



Development Methods

Where to start?

A good place to start is a PDR or OTO review, to highlight strengths to build on and areas of improvement to address. Set SMART objectives for the improvement/s you expect or wish to see. Having identified these, the lists below will give you an idea of some methods that you could use either for your own development, or to develop a member of your team. Choose a suitable development method or combination of methods to use, bearing in mind that not all ideas will suit all people or all circumstances:

- **Timing** – how urgent is the need? How long can you spend on it?
- **Availability** – Where? When?
- **Cost** how much is it, and what budget (if any) do you have?
- **Does it depend on someone else** or can you learn alone?
- **Equipment** what is needed or available?
- **What learning style** do you prefer?
- **What methods** of learning do you prefer or feel happier using?

Checklist of development methods

Seeking information:

- Watch a DVD / video – some are available cost effectively through the likes of Amazon
- Computer based training through Skillsoft or M-Plus
- Reading – books, trade and specialist press, brochures and catalogues. There are also many good books on 'soft' skills and management thinking – contact the People Development Team for recommendations
- Seek information on the internet – visit ours and competitors' websites and compare the style and information given with our own.

In-work activities:

- One-to-one training by a knowledgeable colleague.
- Attend a briefing for information on a particular topic.
- In-work group training by a manager or 'expert' colleague, where several colleagues have the same or similar needs.
- Practise customer service skills with a colleague playing the part of a customer (internal or external). Try other scenarios in this way.
- Brainstorm with colleagues ways in which a particular issue in your team can be addressed. Present your findings to your manager.
- Carry out a project designed to improve the operation in a particular area of the business. Discuss your findings with relevant managers.

- Seek feedback from a group of colleagues on your strengths & development areas, and identify common themes that arise from their replies.
- Complete one or more Top Tips available on the intranet.

One-to-one activities:

- Coaching by a manager or colleague.
- Mentoring by a manager or colleague in another part of the business.
- Taking personal advice, where an issue threatens your progress.
- Seek feedback from your manager on your strengths & development areas, and discuss this at your next one-to-one meeting.

Widening your role:

- Ask your manager to delegate a new task or area of responsibility to you, with clear agreement on what they expect you to achieve.
- Ask your manager to widen your responsibility in order to enrich your day-to-day role. Agree on what they expect you to achieve.
- Stand in for your manager when they are on holiday; this could be at a meeting or with a wider remit.

Activities in other parts of the company:

- Shadow or observe an expert and analyse the job in progress; what exactly is it they do that makes them good at the task?
- Interview an expert and ask the relevant questions to discover what enabled them to become an expert.
- Visit a different part of the organisation such as Logistics or Finance (or Service or Sales). Watch work in progress and ask questions to discover how their operation affects your work, and how your job affects theirs.
- Visit a different branch such as a larger or smaller one. Watch work in progress and ask questions to discover how that branch is different or similar to yours.
- Swap jobs for a week with a colleague in a different part of the business and see how different circumstances and management styles affect its running.
- Arrange a secondment to a different part of the business, such as a different sales division to see how they do things differently.

Off-job activities:

- Training course, run internally, or externally by a supplier or a training provider.
- Workshop – run internally or externally.
- Complete a distance learning course on a relevant topic (support may be available for this).
- Train or be assessed for a professional qualification.
- Attend a development centre.

For related topics see Top Tips:

- **Mentoring**
- **Feedback**
- **Recording Your Learning**