



**Guide to Creating an
Employee Development Plan**

Overview

Employee development is a fundamental strategic tool for an employer's continuing growth, productivity and ability to retain valuable employees. An employee development plan facilitates employee personal and professional development and growth, and provides a roadmap for the future success of the employee and the employer.

Why is Employee Development Important?

Performance management does not have to be a grueling process, rather an opportunity to motivate and engage employees to actively participate in enhancing their knowledge, skills and abilities and develop into high-performing members.

The benefits to the employer by focusing on employee development are many.

Attract and retain “top talent”. It's more important than ever to hire the best and the brightest employees and to also retain them.

- An effective performance management and development program can be seen as a benefit to prospective employees.
- Receiving feedback is a normal human desire. Employees care if you take a genuine interest in their personal and professional development and will see it as an investment into their future. This investment results in employees feeling valued and appreciated.

Promote from within. Promoting employees into higher level positions within the employer is a great philosophy. A strong employee development program helps create a talent pool of qualified workers; workers that are ready for promotion.

Increase productivity. Workers who receive training and educational opportunities; who feel important and valued, are more productive.

Promotes teamwork and a positive culture. Employee development is a direct reflection of how an employer values its employees through learning and training opportunities, team building and development exercises. Employees will want to help each other learn and grow; fostering a culture of teamwork and unity.

Manage change. Employee development is a continuous and ongoing process between the supervisor and employee that involves continuous assessment and planning. What worked last year, may not work this year. Changing demands, customer needs and industry changes will all play a role in employee development.

Employee Development Plan

An employee development plan is a two-way commitment between an employee and a supervisor on what they will work on together to improve the employee's knowledge, skills and abilities. The employee will take majority ownership of activities and meeting developmental goals, with the support and coaching from the supervisor.

How to Write a Development Plan

1. Identify the competencies or skills need to be developed. Use the performance review as the guide. Discuss with the employee what the desired goal is.

List the competencies or skills that will be developed in order to achieve the goal. If an employee is new to a role, these will most likely be fundamental activities of the job. If an employee is struggling in a role, these competencies will be identified in the performance evaluation. If an employee wants to be promoted, then you will need to identify the required competencies for that new role and incorporate them into the development plan.

A development plan can be used in these circumstances:

- The employee is new to the job.
- The employee is struggling in his/her job and improvement is needed.
- The employee wants to move to a new role; get promoted.
- The employee is good at what they do and has no immediate desire to move up, but wants to continue to improve his/her current skillset.

2. Identify what developmental actions are needed to achieve the desired progress or meet the goal(s).

Some common activities include:

- Accept a challenging project or assignment – “stretch” assignment.
- Mentor another employee.
- Coaching from a subject matter expert. Cross-training.
- Attend a seminar or conference; attend a webinar; research a topic; take a class.
- Reading material.

3. Assign dates to meet the desired goal(s).

Dates help to keep progress on track and focus on commitment. The employee will be responsible for the majority of the plan; however, the supervisor may have certain tasks to support the employee in achieving a specific goal.

4. Implement the plan and follow-up quarterly on progress.

The employee and supervisor should review every aspect of the plan and offer input to ensure all areas are covered. Both the employee and the supervisor will sign and date signifying their agreement and commitment to the plan and to each other.

The employee and supervisor will re-visit the plan often, no less than quarterly, to review progress and make any needed adjustments in the competencies, actions, or timeline.

Be sure to document any accomplishments or changes along the way!

Supervisor's Role

At a minimum, meet quarterly with the employee to discuss progress, barriers, or questions with regard to developmental activities and goals. The date of each meeting will be documented on the EDP by the supervisor. *We suggest: March 15, May 15, July 15 and Sept. 15.*

Supervisors are accountable for ensuring these quarterly meetings occur and to document important events or revisions on the EDP.

Changes can be made to the EDP that would benefit employee performance. Any changes made should be agreed upon between the supervisor and the employee and documented.

Have the employee sign the development plan acknowledging that they have reviewed the contents (with the supervisor) and were provided a copy.

Consult with HR for assistance or questions.

Summary

The Employee Development Plan is a working document throughout the employee's career. Even when the employee demonstrates a mastery of skills in a current position, the supervisor should consistently encourage the employee to learn new skills and keep existing skills current.

The ultimate success of the development plan depends on the commitment between the supervisor and the employee to the employee's development.

Remember, performance management and any associated activities don't have to be expensive or elaborate. A key factor of a successful plan and positive experience will be the investment of time and genuine care and concern the supervisor puts forth.

A great supervisor will invest the time into building relationships with his/her employees, understanding their needs, and recognizing and rewarding the value each employee brings to the employer.

And remember ... celebrate every success along the way, no matter how small or big!