



A LEADERS' GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING PEOPLE

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being." --Goethe

Most leaders believe that people are their most important asset and are all too aware of the fierce competition for talent. But too often the annual (perfunctory) evaluation is the only discussion about past performance. This guide offers useful tools and practices intended to encourage meaningful conversation, focused planning, and measurable improvement.

FIVE (BOTTOM LINE) REASONS TO TAKE A PLANNED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING PEOPLE:

1. Attract and retain talented employees
2. Maximize performance
3. Communicate respect
4. Build trust and positive relationships
5. Establish a culture of ongoing learning

FIVE GREAT EXCUSES FOR AVOIDING DEVELOPMENT CONVERSATIONS

1. *I wouldn't know where to start*
2. *I don't have time*
3. *I manage professionals; they should be in charge of their own development*
4. *I don't have the budget to pay for workshops that take him off the job*
5. *She should be grateful she has a job with good pay and benefits*

FIVE STEPS THAT MOVE YOU FORWARD

1. Own it (Recognize that this is one of the most important things you do!)
2. Assess strengths and opportunities
3. Host a development conversation
4. Document the development plan
5. Monitor progress

STEP ONE: OWN IT

As a leader, you get things done through others. A big part of your job is to maximize the performance of every person in your group; that means understanding their current strengths, uncovering hidden talents, and matching strengths and talents to the work at hand.

A development conversation allows you to look for ways to improve performance from the point of view of the employer and the employee. The right questions can surface opportunities and obstacles to each person's contribution and professional development.

Inviting an employee into a development conversation demonstrates your commitment to the development of your staff and the sustainable success of the enterprise.

STEP TWO: ASSESS STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to begin with descriptive and valid data. Possible sources of data are self-assessments, feedback from the employee's manager, and feedback from others (e.g. peers, direct reports, customers, and/or suppliers.)

You can sponsor a formal 360-feedback process conducted by a third party or you can gather the information yourself. In either case, the purpose of gathering data is to acknowledge strengths and discover developmental opportunities, rather than evaluative data.

Here are some **sample self-assessment questions** for the employee to consider prior to the development meeting:

1. What is most satisfying, meaningful or compelling about the current work you do?
2. What are your strengths? In what areas are you performing at the top of your game?
3. What skills do you have that you are not currently using?
4. What is most challenging? What nags at you or keeps you up at night?
5. How do you think others perceive you?
6. What are areas to improve to move you to the top of your game?
 - What are the skills you want to develop?
 - What knowledge would you like to acquire?
 - What opportunities would challenge you?

Here are some **sample 360 process questions** to ask peers, direct reports, or others:

1. What are her significant strengths?
2. What are her most significant areas for development?
3. In order to be most effective in her role, what specific behaviors should she:
 - start doing?
 - stop doing?
 - continue doing?

STEP THREE: HOST A DEVELOPMENT CONVERSATION

A successful development conversation is collaborative. Before the meeting, you will have reviewed the employee's self-assessment and other data you have gathered. You will have organized your own thinking in preparation for this important conversation. At the start of the discussion, set the tone (hospitable, constructive) and provide an overview. At the wrap up, express your appreciation, confirm next steps, and schedule a follow-up meeting.

Here are some **sample questions** to discuss during this meeting:

1. Given your self-assessment, what goals will you set for yourself?
2. What resources will you need to accomplish these goals?
3. How and when will we jointly assess progress?
4. What do you need from me to be successful in accomplishing these goals?
5. What will you do to develop members of your team?
6. How do you prefer to be recognized or acknowledged for the work you do?
7. What role or position would you like to have three years from now?

STEP FOUR: DOCUMENT THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Ask the employee to create a document including the goals, actions, and evidence of success. *A sample format for a development plan is provided at the end of this guide.*

Here are some guidelines for creating the plan:

1. Commit to a vital few goals (no more than 3 areas for improvement.) Use the following criteria when choosing goals:
 - Within your control
 - Will make a difference for the organization
 - Have significant meaning for you
2. Select specific strategies to accomplish each goal. Create this list by gathering tips, remedies, and solutions from trusted advisors, coaches, bosses, peers, mentors, readings, and research.

STEP FIVE: MONITOR PROGRESS AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK

A good plan sets the destination and the route. Progress requires a continuous cycle of acting, reflecting and adjusting one's efforts based on feedback and insight.

Positive reinforcement is a powerful lever for change. Let the employee know when you observe the behaviors you have agreed are valued. Reinforce desired behaviors.

Be on the look out for projects, assignments, learning opportunities and resources that might benefit the employee. Be resourceful.

HARD WON WISDOM – WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

- Success at changing the behaviors of others will of necessity involve changing your own behaviors.
- Without discipline, urgent issues will always trump reflection. Schedule check-ins at agreed upon intervals and keep those appointments.
- Be prepared to intervene when progress is not forthcoming or effort is minimal. This may mean giving specific feedback, changing strategies, or questioning employee “fit” with the job.

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SAMPLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Overall Goal: Improve ability to manage others

Specific Development Area: Coaching others for successful performance

Development Goal(s)	Actions & By When	Evidence of Success
Research effective coaching skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Read at least one article on effective coaching strategies, giving feedback, or managing others (monthly starting _____.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Articles read are documented▪ Discussions with supervisor about what I learned and how I will apply this learning are occurring
Attend training program on coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Attend training program at UC extension on coaching (month/year.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ I make a presentation to Senior Management Team about the program, what I learned, and how I am applying the concepts
Identify development goals for each direct report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conduct an assessment of strengths and development opportunities for each supervisor. (month/year)▪ Jointly identify up to three goals for improvement for each person. (May 30, 2008)▪ Discuss and agree on how you will coach and support your direct reports to achieve these goals. Be very specific about how and when you will meet with them for coaching and feedback (month/year.)▪ Assess progress quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Assessment is completed▪ Goals are defined and documented▪ Coaching plan is documented▪ Coaching meetings with each of my direct reports are on my calendar
Potential Obstacles (and how to overcome them)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lack of time – too busy to devote time to developing others. (<i>Strategy: Make coaching others a top priority – schedule it.</i>)▪ No previous experience effectively coaching employees. (<i>Strategy: Take this learning opportunity very seriously and apply what I am learning on a daily basis. Take risks and try new behaviors.</i>)
Support and Resources Needed for Success.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Financial support to take courses▪ Six months of leadership coaching to support me in learning to manage others more effectively