

# Personal Development Planning Checklist 092



## Introduction

Employers are increasingly aware of the importance of investing in their staff and often have structures and processes in place to provide opportunities for the training and development of their employees. Nonetheless, managers also need to take personal responsibility for renewing and updating their skills and knowledge throughout their working lives. Personal development is a continuous lifelong process of nurturing, shaping and improving skills and knowledge to ensure maximum effectiveness and ongoing employability.

Personal development does not necessarily imply upward movement; rather, it is about enabling individuals to improve their performance and reach their full potential at each stage of their career.

Adopting a constructive approach to personal development planning (PDP) will help individuals to:

- consider where they are now, where they want to go and how they can get there
- revitalise technical skills that date very quickly
- build up transferable skills (such as self-awareness, ability to learn, adaptability to change, empathy and good time management)
- monitor and evaluate achievements.

The process of PDP provides a schedule to work to and can lay the basis for:

- continuous learning
- a sense of achievement
- ensuring employability and survival in an age where very few jobs can be guaranteed to stay the same
- making the most of opportunities which may arise.

## Definition

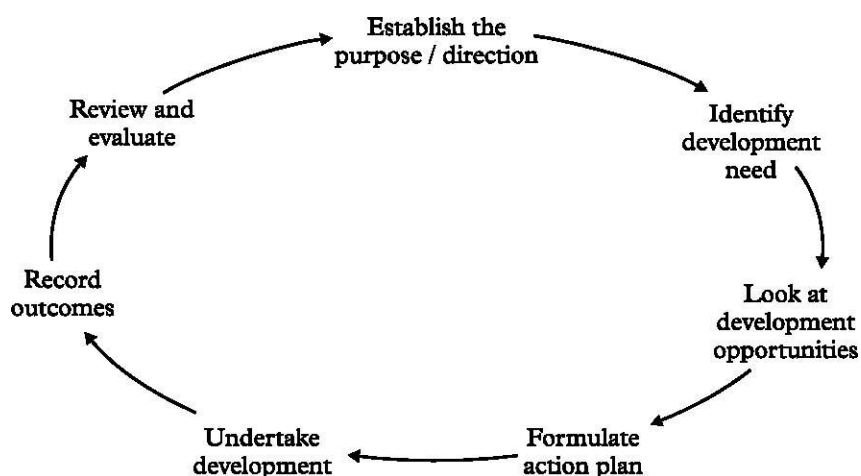
Personal development planning is the process of:

- establishing aims and objectives (or goals) - what you want to achieve or where you want to go, in the short, medium or long-term in your career
- assessing current realities
- identifying needs for skills, knowledge or competence
- selecting appropriate development activities to meet those perceived needs.

Scheduling and timing are important but should not be too regimented.

## Action checklist

PDP is usually understood as a cyclical process, where improvement comes from moving around the loop. The following chart outlines the process:



The Personal Development Planning Cycle

### 1. Establish your purpose or direction

The purpose of any development activity needs to be identified. You may do this, either, by yourself or with the help of your manager, mentor, career coach, colleagues, or friends. This involves:

- gaining an awareness of your current standing and future potential within your chosen field or sector
- gaining a measure of what you are good at and interested in (because these things will motivate you)
- taking account of the organisational (and sectoral) realities you encounter
- linking your plans to organisational (and sectoral) needs as much as possible.

Think about:

- your own value system, involving private life and family, work and money, constraints and obstacles to mobility, now and in the future
- the characteristics of the kind of work that fits with your value system.

### 2. Identify development needs

The identification of development needs may emerge from intended or actual new tasks or responsibilities, from discussions with your manager or others, or from dissatisfaction with current routines. Some people know what they are good at, others may be less sure. Various instruments such as self-assessment tests, benchmarking exercises and personal diagnostics are available to help you assess your skills in a structured way.

Your development needs will depend largely upon your career goals. If you intend to remain in similar employment, you may need development to re-motivate or re-orient yourself, or to improve your current performance and effectiveness. Alternatively, development may be required to prepare you for promotion, your next job, a new career or self-employment.

### 3. Identify learning opportunities

As a result of one, or several, of the assessment processes above, draw up a list of the skills or knowledge you need to acquire, update or improve. Compare this list with your current skills and knowledge base and identify the gaps.

Consider:

- your learning style - some learn best by trying out new things, whilst others prefer to sit back and observe; some prefer to experiment, others to carry out research. The Learning Styles Questionnaire, devised by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford will help identify preferred learning styles (See Additional Resources below.)
- your development: in addition to your own organisation, consider government and private advisory agencies, literature and open learning, multi-media or online packages, professional institutes, your peer groups, networks and colleagues and family and friends
- the range of learning options available - these can be broadly differentiated into three categories:

**Education** takes place over a sustained but finite period of time, usually leads to a qualification and may open up the way into a new career direction.

**Training** is carried out at a specific time and place and is usually vocationally relevant and limited to specific measurable aims and objectives.

**Development** encompasses a wide range of activities with learning potential that are either work-based (such as work shadowing, job rotation, secondment, attachment, mentoring, delegation, counselling or coaching) or personal (such as private reading, authorship, presenting papers, peer group contacts, networking, or community involvement).

There will be occasions when unplanned development opportunities arise, such as, a last minute vacancy on a course or a place at an event, which will require you to take account of your priorities when considering whether to follow up on that opportunity.

#### 4. Formulate an action plan

For each of the skills and knowledge gaps you identify, set yourself development objectives. These need to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. There must be an element of challenge in them so that they stretch you as an individual and carry you on to new ground. But they must also be attainable and viable within a realistic time-frame, otherwise time will overtake you.

#### 5. Undertake the development

Put your plan into action- what you do and how you do it should be your choice. In addition to training courses, options include work shadowing, secondment, job rotation, project work, networking and community involvement.

#### 6. Record the outcomes

Keeping records serves to remind you - and others, such as potential employers - what you have done. Most importantly your records will help you to focus on what you have got out of your development activity. Record the date, the development need identified, the chosen method of development, the date(s) when development was undertaken, the outcomes, and any further action needed.

#### 7. Evaluate and review

Evaluation is the key stage in the self-development cycle. There are two issues you should reflect upon: whether the development activity you have undertaken was appropriate and worthwhile; and whether and how your skills or working behaviour have improved as a result. Evaluating development activities also involves asking the following questions:

- a) What am I able to do better as a result?
- b) Has this experience thrown up further development needs?
- c) How well did this development method work?
- d) Could I have gained more from this activity?
- e) Would I follow this approach again?

Evaluation will also provide a key lead for the next stage of the continuing cycle. Goals change, tasks vary and new needs will emerge. It is important to revise your own plan accordingly.

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## Managers should avoid:

- repeatedly putting off planning your personal development
- trying to tackle everything at once – select one area to work on and then move on to the next
- being too ambitious – development normally takes place in incremental steps
- being afraid to ask for help from your line manager, colleagues or HR department
- forgetting to reflect on and evaluate your learning experiences.

## National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership

This checklist has relevance for the following standards:

Unit AA1: Manage yourself

Unit AA2: Develop your knowledge, skills and competence

## Additional resources

### Books

**Study skills for part-time students**, Dorothy Bedford,

Harlow: Pearson Education, 2009

This title is available as an [e-book](#)

**Strengthen your strengths: a guide to enhancing your self management skills**, Peter Honey,

Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications, 2008

**Personal development and management skills**, Chris Routledge and Jan Carmichael

London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2007

**Continuing personal development**, Peter Honey

Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications, 2007

**A managers guide to self development**, 5th ed, Mike Pedler, John Burgoyne, Tom Boydell,

Maidenhead: McGraw Hill, 2007

This title is also available as an [e-book](#)

**Learning styles questionnaire : 80 item version**, rev ed, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford

Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications, 2006

**Discover your hidden talents: the essential guide to lifelong learning**, Bill Lucas

Stafford: Network Educational Press, 2005

**Practical self development: a step by step approach to CPD**, Bob Norton and Vikky Burt

London: Institute of Management Foundation, 1997

This is a selection of books available for loan to members from CMI's library. More information at:

[www.managers.org.uk/library](http://www.managers.org.uk/library)

## Related checklists

Setting SMART objectives (231)

Testing for personal effectiveness (164)

## Internet resources

**Palgrave Study Skills** [www.palgrave.com/skills4study/pdp/](http://www.palgrave.com/skills4study/pdp/)

Offers advice about Personal development planning including: setting priorities, making choices, keeping personal records and structured reflection.

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**This is one of many checklists available to all CMI members. For more information please contact**

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