

Personal Development Planning

What is a PDP – and what's it not?

PDP stands for **Personal Development Plan**. That is to say:

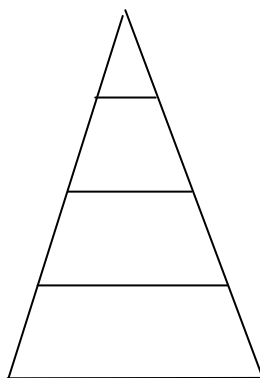
- **Personal** as in not your team's, not your department's, but your own.
- **Development** as in improvement in defined areas that will help you progress your career, not as in improving the business.
- **Plan** as in a statement of what you intend to do – it won't help you unless you put it into practice.

How do I know what I need to develop?

- Use your own knowledge of yourself. You may believe you need to develop a particular skill, so if it's relevant to your role, add it in – after all, you know yourself better than anyone else!
- Use feedback. If enough people tell you that you need to change a particular behaviour, there's probably something in it!
- From your OTO meetings. Your manager may have indicated areas that you could work on, such as particular skills or behaviours.
- From your PDR – if you've had a review, this should have identified improvements you could make that will help you. This is probably highlighted in the Capability Framework for your role.

What should go in my plan?

Your plan should cover four areas like a pyramid:



Future roles

Business changes

Behaviours and capabilities

Process and technical skills

Work through these from the bottom up, so start with the basic processes and technical skills you need to know for your role. When you are competent in all these areas, move on to behaviours and capabilities. In some cases there will be a mix of both process and behaviour. When you have completed both of these, consider the future need of the business. What skills would you need to develop to take advantage of this? Finally, consider what skills you need for your next role.

What else should I consider?

Assess what you know

Think about how much you know already. For example, if you already know how to recruit staff, you may not learn much by attending a course, but would get more from being coached by an experienced colleague. Make sure you build in opportunities to practise; after all, it won't help you to learn a skill if you never use it!

How do you like to learn?

Identify your learning style. Do you learn best by doing something, or reading about it, or watching someone else do it? Consider which you would get the most from. Build in a mix of different activities to help you get the most from this. **Hint:** the more learning styles you can use, the more opportunities you can take advantage of.

What do you need most?

Prioritise your needs. Consider which two or three topics would benefit you most to improve, or which skills would help the business most. If you've identified several things to work on, pick just the top two or three to work on first, and come back to the others when you've reached the standard you need to on the first ones.

Use SMART activities

Having identified activities which will help you learn or practise, make them SMART. For instance, don't just put 'Develop my leadership skills', but consider what particular leadership skills you need to develop – is it motivation, or communication, or strategic thinking, or to use a wider range of styles?

What does 'good' look like?

Decide what 'good' looks like. You may be able to identify someone who is good at what you want to learn, so ask yourself exactly what it is they do, that makes them good at it. What exactly will you be doing when you are 'good' at the skill? Be specific!

Keep a rolling plan

- If possible, include some 'quick wins' – they'll provide evidence that you are learning, make you feel better, and may help the business as well. When you have completed these, mark them off on your plan, and tackle the next topic on your list, so that you always have a few topics to work on.
- Make sure your activities are timed on your plan, with a note of when you will complete them and when you will review their success.
- Include short, medium, and long term objectives, say for 3, 6, and 9 months, so that you're not trying to achieve everything at once.

Should it be all work?

You may want to include non-work areas, if these are related to your job. For example, your job role may not require you to be a counsellor, but learning some of the skills used may make you a better manager or team leader.

Review your progress

- Periodically you should review your plan, checking your progress against your 'achieve by' dates.
- You could also review more formally at 3 or 6 month intervals to check your learning against the headings of:
 - What went well
 - What went less well
 - What would I do differently if I was doing this again

PDP format

Below is just one example of a PDP format:

Personal Development Plan

Name:

Department:

Date:

Development need	Activities to address this	Target date	Review date
1.			
2.			
3.			

In this,

- 'Development need' is the skill you wish to improve
- 'Activities...' are the methods you will use, such as going on some training, using Top Tips or seeking coaching from an expert
- 'Target date' is the date by which you aim to have completed each activity
- 'Review date' is when you will review the success of your learning.

For related topics see **Top Tips:**

- **Career Management**
- **Development Methods**
- **Mentoring**
- **Recording Your Learning**