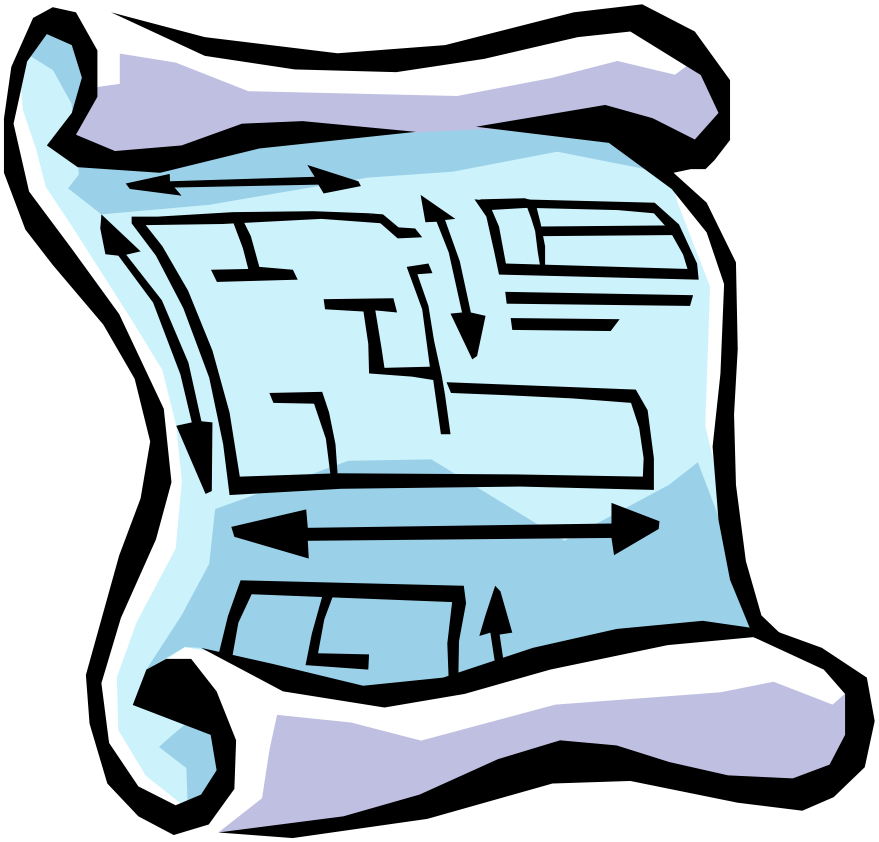
Creating a Professional Development Plan



Creating a Professional Development Plan was written using materials from the following sources:

NASA's *Financial and Resources Management Individual Development Plan Advisor* at http://ifmp.nasa.gov/codeb/staffing/idpguide.htm

Robin Ryan, *What to Do with The Rest of Your Life : America's Top Career Coach Shows You How to Find or Create the Job You'll LOVE* (New York: Fireside, 2002).

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Introduction

Why should you be concerned about planning your career? It is *your* career. If *you* don't take responsibility for the success of your career, then who will? Besides, considering all the time and energy you spend at work; why not ensure you get maximum satisfaction from your work and career? The workplace has been affected by a number of significant changes or trends, which have definite ramifications for your career planning:

Less job security: Gone is the era of high job security, with the same employer for life, where good employees automatically move up well-defined career ladders. Even in higher education, downsizing will continue to eliminate some jobs in response to increased pressures to reduce costs. Workers will, of necessity, need to be more mobile in finding the right job—and employer.

Up is not the only way: In higher education, there are trends toward flattening of organizational structures. The traditional linear career patterns will be less available. Employees will need to be more flexible, adaptable and creative in identifying their next job, and may need to consider lateral moves or rotational assignments to broaden their experience or leverage their skills.

Technical knowledge and skills obsolescence: Rapid advancements in technology and state-of-the-art knowledge require employees to upgrade their skills and "retool" themselves just to remain current with their job requirements.

It is definitely to your advantage to position yourself for long-term employability in the rapidly changing world of work. Begin preparing now for the future!

Developing a Professional Development Plan (PDP)

Reflecting

Taking time to write and reflect on your career can increase your self-awareness and help you organize and synthesize your thoughts. Set aside regular amounts of time to journal. You will need to make your PDP a priority.

Gaining Self-Awareness

A professional development plan is a concept that emphasizes gathering input from many sources. First, you will need to do some self-analysis on aspects of work that give you satisfaction and aspects that do not bring satisfaction. A suggestion would be to continue to use your PDP book to write about other events and to analyze those to learn more about what elements you would want to include and emphasize in your career. You may want to write about work you've done in the community or volunteer work or other jobs you've held in the past in order to look for nuggets of information about the important areas that future jobs should include in order to bring you satisfaction.

Seeking Outside Input

Work to gain more information from others in order to have the full picture about yourself. Talk to your supervisor, your mentor or coach at work, your peers or staff at work to gain information. Each PDP should be uniquely tailored to the needs of the individual and the organization. You might identify extensive skill training; or might emphasize a more academic approach. There is no set pattern—the term "individual" is basic to the concept—especially as it applies to your willingness and capacity to learn and grow.

Developing Action Steps

How can you get from where you are to where you'd like to be? How can you improve your satisfaction with your career? First, determine something you would like to change in the very short term. Then list concrete steps you can take to move yourself toward that change. ***Here are some examples of action steps:***

— Update my résumé
— Ask for new assignments in my current job
— Rotation to a different project/job
— Seek a mentor(s)—volunteer for a task force or process action/reengineering team
— Obtain on-the-job guidance from someone who is more expert in a specific area
— Attend seminars/conferences (on site and off site)
— Enroll in university courses
— Attend commercial/contracted courses
— Experience self-paced learning (books, videos, computer-based instruction)
— Pursue an academic degree or certification program
— Conduct informational interviews
— Move to a new job within my division
— Move to a new job within the college or university
— Read EDUCAUSE publications
— Join a discussion group on topics I want to learn more about

Setting Longer Term Goals

After you have begun to test out new areas you want to explore, work with input from your supervisor and coach/mentor to set goals which cover the bigger picture for the next three years. The worksheet on page 14 may be helpful in guiding this process.

Current Career Issues Worksheet (5 Minutes)

What are your career issues?
How much time and effort you need to spend at any one step in the process depends on your career issues. It is important to be clear about these career issues, so that you can develop an effective strategy for dealing with them. Career issues cover a broad spectrum, ranging from getting up to speed in a new job, to making a major career field change, or planning your retirement. The following is a list of statements that reflect the full range of career issues people face at one time or another. Which ones are relevant for you now?

Check the statements that are true for you at this time. Move quickly through these items.

- ❑ You are new in your job and must learn the basics to get up to speed and feel comfortable and productive.
- ❑ You have been in your job for a while and are striving for increased competence, in general.
- ❑ You have been in your job for a while, but have a new boss or organization leader.
- ❑ You need to improve your performance in certain areas of your current job.
- ❑ You need to update your skills or expertise to keep up with the changing technologies or state-of-the-art knowledge in your line of work.
- ❑ Your job duties have changed recently (or will change), requiring some new skills or expertise on your part.
- ❑ Your job may be eliminated due to reengineering or restructuring, and you want to begin "re-tooling" to be ready for future opportunities.
- ❑ You want to prepare for a promotion or move to the next higher level of responsibility.
- ❑ You want to broaden your skills or expertise to allow yourself more flexibility for future job moves.
- ❑ You want to change jobs within your current job category, and...
  - ❑ Stay in your current division at your current institution
  - ❑ Change to a different area at your current institution
  - ❑ Change institutions within higher education
  - ❑ Stay in higher education
  - ❑ Leave higher education
  - ❑ You don't see much of a future if you remain in your current job, but aren't sure of your options.
  - ❑ You want to plan your retirement.
  - ❑ Other _____

Pinnacle/Foothill Activity

The purpose of this activity is to increase your self-awareness of elements of work which energize you (Pinnacles) or drain you (Foothills). You will need to find a partner to help you clarify and summarize. Recognizing your "Pinnacles" helps you create a direction for your career.

For this activity you will:

1. Reflect and write by yourself
2. Team up with a partner to help you reflect.

- On the ***Pinnacle Moments Worksheet (Page 5).*** Think about your career and some of the events or projects that went especially well for you. Try to think of examples of things that you have done that were very energizing and satisfying. Write some bulleted items or a few sentences to describe two or three examples of those moments. Write down some adjectives, phrases, or a few sentences that describe what was satisfying about the events. *This doesn't need to be perfect prose—phrases are fine. This is for your own use.*

- Team up with a partner and share information about **one of the Pinnacle events** you have written about. Come up with adjectives, phrases, or create a "newspaper headline" to summarize your event.

- On the ***Foothill Moments Worksheet (Page 6)*** do the **same exercise for your Foothill moments.** Write some bulleted items or a few sentences to describe unsatisfying events in your career. Write two or three examples on your worksheet**.** Think of something that drained you and was not energizing.

- Team up with a partner and share information about **one of the Foothill events** you have written about. Come up with adjectives, phrases, or create a "newspaper headline" to summarize your event..

Pinnacle Moments Worksheet (10 Minutes)

Pinnacle Moment #1

Description:

What was energizing or satisfying? (adjectives, phrases)

Pinnacle Moment #2

Description:

What was energizing or satisfying? (adjectives, phrases)

Pinnacle Moment #3

Description:

What was energizing or satisfying? (adjectives, phrases)

Summary

Choose one of your moments to share with a partner. Ask the partner to help you summarize qualities that this pinnacle moment reveals about you that you might want to consider for your professional development or career planning. Jot down the summary here.

Foothill Moments Worksheet (10 Minutes)

Foothill Moment #1

Description:

What was draining or unsatisfying?

Foothill Moment #2

Description:

What was draining or unsatisfying?

Foothill Moment #3

Description:

What was draining or unsatisfying?

Summary

Choose one of your moments to share with a partner. Ask the partner to help you summarize qualities that this foothill moment reveals about you that you might want to be cautious about for your professional development or career planning. Jot down the summary here.

Self-Assessment Worksheet (10 Minutes)

To gain a better understanding of yourself, answer the following questions.

1. Of the new and recent developments in my organization or field, **what interests me the most? What are my current skills and strengths for pursuing these interests?** (See page 11 for suggestions.) What do I need to do to reposition my career so that I can get involved in these new areas?

2. **What is most important to me in my work?** What values guide the kind of work I want to do? Examples of guiding principles include: must agree with the organizational mission, must be allowed innovation and risk taking, and must honor family values for a balanced professional life. (See list of values examples on page 13.)

3. **What things are "must haves" for me in a job?** Examples might be flex time, on-site day care, etc.

4. **What are my limiting factors?** These are things that put limits on the type of job you can take. Examples could be health concerns, geography, not willing to move, must not involve extensive travel, must stay in place until kids graduate, I need an advanced degree, or maybe a barrier or challenge such as a poor relationship with immediate supervisor. If you have none, you are most flexible and positioned for change.

5. **Is it time for me to consider working outside of my institution?** If I am considering a complete career change, what experiences and learning would help reposition my career in the direction of my new interests?

Action Steps Worksheet (10 Minutes)

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Start an action list. (See examples on page 2 of your booklet.)

Think about the gap between what your career is like now and how you would like for it to be. Think of an area you would like to improve. List some steps to move yourself from where you are now toward where you'd like to be. For example, you might decide to take a class, or volunteer to head a team for a project, or learn a new computer language, or read books on the area you would like to improve, and so forth.

- List some steps to move from where you are now toward where you'd like to be.

- Categorize the steps as immediate, medium-term, or long-term actions.

Professional Development Worksheet

Complete with input from a mentor, coach, or supervisor.

Answer the following questions to identify what is currently going on around me, and what changes I expect to occur in the near future:

1. How is the mission of my organization changing? What other changes are occurring regarding our customers, services, work processes, organizational structure, reporting relationships and personnel?

2. What are the organization's changing needs regarding the workforce, and what new expertise and skills will be required or desirable?

3. What opportunities are available for developing this new expertise and skills (work experiences, training, rotational assignments, professional conferences, mentoring, and so forth)?

4. How might my role (job) change in my organization? How can I prepare for or develop new skills for these changes?

5. New expertise and skills my organization wants me to learn include:

6. What new missions or projects appeal to me? What are the organization's future needs? What kinds of development activities would help position me for participation in another work project?

Professional Development Worksheet *(continued)*

7. In what areas do my interests and personal plans overlap with the changing needs of my organization?

8. What knowledge, skills, or abilities are important for increasing or maintaining the quality of my performance in my present assignments?

9. What knowledge, skills, or abilities would help prepare me for opportunities or roles I might have in the future?

10. Compared to the development needs suggested by these factors, other interests for development that are important to me include:

Skills Assessment List*

Adapt tools, machinery and equipment	Follow-through on tasks
Advise others	Fund-raising
Analyze data	Give presentations
Audit or balance financial information	Hire people
Budget time, resources, or materials	Influence others
Budget management	Install equipment
Calculate numerical data	Interior design
Compile research data	Interview people
Complete projects or tasks on schedule	Instruct others
Computer skills: Note all	Interpret or translate a different language
Conceptualize ideas	Invent new products
Conduct statistical analysis	Justify decisions
Conduct market research	Lead a department
Control costs	Lead an organization
Construct or assemble things	Legal expertise
Coordinate services	Make business deals
Create displays	Manage people
Create advertising/marketing materials	Mentor others
Create graphs/charts	Merchandising of product(s)
Critique or review others' work	Multitask
Curriculum development	Negotiate contracts
Demonstrate how to do things	Operate equipment or machinery
Demonstrate strong interpersonal skills	Originate new ideas or procedures
Design buildings	Organize data or information
Design flyers, brochures, booklets, etc.	Organize people
Detail-oriented person	Organize processes or systems
Detect problems or errors	Organize programs
Diagnose technical problems	Promote products, services, or events
Dispense medicines	Quality assurance
Document records	Quality improvement
Edit written material	Rehabilitate others
Effective listening skills	Schedule others
Encourage productivity in others	Sell products or services
Establish policy and/or procedures	Solve technical problems
Estimate space or cost requirements	Supervise construction projects
Examine products or processes	Supervise installations
Financial analysis	Supervise staff
Financial planning	Team builder
Test others or objects	Verbal communications skills
Treat ill people	Visionary
Use multimedia equipment	Write technical materials
Use sophisticated equipment, instruments	Written communication skills
Use scientific/medical instruments	

Other skills you may possess? List them here.

Values Assessment List*

Acquiring new knowledge	Opportunity for advancement
Autonomy in job	Power and influence
Beautiful work surroundings	Public contact
Being around interesting people	Quality of product
Benefits	Recognition
Blending of family and career	Regular 40-hour work week
Challenging work	Salary
Clear rules and expectations	Security
Competition	Status and prestige
Creativity	Supervising others
Flexible work schedule	Taking risks
Freedom from pressure and stress	Travel opportunities
Friendships at work	Variety and change in work
Helping others	Working alone
Independence	Working from home
Involvement in decision making	Working with a team
Leisure time	Working with details

* Ryan, Robin. *What to Do with The Rest of Your Life: America's Top Career Coach Shows You How to Find or Create the Job You'll LOVE.* New York: Fireside, 2002, pp. 19–20.

Other values you may possess? List them here.

Goal Development Questions for My Journal

Complete using the journal pages at the end of this booklet.

A goal is a statement of a desired outcome or accomplishment that is specific, observable and realistic. Based on the data you have generated about yourself on the previous worksheets *and* your specific career issues, write some career goals for the next one, two, and three years and answer the following questions in your Professional Development Plan Journal.

1. What I want to accomplish and the knowledge/skills I want to acquire or improve by this time next year are:

2. What I want to accomplish and the knowledge/skills I want to acquire or improve by the end of the second year are:

3. What I want to accomplish and the knowledge/skills I want to acquire or improve by the end of the third year are:

4. What barriers or obstacles might prevent me from accomplishing my goals on time (e.g., time, money, and other commitments)?

5. What can I do to overcome these barriers or obstacles? What resources are available to help me?

Professional Development Plan Journal

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