DEVELOPMENT PLAN FAQS

1. What is a Development Plan?

A Development Plan is an annual document completed by an employee and approved by their manager to track specific learning and development activities to participate in for the benefit of themselves and the organization.

Development Plans will include short and long-term career goals, key strengths, and development areas. While you may identify many areas of development that you want to explore and develop over time, the plan is designed for you to focus on two goals (one leadership soft-skill and one technical job-related) for the current year. This way the plan is realistic and achievable alongside all of your everyday job responsibilities.

A Development Plan is not a work plan - while it may outline some actions that you will take at work it is not designed to be an operational plan. You should have a separate operational plan that outlines goals and objectives for you and your team.

A draft Development Plan should be discussed with your direct leader and together it can be approved and finalized after a conversation.

2. What are Career Goals?

Career Goals are big picture personal aspirations for your career. They are things you personally want to achieve and accomplish. Career Goals can be thought of as short-term - things you want to happen within 2 years and long-term - things you want to happen between 3-10 years from now. Setting Career Goals not only gives you the clarity you need to proactively manage your career, it also allows you to easily communicate your career direction and desired next role to others.

You can use this worksheet to help you explore your Career Goals.

3. What are Strengths?

A Strength is the ability to consistently provide excellent performance in a specific task or area. You are valued and value yourself for having this competence. Your unique Strengths are a combination of:

1. Knowledge-based skills: Acquired from education and experience (e.g., computer skills, languages, degrees, training and technical ability)
2. Transferable skills: Your portable skills that you take from job to job (e.g., communication and people skills, analytical problem solving and planning skills)

3. Personal traits: Your unique qualities (e.g., dependable, flexible, friendly, hardworking, expressive, formal, punctual, and being a team player)

Knowing your Strengths is important so that you can leverage them in your work and career.

A resource to help you with this section is Identifying Strengths & Development Areas.

4. What are Development Areas?

Development Areas are specific skills or behaviours (identified through reflection and feedback) that you need to develop to be more effective in your current role. They can also be areas that you need to develop to be successful in your next role. Most people have many areas that they can improve on. Being able to articulate your Development Areas demonstrates that you are self-aware and models to others that you are committed to ongoing learning and growth.

A resource to help you with this section is Identifying Strengths & Development Areas.

5. How do I choose which Development Areas to make into Development Goals?

Choosing Development Areas to turn into Development Goals is an important step in the development planning process. We often have many things we want to develop and this can be inspiring and overwhelming at the same time. Focusing our development efforts enables us to track progress and see results.

When you focus on two specific Development Goals it doesn't mean that you don't learn and grow in other areas during the year, it just means that you set a specific intention and map out an action plan for only two goals. You need to identify which goals will have the greatest impact. Ask yourself:

1. What specific leadership/soft skill will make the biggest impact on my ability to successfully do my role?
2. What specific technical/job-related skill will make the biggest impact on my ability to successfully do my role?
3. What areas can I make good progress on in a 12-month timeframe?
4. What areas do I already have ideas on for how to move forward?
5. What is happening in the organization and which of my Development Areas will help the organization the most right now?

In the Development Plan draft, you should identify at least one leadership/soft skill and one job technical/job-related skill to build an action plan for. You will then meet with your leader to discuss this and get their feedback.

6. How are my Career Goals and my Development Goals related?

Career Goals are personal aspirations that you want to achieve in your career. Development Goals are goals that will make you better in your current role or prepare for the next role in your organization. Development Goals are often negotiated with your direct leader because the effort and time it will take you to achieve these goals are often done on paid time. Career Goals should inform your development goals. You should share your career goals with your direct leader so they can support you to achieve your aspirations however they can. Sometimes you have Career Goals that are different from the role you are currently in. When that happens you need to balance the needs of the organization with what you want to achieve in your own career. Great leaders want to know their employees' aspirations even if they mean that one day they will move on from the organization.

7. Who is responsible for what in the Development Planning Process?

Employees are responsible for:
- Drafting their Development Plan and scheduling time with their Manager to review it together
- Obtaining approval (where necessary) to participate in development activities both internally and externally that have been identified on their Development Plans
- Tracking the progress and completion of specific development activities

Managers are responsible for:
- Reviewing and contributing comments to the Development Plan draft
- Communicating clear expectations and guidelines to the Employee concerning:
  - o   approval and access to internal and external learning opportunities
  - o   amount of paid work time that is approved to spend on development activities
- Supporting the development process by sharing their time and where appropriate offering ideas and connections that will help the employee be successful

8. How often should I do a Development Plan?

To ensure that you are always developing your skills and preparing for the next role you should do a Development Plan once a year. This will enable you to refresh your goals and plans as things change and evolve in your life, organization, and industry. The process gets easier every year you do it because often you have already done some important groundwork in the first year you complete the process.

You can use this template to create your Development Plan.