Creating an Effective Development Action Plan

Identify Resources

Identify Career Interests

Prepare the plan

Revise and Adjust

Assess Progress
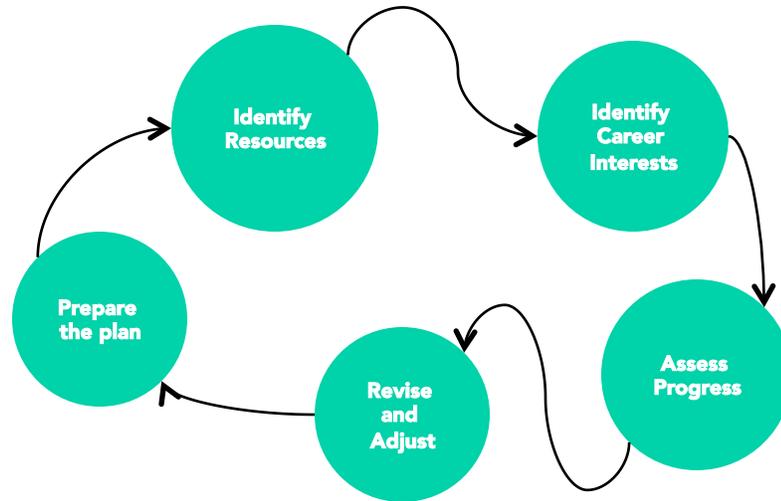
Job Aid for Leaders

A   ## The Challenge of Employee Development Plans

One of the biggest engagement drivers for employees is continuous learning. And yet, we frequently fail at our efforts to support employee mastery and development. Here are the biggest reasons that development plans will fall short.

- **Not customized.** Development plans need to be customized and tailored to the employee, keeping in mind the person's role requirements, career goals, work experience, strengths and weaknesses. A one-size-fits-all approach just doesn't work.

- **Too much in the plan.** Development plans should include no more than a couple of robust goals that answer the question: What is the most important thing I can learn in this period that will support my success within this role and in future roles. If there's too much, the employee will fail. After all, they have a lot of work to do.

- **The plan includes development strategies with little impact.** Online and in-person courses are fine, but employees learn the most with challenging on-the-job experiences.

- **Lack of measurement.** Most managers do not regularly measure progress and check in on the learning. As a result, employees will not see the development plan as a critical success priority.

B — Development Tactics and Strategies (in order of effectiveness)

It's critical to recognize that not all strategies and methodologies are created equal. Here is the rank-order of development programs by importance and effectiveness (to the learner).

Development Strategy	Overall Rank
Challenging on-the-job assignment with increased decision-making authority	1
Customized leadership development plan (with ongoing monitoring and manager coaching)	2
Projects and tasks that offer increased visibility and risk	3
Interacting with peers	4
Meeting with an executive coach	5
Meeting with a mentor	6
Feedback (performance reviews, 360 instruments, personality tests)	7
People-management skills courses	8
Off-site seminars in business skills	9
Online Courses (Technical skills, business skills, interpersonal skills)	10

* **Source:** Based on Corporate Leadership Council "Voice of the Leader" Survey Analysis of Leadership Bench Strength and Development Strategies. This seminal 2001 study surveyed over 8000 leaders in order to identify best-practices around leadership development.

C — Step One: Ask the Big Question and Turn It Into a SMART Goal

What is the most important thing that I can learn this period (year, six months) that will make me successful in this role or in future roles? (Consider your performance review within your last review, career goals, current competency ratings, feedback from others.)

Write notes here:

D Discuss and Finalize Your Development Goal

The Development Conversation is either held in the second part of the Goal-Setting meeting or at a time soon after. Like that meeting, the development discussion begins with the manager asking a question. Both the manager and employee should come to the meeting having considered some ideas.

1. **The Question:** What's the <u>most important thing</u> you can learn this year to be successful?

2. **Follow-up Question:** What's a strength that you can leverage and hone AND what gap is getting in your way?

3. **Ensure that:** the employee has the awareness around why the development goal is important. And that the person recognizes why it needs attention (motivation to change).

4. **Make the Development Goals SMART:** Just like performance goals. In other words, ensure that the goal is specific and is measurable.

5. **Collaborate on some ideas that will move the person forward towards their goal:** Use the Competency Development Guide (on the next few pages) to jumpstart identifying a variety of actions.

6. **Come to agreement on next steps:** Make sure that you monitor progress throughout the year.

E Use this Development Pyramid for the Most Valuable Strategies

Your development plan should be populated with more strategic, profound learning tactics like challenging on-the-job experiences, and less populated with less impactful strategies like online or in person training courses.

Any of the strategies you select should be supported through conversations and process checks with your manager.

Take a look at pages 4-6 to get some ideas around competency-based development.

Training
Workshops or Coursework

Mentoring
Peer mentoring or cohort groups

Do-it-Yourself
Learning diary, books, articles

Role Models
Technical experts, leaders

Feedback
360 assessments, on-going feedback

On the Job Experiences
Challenges, hardships, people management, project ownership, new tasks or responsibilities