

Creating your Personal Development Plan (PDP)



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Introduction

To support your development, it's a good idea to have a Personal Development Plan (PDP). This guidance sets out what a PDP is and how you can use it in support of your aspirations.

1. What is a Personal Development Plan (PDP)?

A PDP is just another name for an action plan, only this one refers specifically to your aspirations regarding personal and professional development. We make plans every day, but do not always write them down. A PDP allows you to set your own personal targets and find the best way to achieve them.

2. Why should I have one?

An action plan will help you to visualise what you are doing and keep track of your achievements. To be most effective, it must be a live document that is reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that it is always accurate, relevant and realistic. Remember that the PDP is your personal document and unique to you.

3. How can I write one to reflect my own aspirations?

You now have 2 options. You may feel confident enough to go straight ahead and fill in a PDP. You can use any layout, provided that it satisfies the 3 questions discussed on the following pages.

Some people need a little more time to consider the various factors that will affect their future decisions. If this is the case for you, take some time to go through the guidance on the following pages. The questions aim to promote thought and consideration of the direction that you want to take and the methods that you want to use. They also encourage you to take account of your own personal circumstances before you decide on a course of action.

Simple steps for writing a PDP

First, ask yourself three key questions:

Where am I now?

Where do I want to be?

How do I get there?

Where am I now?

You need to decide what your current situation is. This will form the lower edge of your "Learning Gap". You may find it helpful to consider the following questions:

What am I good at?

What do I need to work on?

What could help me along?

What might stop me?

Consider the following example and then repeat the exercise to reflect your own circumstances.

BOX 1: What am I good at?

Good interpersonal skills

Sound IT skills

Fair organizational skills

BOX 2: What do I need to work on?

Limited qualifications

Don't like formal exams

BOX 3: What could help me along?

Attending relevant courses

Involvement in projects underway at work

BOX 4: What might stop me?

Imminent change to organisation

Lack of resources (money/time)

- The above example could apply to someone wanting to improve their professional qualifications by concentrating on work-based skills (see box 1) rather than more formal exam-based courses (see box 2).
- They could use this exercise to identify that work-based learning would be an ideal solution as it involves gathering evidence from the work and varied projects that they might get involved with on a daily basis (see box 3).
- The skills gained are transferable and learning could continue wherever they are in the organisation (see box 4).

Where do I want to be?

This is probably the most difficult stage to define. Only you can answer this question, but be aware that there are many factors to consider when finding the solution. You may find the following questions provoke thought in many areas.....

What do I like doing?

In my job, as a hobby....

What is my motive for learning?

Promotion, personal improvement, overcome a challenge....

What qualifications and/or experience do I already have?

Some of these may be transferable

What method of study would suit me best?

Courses, book-based learning, e-learning, projects

How much time do I have to complete my learning?

Be realistic – development takes time.

What effect will studying have on my home life?

Consider the commitments that you already have and how you would balance these with study.

Are there any imminent changes to my life?

Marriage, children, change of job.

What will happen if I change job?

Will your plan need to change?

What is my ultimate goal?

A qualification, personal fulfilment, career development.

How will I measure my success?

Recognised qualifications, personal goals....

Where can I get help and advice?

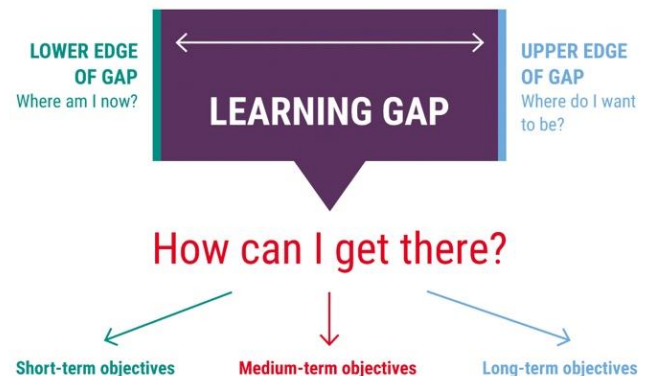
Your Line Manager is available for advice and support. Also consider discussing any problems or questions with colleagues – they are developing their own plans at the same time and you may find that you have things in common.

Once you have considered all of the factors, decide on a future goal. This may be one single objective, or many smaller goals that make up a larger one. Either way, you have now defined the upper edge of your Learning Gap.

How do I get there?

Once you have identified your Learning Gap, the question of "How can I get there?" can be answered by splitting your task into "bite-size chunks".

This is a good way to plan effectively without losing sight of your overall aim, and will motivate you to continue as you achieve small successes on your way to completing the final goal.



The best way to organise your plan into manageable chunks is to set **short, medium and long-term objectives**. Remember that 'short', 'medium' and 'long' are all relative terms and will mean different things to different people. Some plans may only cover a one-year period, others may last up to six years - it all depends on you and your own circumstances.

It is also important to remember that the short, medium and long term objectives are flexible and must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant. It isn't a problem if your plan changes - just follow the basic principles outlined here, and continually ask yourself the three main questions. Your plan will then remain an effective tool to support your personal development.

Support templates

There are three support templates to help with your PDP:

1 A Personal Development Plan Template – this will help you set out your full PDP

2 Personal Development Plan Summary Objectives: this helps you set yourself manageable targets

3 Personal Development Plan Record: designed to help you capture any learning activity as they occur and track your learning

Personal Development Plan Template

Outcomes			
Actions			
When			
How do I get there?			
Where do I want to be?			
Where am I now?			
Key areas			

Personal Development Plan Summary Objectives

Time scale	Start date	End date	Comments
SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES			
MEDIUM-TERM OBJECTIVES			
LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES			

Personal Development Plan Record

Name	
Learning activity	
Date	

Why am I doing this activity?	
What did I learn from this activity?	
How can I apply this learning?	

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