

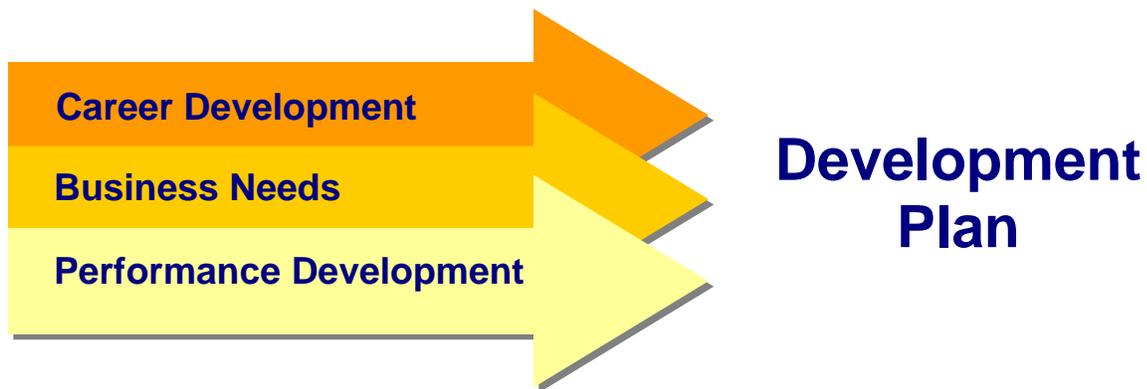
Writing a Development Plan

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES

Development Planning

Career development and development planning are **employee-directed** activities. Employees are responsible for creating and implementing their own development plans. Leaders play a critical, supportive role in the process.

Development plans are **multi-faceted** and take into consideration various elements. As depicted in the graphic below, your career interests and the needs of the business should be taken into consideration, along with building the skills you need for your current job.



An Effective Development Plan:

- **Is created and owned by the employee**
- Has the sincere support of the manager and the organization
- Is customized to the employee's career interests and goals
- Is realistic and achievable
- Is something the employee can begin working on immediately
- Includes a variety of on-the-job activities and involvement of others
- Identifies how progress will be monitored and measured
- Is reviewed and updated on a regular basis

You are responsible for your development and for writing your development plan. Your manager will make suggestions and help secure resources, but ultimately you own implementing the plan.

Development Planning Preparation Worksheet

You have a ***personal responsibility*** for your ***own continuous development***. The information on this worksheet will assist you in defining your career interests and writing a development plan to help meet your goals. After completing the information on the worksheet, draft a development plan following the principles in this guide. Then schedule a time to meet with your manager to review both documents.

1. What do you like most about your current position?
2. What challenges you the most; what are the biggest challenges you face?
3. What do you see as your top two strengths?
4. What do you consider as your top two improvement opportunities?
5. What specific feedback have you received from others regarding your strengths or improvement opportunities? Who would be the best source for additional feedback?
6. Describe how you like to learn.
7. State your preferences regarding present and possible future assignments, projects, or placements.
8. If you have long-term (two to five years from now) career goals, describe them here.
9. Name one or two individuals you think would be helpful partner(s) in your growth.
10. What kind of support do you need from your manager?

Writing the Development Plan

The first step in writing an effective development plan starts with **assessing current abilities and career interests**. Use the Employee Development Planning Worksheet included to assist in defining your career interests and goals.



Step 1: *Determine development goals.*

Assess your strengths and development opportunities. A development opportunity could be a gap between where you are now and where you want to be, or it could be a way to leverage strengths more fully.

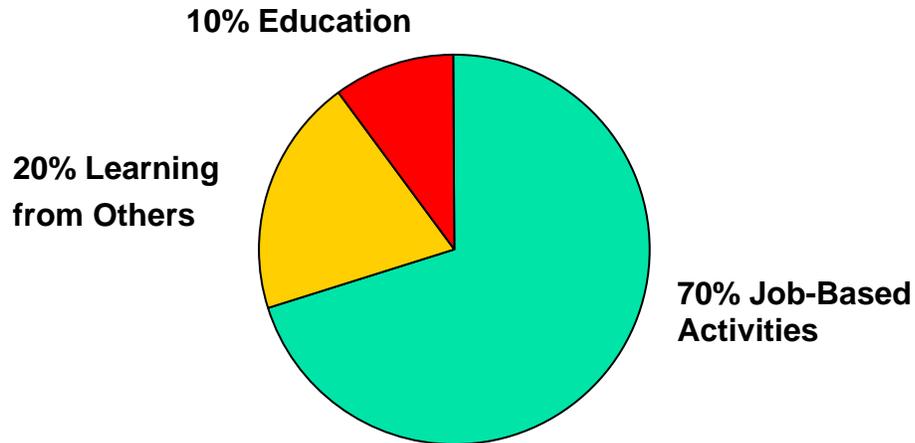
Create goals that are **specific** and **measurable**. Choose goals that align with your career goals and the goals of the organization. These are the areas where you will receive the greatest support and have the most energy for change. Be sure your goals are **realistic** but **challenging**, and that you are **personally committed to** and **comfortable with** each one. Limit your development goals to the top two or three.



Step 2: *Identify development strategies.*

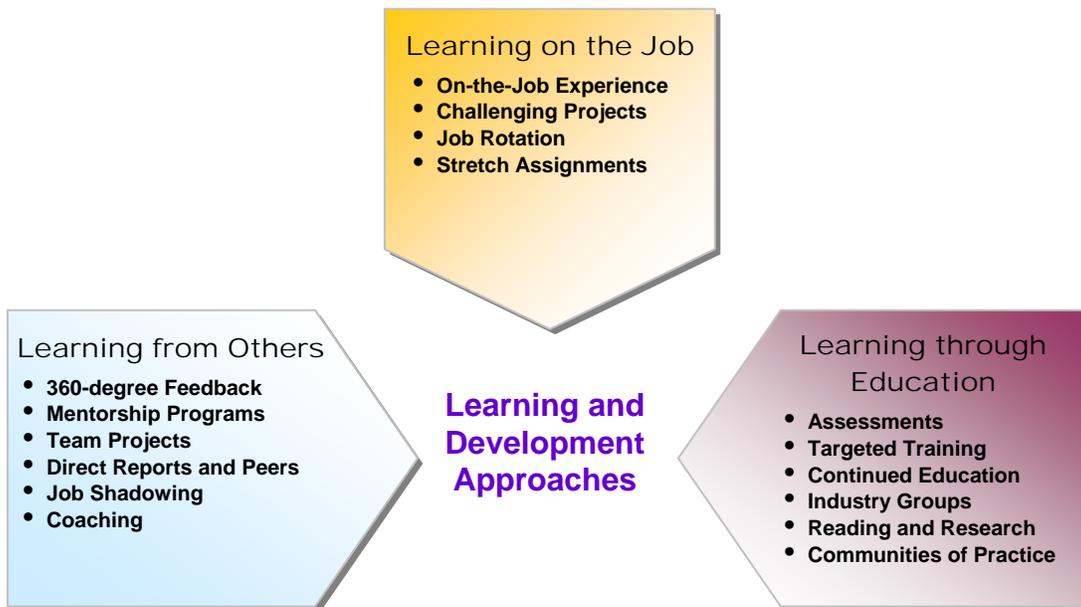
Plan the activities that can help you develop the knowledge you want to obtain and the skills you want to learn. Development strategies typically fall into three main categories: **learning on the job**, **learning from others**, and **learning through education**. Consider how you like to learn and who may help you.

Research conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership (a leading leadership research and consulting organization) indicates that development results from a combination of three strategies:



Approximately 70% of learning occurs through job-based activities, so be sure to include a variety of on-the-job activities that will help you develop and practice new behaviors. Consider approaches that will add new challenges to your existing job and will stretch you beyond your comfort level.

Listed below are only a few ideas of possible development approaches.



Step 3: *Identify development resources.*

Resources can be people, external training programs, books, etc. **Select the people and other resources you think will have the greatest impact.** Learning from others has proven to be a valuable way of developing new skills and acquiring important knowledge. When utilizing the support of others, determine how to network with people inside and outside of the organization who can mentor you or share their “lessons learned.”

Step 4: *Describe how you will measure your progress.*

For each development goal, describe how you will know that you have achieved the objective of your goal. This is the measure that you can **see, hear,** or otherwise **observe.**

Step 5: *Set time parameters for completion.*

Establish a **realistic timeline** for accomplishing your development goals. By identifying target completion dates for each of your goals, you can ensure steady progress toward meeting them. Consider staggering completion dates for your goals to avoid trying to do too much at once. A sample Development Plan is included on the next page.

For a blank Development Plan Template, go to USBnet > Human Resources tab > Learning & Development > Access the Employee Development Plan template.

Sample Development Plan

Development Goals	Strategies	Resources	Measurement	Timeline
<i>What skills are you going to develop?</i>	<i>How are you going to learn/ demonstrate this skill?</i>	<i>Who and/or what can help you?</i>	<i>How will you know you met your development goal?</i>	<i>What is the target completion date?</i>
Key Strengths				
Inspires Trust and Confidence: Create an atmosphere where new ideas can be generated and shared.	Get involved in XYZ task team to share thoughts and encourage others in generating ideas for change. Assist with brainstorming department process improvement initiative with peers. Mentor 2 direct reports who struggle with innovative approaches to work.	Randy Crocker, Project Lead for XYZ task team Peers and Manager Direct Reports	I will feel challenged and rewarded by the opportunity to leverage my strength. The task team will be successful. I will contribute to department improvements. I will develop the skill of my direct reports in this area.	August through December
Development Areas				
Drive for Results: Demonstrate a stronger sense of urgency to accomplish our team's objectives.	At the start of each week, I will list out my team's priorities and goals, and measure whether they are stretch goals. As I see problems developing, I will take initiative to resolve them immediately and begin brainstorming solutions for discussion. Read book titled <i>Balanced Scorecard Step-by-Step: Maximizing Performance and Maintaining Results</i> .	Work closely with manager to assist in reviewing team priorities and goals. My direct reports and colleagues will assist with brainstorming. <i>Balanced Scorecard Step-by-Step: Maximizing Performance and Maintaining Results</i> .	My team meets or surpasses our department goals. My manager gives me feedback that my team and I are more focused on meeting objectives. Colleagues and employees comment on how quickly and efficiently my department responds to problems.	October through February
Decisiveness and Ability to Discern the Issues: Improve the quality of the options I recommend by basing them on available facts and data.	When faced with a problem, I will begin by making a preliminary list of what I need to know in order to resolve it effectively. Resist the temptation to jump to conclusions prematurely, or develop a plan too quickly. Consult with at least 3-4 key sources of information.	Work with Steve Jones in XYZ department for insight on key projects. Various department managers that will serve as source of information.	My decisions will be supported by a diverse mix of data backed by several data sources. I will use new sources of data that I have not used previously. Decisions may take longer at times, but over time, people agree that they were solid solutions.	Ongoing

Building on Strengths

It is human nature to focus on the areas that ***you want to improve***. Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton, in their best-selling book *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, talk about our faulty assumption that each person's great ***room for growth*** is in his or her greatest weakness. Instead, they believe that ***each person's talents are enduring and unique***; each person's greatest ***room for growth*** is in the areas of the person's ***greatest strengths***.

The development planning process is a great opportunity to ***build on strengths*** rather than solely focus on improving deficiencies. You can help employees understand where their ***natural talents*** are and find ways to ***expand their work*** in those areas.



Examples of leveraging your strengths may include:

- Take on a new project that will further tap into your strengths and will increase the project's success because of your contribution.
- Ask for a special assignment, even for a short time, that taps into your strengths.
- Give a presentation that draws on one of your areas of strength.
- Look for opportunities to teach or coach someone either inside or outside the organization in the area of your strength.
- Ask “what lessons have I learned?” and then look for ways to share those lessons with others.
- Use your strengths to solve an organizational problem that has caused you and others frustration.
- Use your strengths to help compensate for, or develop, an area of opportunity.
- Lead or join a task force where your strengths can add value.

When considering how to leverage your own strengths, start by asking these questions:

- How can I increase the use of this strength?
- What additional responsibilities can I take on that require this strength?
- Who could benefit from mentoring in this strength area?
- How could I use this strength to help me grow in an area that needs development?
- How can I use this strength to improve the effectiveness of my department?
- What complementary skills would develop this strength even further?

The answers to those questions will generate some good ideas for specific activities to incorporate into your development plan.

“Find a small stream in which your strengths can flow and then see if you can carve it into the Mississippi.”

Marcus Buckingham

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