

Career Development Plans

As a manager, your role in helping develop the potential and growth of your team members lies in your ability to initiate coaching conversations with them, that are fueled by curiosity and powerful questions, and aimed at encouraging your team members to reflect on both their areas of strength as well as their areas for desired growth.

In their book, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, authors Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni state, “Career development is among the most frequently forgotten tools for driving business results”. Yet it is completely within a manager’s sphere of influence. And quality career development boils down to having quality conversations with your team members.

From these conversations, you can more effectively support each team member in building a career development plan that can be regularly reviewed and tracked in support of achievement and success with their key career goals.

Why It Matters

People like to do a good job and to make an impact, and they need to see a vision for their future. A solid career development plan helps do just that and is crucial to team member engagement and success.

- Helping a team member to see their skills and strengths builds their confidence, and helps them understand how to have the greatest impact at work.
- Knowing what is expected of them provides structure to their role and sets you both up for success.
- Understanding gaps clarifies the areas for potential skill development and improvement.

How It’s Done

Career agility is the name of the game. The traditional “career ladder” is often no longer relevant due to factors including organization restructuring, fewer leadership roles, and people moving more frequently to different jobs or companies. Onward and upward has been replaced by forward and toward.

Develop a cadence and a process for career development planning

- Leverage shorter and more frequent career development conversations which fit better in today's business cadence. For example, scheduling quarterly career development conversations, with follow-ups and updates in 1-on-1's.

Your team members own their career development plan

- You might start this plan together, or start individually each with your own blank copy and then set up a one-on-one where you can both compare and share your ideas and thoughts.
- However, once it's developed, the team member owns the plan – they should feel that the plan came from them with your input and support.
- Refer to the sample Career Development Plan on the last page, which you can use with your team members.

Use your coaching skills in the career development conversations

- Your team member does 80% of the talking. Use your 20% to ask open ended questions (e.g. "what" questions), to share your experiences and knowledge of the organization, etc.
- Practice Level 2 listening – listen with curiosity. Curiosity is not just informative; it's also transformative. It provokes reflection, insights, ideas, and actions.

Focus on strengths and filling gaps

- Generously identify and praise your team members' strengths.
- Validate team members' performance and aspirations – what skills, talents, and knowledge do they presently have that could be transferable and applied towards their career goals?
- When identifying and coaching to gaps, use a scale of 1-10; ask where they'd rate themselves now, and what steps can they take to reach 10?

Tips for Success

Here are some powerful questions you can ask with team members when you are filling out the career development plan, or during any career development conversation.

- How do you define career success for yourself? How does this align with related career paths in your organization?
- What are your top goals for growth and improvement?
- What are your strengths and how could you be leveraging them even more?
- What gaps might currently exist? What steps could you take to fill them?
- How can I support you in achieving your goals?

PRACTICE

Sample Career Development Plan

Team Member: M. Smythe		Date:		
Employee's aspirations & skills they want to develop.	Strengths	Skills to develop <small>Current skill rating? 1-10</small>	How to develop these skills? What are steps? What is timeframe?	Next follow-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like to become a manager and lead a team. I would like to learn how to give honest feedback and have difficult conversations. I would like to receive more coaching and have a manager mentor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert in my field Technically skilled team lead Organized and meets deadlines Well-respected by directs and peers Team player Data focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take initiative more and "show off" my skills. (7) Up-level my leadership skills. (6) Improve interactions with coworkers – be more direct when tension/conflict arises. (6) Listen to understand rather than listen to respond. (6) Increase my self-awareness and emotional intelligence. (7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take more risks! Be ready, willing and able to do more. [Start now.] Make more "deposits" into the relationship bank with coworkers – particularly with those I struggle to connect with. [Start now.] Listen more, talk less. [Start now.] Network within the organization to enlist the support of a seasoned mentor who is in a manager's role. [By next month.] Self-enroll in coaching through our HR portal. [ASAP.] 	[date]

Ask team member to detail the steps/actions for each skill with timeframes.

Resources

- o *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, a book by Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni
- o *Top 7 Strategies for Helping Your Employees Reach Their Goals*, by Chris Brennan
<https://www.insperity.com/blog/top-7-strategies-for-helping-your-employees-reach-their-goals>