly thanking and congratulating employees for important achievements during monthly all-staff meetings, where goals reached and contributions are highlighted.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	One of the main challenges is that not all process improvements can be easily measured or directly linked to organizational results, which makes it harder to evaluate their impact on career advancement. Another challenge is that some employees contribute through smaller, incremental improvements that may be less visible, while others participate in large projects that are more easily recognized. In addition, career advancement decisions are based on a combination of factors — skills, leadership potential, teamwork, and organizational needs — so process improvement is only one part of the overall picture.

Annex 6 – Respondent 6 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, it's included in the company's quarterly OKRs.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, improvement initiatives are super supportive, and a reward mostly comes in a way of leading this initiative on your own to its execution. Also, it may play an important part when promotions are considered.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Usually not, we tend to focus on overall person achievements considering his/her skills and improvements performed. But it's true that improvement performed plays an important part in advancement decisions especially if you want to stand out.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	It tends to evaluate overall person performance independent of the improvement contribution, but bigger scale effected contribution are much more noticeable by management and overall organization, same as employee initiated.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	It's important, but it's not the key criteria. Metrics used are OKR achieved, where improvement initiatives are OKR quarterly goals.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	I think it only plays part, if the contribution itself proves that you can take more responsibilities, drive initiatives on your own and there are opportunities to advance in career. In that care contribution would have leading role for promotion.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Yes, but there should also be opportunities for career advancement to happen. Otherwise, you might be recognized with no career advancement.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes, it you prove yourself well leading those initiatives.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	It usually depends on role and opportunities at that time. However, more skilled, but not necessarily longer working employees are given opportunities to lead big initiatives.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Overall performance is reviewed, but improvement shows what extra, apart from our operating activities, you can do, thus I think it's usually a big bonus for career advancement considerations.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	No, it does not, at least nothing formal.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	Typically, the improvement process does not necessarily mean you'll get instant career advancement. It's your overall performance that matters. Also, for advancement it's important to drive bigger contributions (affected more teams' scope, solving significant issues, etc.) as small ones are usually not recognized that much.

Annex 7 – Respondent 7 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, given we are a small firm, initiative taking is a highly desirable trait as this helps generate new ideas/formulate new plans forward for our continued growth. We also operate in an inclusive environment where we want employees/individuals to speak up/weigh in on issues as this allows an issue to be analysed/reviewed in a potentially unique manner that may not have otherwise been considered.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, we operate in a supportive environment where a drive for improvement is identified and developed. We are aware that individuals come and go from an employment perspective, so we wish to be able to develop individuals two fold; to teach them actual practical skills that can benefit us as a company/their future employment elsewhere and to provide them with a good social foundation so that they feel included in what we achieve as a company/feel that their own work is valuable.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Promotion/career advancement is a multi faceted idea. Some individuals are more forward-thinking, where they will actively take the initiative to try to improve matters where they see fit. Others are more suited to maintaining existing processes rather than 'thinking outside the box' so to speak, which is equally valuable. Both are equally valuable to us as a company as there is value in both aspects of one's employability and so from a promotion/career advancement perspective we weigh both equally.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	We always strive to find where an employee's talents are best maximised and how this suits their existing strengths. All contributions can be valid, be it significant in one aspect but minimal in another. Certain tasks/jobs an employee is required to do may be done better than in other instances/may require a more hands on approach from a manager, thus stifling an employee's initiative, for example. However this would not be considered a negative aspect to us, given the complexity of the task/responsibility has to be taken into account.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	As a small but growing firm, process improvement is crucial to us as a business. We always strive to improve our existing systems as this helps us in numerous aspects, such as increasing our efficiency as a business, helping us to remain compliant with new regulations as they arise and so on. We are keen and quick to note where an employee has been instrumental in helping to implement this process improvement through soft metrics, such as how often the employee weighs in and questions existing processes, or whether they take the initiative to suggest new means of improvement. This evaluation is more 'soft' than objective, given the nature of our operations.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	Personally given the size of our firm, we believe this is more organisation dependent as an idea as to a large extent the bigger the organisation, the more room for advancement there is. However conversely, the bigger an organisation is, the less one may actually be able to take the initiative and lead process improvement given a company may have an existing pre-established culture that is difficult to change. For us as a small business, taking the initiative and proposing tangible ways we can improve our systems and business operations is highly valuable. We are always open to being flexible, in that regard.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Employee visibility can only be a good thing for a business of any size. The more visible one is, i.e. the more they are seen to be actually partaking in existing processes/suggest improvements, the more they are noticed by senior management. One has to take the initiative in a big business in my opinion in order to get noticed and marked for potential career advancement. While it can happen,

		if you are passive in this regard and no effort is made to actually seek such opportunities, it could potentially limit career advancement in the future.
8		Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
		For sure. Taking the initiative and being involved in process improvement demonstrates your value to a company entity as well as what you can offer. It also shows to senior management that you are willing and able (provided you do a good job/suggest good process improvements!) to take on further responsibilities in a more senior capacity in the future as you are dependable and an integral part of the overall team.
9		Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
		A lot of business is about trust and knowing that an individual can do the job they are employed to do. While all contributions are valuable, it is natural that someone who had been working with an institution for a number of years may be slightly prioritized by senior management for career advancement than someone who had just arrived with the organization, as senior management has more evidence that the former individual is competent and capable of doing the job at hand. However, this is dependent to a large extent on the individual and the quality of the work that they produce, as well as their willingness to put themselves out there and be visible re taking opportunities and the work they do.
10		How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
		We evaluate contributions more from a soft perspective rather than using objective metrics, given the size of our firm. *However questions we consider when evaluating the job is doing is the following;* *Is this individual taking the initiative to suggest tangible improvements to our processes?* *What is the attitude of this person when we are working with them? Are they happy to be doing what they are doing/do they appear motivated in the work they do?* *Is this individual doing the bare minimum? Or are they actively looking for more responsibilities to take on?* *Has the individual suggested good process improvement ideas that have actually gone on to be implemented in our day to day operations?* *This list is not exhaustive.*
11		Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
		At present no, given the size of our firm. We solely employ 5 individuals.
12		What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
		This is individual dependent but some may get disillusioned if they feel their work isn't being valued by the company who they work for. If one feels overlooked, they may look to leave the organisation they work for as they feel personally hurt by the lack of reward for the effort they put in, or they may simply check out and begin to become more passive in their approach of involving themselves in helping to continue process improvement. Therefore there is a responsibility on behalf of the company or senior management as best as it can to ensure they look after their employees/give them the emotional support and validation they require to keep them motivated as an important part of the team to continue doing the work they do.

Annex 8 – Respondent 8 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes, our organization actively encourages process improvement. Managers routinely invite feedback during team meetings, and there are dedicated suggestion platforms where employees can submit ideas for improvement – in our Organization we call it "Continuous Improvement platform" where all employees are invited to raise ideas and suggestions. Additionally, cross-functional workshops and Kaizen sessions are held quarterly to brainstorm and implement improvements.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, internal motivation is often identified through performance reviews and project debriefs. Employees who show initiative are supported with resources and training, and their efforts are recognized through awards, internal communications, or even fast-tracked for developmental programs.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Yes, there is a clear distinction. While operational excellence is valued, employees who proactively improve systems are seen as potential leaders. This distinction does influence promotions, particularly for roles requiring strategic thinking and innovation. This is especially valued if we have a strong SME who is also able to contribute to the continuous improvement.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	Partially yes, contributions are assessed based on their scope, impact, and level of initiative. Employee-initiated improvements with measurable outcomes are especially valued, and these distinctions play a role in performance appraisals and advancement opportunities. But generally, all contributions are rewarded and valued, despite their impact.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?

	Process improvement is a fundamental part of our organizational culture and is embedded in our strategic objectives. Continuous improvement is not just encouraged but expected from all employees, regardless of their role or seniority. Leadership consistently communicates the importance of innovation and efficiency, which has fostered a culture where employees feel empowered to identify inefficiencies and propose solutions. It is a crucial part of our daily work, especially given the complexity of our internal processes. When evaluating an employee's impact in this area, we use a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics:
	
	Quantitative criteria:
	    1. Measurable cost reductions resulting from implemented changes.
	    2. Increased productivity or throughput (e.g., reduced cycle times, improved resource utilization).
	    3. Reduction in error rates or defects, leading to higher quality outputs.
	
	Qualitative criteria:
	    1. The degree of initiative taken (e.g., self-initiated vs. manager-directed improvements).
	    2. Cross-functional collaboration and the ability to engage others in the change process.
	    3. Sustainability of the improvement — whether the changes produce lasting benefits.

6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	Transparency, a growth mindset, and leadership buy-in are critical cultural aspects. Yes, the impact of process improvement on career advancement heavily depends on the organization's strategic priorities and how innovation is embedded in its values.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Yes, visibility is a key factor. Contributions that are known to senior leadership or impact multiple departments are more likely to be acknowledged and rewarded. Internal communication platforms and presentations help raise this visibility. As an example, we have our quarterly department-wide meetings where such contributions are acknowledged.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Absolutely. Employees known for process innovation are often viewed as change agents and are more likely to be entrusted with leadership roles or strategic projects. Their reputation tends to improve as a result.

9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	Longer-tenured employees often have deeper process knowledge and are more likely to lead improvements. However, their ideas may sometimes be seen as incremental rather than transformational. Newer employees can bring fresh perspectives, and both contributions are valued differently but importantly.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Evaluations are based on measurable impact, initiative, collaboration, and alignment with organizational goals. These factors are considered during performance reviews, and those with strong contributions often receive faster career advancement. I think it also relates to the fact that such employees have higher visibility in the organization and in itself, they are more likely to be suggested for promotion.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	While we do not offer monetary bonuses specifically tied to process improvement contributions, we do have formal, structured methods of recognition that support visibility and career advancement. One key recognition channel is internal communications — such as newsletters, intranet announcements, and leadership updates — where individual or team achievements in process improvement are highlighted. In terms of career advancement, employees who demonstrate consistent initiative and deliver impactful improvements are considered eligible for faster promotion. Their contributions are often viewed as indicators of leadership potential, problem-solving capability, and strategic thinking.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	One key challenge is attributing individual contributions in team-based improvements — many successful initiatives involve collaboration, making it hard to isolate who drove the change. Additionally, not all process improvements produce immediate or easily measurable outcomes, especially in areas like compliance or employee experience, which can limit recognition. *There's also a risk of inconsistent evaluation across departments if managers apply different standards or don't prioritize process improvement. In some cases, contributions are seen as extra work rather than core responsibilities, especially when workloads are high and recognition is limited.* *Lastly, without formal career pathways for employees who excel in continuous improvement (but don't want managerial roles), their efforts may be appreciated but not rewarded with advancement. This can impact motivation and long-term engagement.*

Annex 9 – Respondent 9 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes. At organization, we encourage employees to propose improvements during regular team syncs, retrospectives, and 1:1s. Managers are expected to listen, document, and escalate relevant suggestions.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	While not formally tracked, employees who consistently show initiative are recognized informally and trusted with more ownership or responsibility.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Yes. Process improvement is considered a marker of strategic thinking and often influences decisions related to promotions, especially in leadership or cross-functional roles.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	Distinctions are made informally, with greater weight given to scalable, proactive, and employee-initiated improvements. However, all contributions are appreciated.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	Process improvement is valued as part of continuous growth. Evaluation is typically qualitative — based on efficiency gains, time savings, or simplification of workflows — rather than tied to strict KPIs.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	At organization, initiative, collaboration, and a solutions-oriented mindset are culturally valued. Career advancement tends to favor those who contribute beyond their scope — so yes, the organization's values play a key role.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Visibility does help, especially when improvements impact multiple teams. We encourage employees to present ideas or results during team meetings and cross-department updates.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes. Proactive problem-solvers often gain trust and are seen as informal leaders, which can evolve into formal leadership roles.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	Experience often brings deeper process insight, but fresh perspectives from newer employees are equally welcomed. Value is placed more on impact than tenure.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Managers consider the scale, relevance, and cross-functional effect of contributions, especially when evaluating readiness for expanded roles.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	Recognition is mostly informal, though standout contributions can influence performance reviews and promotion decisions. Some are also acknowledged during all-hands or internal communications.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	One challenge is ensuring visibility and documenting the long-term impact of changes. Additionally, some improvements are incremental and may not immediately align with formal promotion cycles.

Annex 10 – Respondent 10 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes. Each employee is encouraged to share ideas. After presenting them to the management, they are expected to lead the implementation of ideas.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Fully supported giving the employees freedom to drive process improvements. No financial rewarding is yet available.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Our team is small so no formal procedure is available. Yet active participation in provements may be considered as significant advantage when considering a promotion.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	It might be assessed yet no formal procedure is available.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	In a start up environment ability to work independently and drive the improvements is a key skill required for each employee. Currently, no KPI are set to measure it.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	It is not the key factor deciding on promotion. Experience and other skill set play an important role as well. On the other hand, ability to assess the existing processes and initiate changes is a one of the important factors when considering a person for promotion.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Our team is small thus any initiative is visible.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	On reputation - no. It can lead to leadership responsibilities on condition if implementation of improvement required to manage other team members and this was done successfully.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	The longer employee works in organization, the more knowledge he/she has in general. However, this doesnt mean that this person is the best option to lead improvement (managerial skills are needed for that). Yet this person should be involved to share his insights.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	No formal procedure is available. Yet this involvement indicates that person is proactive and initiative, willing to take extra step. So definitely it gives a big credit.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	No.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	Availability of career advancement options in general - if person participates in improvements (as specialist) it doesnt mean that she would be promoted to team lead or manager as other skill sets are required for such position. So it depends on each organization whether this initiative can be a deciding factor for promotion.
	In bigger organizations there is an option for career advancement as an expert and as manager, also to change departments (linear career growth).

Annex 11 – Respondent 11 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes. Each employee is encouraged to share ideas. After presenting them to the management, they are expected to lead the implementation of ideas.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Fully supported giving the employees freedom to drive process improvements. No financial rewarding is yet available.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Our team is small so no formal procedure is available. Yet active participation in provements may be considered as significant advantage when considering a promotion.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	It might be assessed yet no formal procedure is available.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	In a start up environment ability to work independently and drive the improvements is a key skill required for each employee. Currently, no KPI are set to measure it.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	It is not the key factor deciding on promotion. Experience and other skill set play an important role as well. On the other hand, ability to assess the existing processes and initiate changes is a one of the important factors when considering a person for promotion.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Our team is small thus any initiative is visible.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	On reputation - no. It can lead to leadership responsibilities on condition if implementation of improvement required to manage other team members and this was done successfully.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	The longer employee works in organization, the more knowledge he/she has in general. However, this doesnt mean that this person is the best option to lead improvement (managerial skills are needed for that). Yet this person should be involved to share his insights.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	No formal procedure is available. Yet this involvement indicates that person is proactive and initiative, willing to take extra step. So definitely it gives a big credit.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	No.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	Availability of career advancement options in general - if person participates in improvements (as specialist) it doesnt mean that she would be promoted to team lead or manager as other skill sets are required for such position. So it depends on each organization whether this initiative can be a deciding factor for promotion. *In bigger organizations there is an option for career advancement as an expert and as manager, also to change departments (linear career growth).*

Annex 12 – Respondent 12 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes in organization we have standard continuoys impr.approach in daily work and managers empower their emoloyees to improve the work they do. We apply lean methodology like KAIZEN or KATA
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	It is decentralised solution it means each departmen decides about motivation. But we have special tools like intranet,chatting platforms were we share best practises to encourage others.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	No. We give opportunity for everyone. But in yearly results review we have a standard structure how to recognize outstanding performance and in this part can be active approach to.improve processes.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	We recognize all possible improvement. However we have standard for benefit realization whats is mainly FTE savings or money.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	It is very important but different approach in different teams as organization has 21000 empl.accros different countries.for olerational teams continuous impr.or lean is more closer to daily work and even embedded in yearly targets. Teams on business or IT side do not have standard way or strong culture commitments.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	WE do not put any equal signs or carreer and process impr. We try to embed culture where process impr.is neutral not written someshere in nice slides or on walls. But I strongly agree that process impr.should be one of strategic directions or clearly linked with vision.otherwise process impr.will be fragmented and seen in silis.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Depends on area but as I highlighted we are not merging process work with career.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes it can be that such people are more visible and have opportunity to shine.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	IN some cases more experienced people tale more responsibilities and lead process impr.work but it is not officially described in any job role description.exception only for process consultants and their seniority level.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	IT is more advantage for employee and manager as well to revognize and reward employees with significant results. It is more on "how" part people are planning to avhieve what is set as a goals. Process impr.is one of the "how" items.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	WE have reward system but it is overall to recognize performance not neccessarily process impr. In some areas we have gamification for KAIZen ideas and people get some prizes.
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	Key part it is alignment in organization clearly defining on strategic level what we want to achieve and how.which initiatives will support the strategy and how it is linked with personal development. If there is no.link to this so process impr.work is more fragmented, no trancperancy on promotions and motivation systems are decentralised.

Annex 13 – Respondent 13 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	I think so, just not sure how actively. However, it's very important for our organization to have employees who want to improve things. Usually, due to a heavy workload or a lack of proactiveness, these ideas are not shared with managers. But usually it is part of a manager's communication to employees during all kinds of meetings (team meeting, 1on1).
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Yes, during an annual performance review employee could get a better salary increase, promotion, or change their seniority level, e.g., from mid to senior level.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	No.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	No, we don't. However, I think that during performance reviews, managers tend to value employees' initiatives more than manager-led improvements, even if the impact might differ. That said, expectations largely depend on the employee's experience: the more senior you are, the more managers expect you to come up with solutions and initiatives. If you're a junior, managers are more likely to guide you and assign processes for you to improve.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	I wouldn't say it's the number one priority, but it's more like common sense when working in the fintech industry – especially in a startup environment, where you constantly need to make improvements. We don't use any metrics to evaluate.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	I'm not sure if I fully understood the question, but for example, if you hire a Senior AML Analyst for process improvements and there is no progress in this area, then the manager must decide whether it's worth keeping such a senior employee or better to promote a mid-level analyst who, although less experienced, might see it as a challenge and be given the opportunity to drive improvements. So, there isn't one clear answer. However, our culture values high performers and quickly notices employees who lack proactiveness and contribution.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	We are a small company, so yes, it's visible. And usually, even top management knows who leads or initiates process improvements. Which means that during the annual review this will be an important argument for promotion or salary increase.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Partly yes. But not always.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	Yes, they are. And yes, expectations are higher from management for employees with longer tenure.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	This will be one of the criteria during the performance review for the promotion.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	No.

12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	The only challenge I see is that a few employees are willing to make improvements in processes and are lacking motivation or time to make the improvements.

Annex 14 – Respondent 14 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Sure, it is often encouraged and incentivized to become an intrapreneur (as well), the employees can think of new product lines and services, take leading roles and be a part of marketing processes. Since we mostly occupy approximately 80% of full-time, the 20% is left for either self development or exactly these incentives.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Highly rewarded, up-front we provide transparency in offering 20% from all profit made with a potential to be promoted in a lead role if the certain product/service grows in importance for an overall business
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Depends on many factors, there are those who can be creative and create a new service area, but also someone has to deliver a good value when executing – some people like to be exceptional executors knowing "what every day will bring" thus be comfortable with it and they stay with it, while some always ask for more. Those who ask for more, more often get promoted for obvious reasons, but also if certain service grows in revenue, it needs more hands at work, then the executor increases in his seniority and that can happen faster than the risk takers.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	We are relatively small company thus all things are decided horizontally, from office manager to Senior advisors, all have same seat and saying at the table. Of course senior advisors will have better access and understanding whereto improve to make bigger impact that ie. Office manager who would only know administrative tasks ie. Changing or improving CRM system
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	Not big impact since we have multiple small businesses each divided in different country thus one improvement does not make a big impact, the consistency would, however, make an impact and that is greatly rewarded.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	We have motivated employees to go to courses, examinations for self-development and thus upon success reward them with +10 %to +20% salary boost, however, as many there are people, as many different attitudes. Perhaps the greatest difference maker towards culture is the hiring process in which we either do well and the person fits our culture to always improve, or the person speaks well during interviews, but when the work starts, over time, it's a character that wants the same thing every day without discomforting tasks.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Depends on the contribution, most impactful contributions make a team meeting and everyone gets to be informed and if the new process makes the company more efficient = more profit, then our company shares some of the profit with the person who initiated the contribution
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Human behavior, if you perform a respectful cause then whether one likes it or not, the reputation build over time – the more you get right, the greater it gets thus, yes
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	Some yes, some to the complete opposite, I would refer to 80/20 principle where most stagnate and the one fifth outperform
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Greatly, if you are an outperformer then you are given the fastest horse to run with
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?

		Yes, we do Bonuses and where applicable also Promotions, we are not too active publicly thus inapplicable, but it would be a tool of motivation if such activity was there.
12		What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
		Risk taking, the employees should be ready to take risks with their own reputation, time and delivering the result for their ideas and the career advancement will come organically.

Annex 15 – Respondent 15 Replies

	Questions
1	Does your organization — including individual managers — actively encourage employees to take initiative in process improvement? If so, in what ways?
	Yes. We had process management maturity training. How to convert routines to formalized structured processes. 1:1 with employees. Process improvement meetings.
2	Is employees' internal motivation for process improvement identified, supported, and/or rewarded?
	Not formal process, but yes.
3	Does your organization distinguish between employees who actively improve processes and those who are highly skilled at operating existing processes? If so, does this distinction influence promotion or career advancement decisions?
	Not formal, but significant influence on hiring/promoting process owners/managers.
4	Does your organization distinguish between different types of process improvement contributions — such as those with significant vs. minimal impact, and manager-led vs. employee-initiated — when evaluating employees?
	No structured tracking of process improvement suggestion source or impact size.
5	How important is process improvement in your organizational culture, and what specific criteria or key metrics are used to evaluate an employee's impact in this area?
	Process owner is responsible for KPI improvements in his processes. Quarterly/Half-year/Yearly goals.
6	What aspects of your organization's culture influence whether process improvement contributions lead to career advancement? In your view, is this something that depends on the organization itself?
	Our motto. "Do.It.Right". Proactivity is noticed.
7	Does employee visibility — or how visible their process improvement contributions are across the organization — influence whether those efforts are recognized or lead to career advancement?
	Not a formal process, but yes it is noticed and influence promotion.
8	Does involvement in process improvement influence an employee's reputation in the organization and/or lead to leadership responsibilities?
	Yes.
9	Are employees with longer tenure more likely to be involved in or lead process improvement? Are their contributions perceived differently because of their tenure?
	Not measuring this. Gut feeling new ones have more suggestions for a change.
10	How are employee contributions to process improvement evaluated in your organization when making decisions about career advancement?
	Not formally, but influence decision.
11	Does your organization have formal systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions, public acknowledgment) to recognize process improvement contributions, and what criteria are used to determine eligibility?
	We measure actual change impact, not business (busy work with flooding suggestions).
12	What challenges exist in linking the process of improvement to career advancement?
	People ability to see big picture, why organization have process, what they are, agreeing on definitions, how to measure process maturity, how to manage process, how processes ties to organizational governance and risk management.