

Development Planning Process

The first place to start is to double check the process of development planning to make sure that it is effective. Below are the steps that we have found to be best practices when creating a personal development plan.

1. Start by identifying the gaps. The best way for an individual to get the perspective of everyone around them is to use a 360 feedback survey and report. These surveys often point out gaps between the perceptions of various rater groups. In other words, I may see my performance differently than does my boss, peers, etc. These gaps quite often lead to major “ah-hahs,” where people realize their performance may not be viewed the way they assumed, or viewed differently between the rater groups.

All good 360 feedback reports include the information needed to identify significant and consistent differences between rater groups (self, supervisor, co-workers, direct reports, etc.). Individuals should ask questions, such as the following, in order to better understand these gaps:

- Do people see me in a different light, depending on my working relationship with them? Have I already seen evidence of perception gaps? If so, how are they affecting my relationships?
What would happen if I were to fully see myself from their point of view?

2. Recognize real strengths. There are things we do so well and effortlessly that we often forget we possess a talent. The 360 feedback report helps identify an individual's highest scores as seen by others. However, each person needs to interpret what his or her real strengths are. When evaluating strengths, ask these questions:

- Have these strengths played out in my career thus far? How?
- Am I continually using these strengths in my career and personal life?
- What would happen if I were to utilize these strengths more regularly?

3. Identify potential derailers. A personal derailer is a behavior that gets in the way of our progress. It is not just a weakness, it is a weakness that requires improvement if we are to realize our potential. These may play only a small role early in our careers, but as we progress they have much more potential for harm. The 360 feedback report can include feedback on potential derailers from all of an individual's raters. Here are some questions to ask when looking over the feedback in order to make best use of the feedback:

- Is this area critical to my continued growth and development? Why?
- Have I been making improvements in this area on a regular basis?
- How would my life be different if I were to significantly improve in this area?

4. Set SMART goals. We've all heard this, but only those who take the time to actually do it benefit from this whole process. A SMART goal is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. If a goal is missing any of these components, it is far more unlikely to be followed up on, and most likely to be missed. If possible, find a way to use an individual's strengths to do a project that will aid in their personal development.

Improve Follow Through

All too often, goals are written down and then filed or shelved, where they are forgotten. There are a few ways to prevent this and make sure the goals are followed up on.

- **Get a mentor or coach.** Often the best mentors and coaches are coworkers, peers, or supervisors. Help the individual find someone appropriate to helping him/her really focus, as well as to help hold him/herself accountable—even if informally.
- **Set a deadline and hold the individual accountable.** This goes back to the coach or mentor. People are far more likely to get something done if they have to answer for it to someone other than themselves. One of the best combinations is if both the coach and individual know about the deadline and the coach is willing to keep updated on progress. It is important to take the time to do development planning right. It may not always be easy to get an individual to take development seriously and achieve his or her goals, but the returns are significant both for the business and for the individual.