



Developing a Personal Development Plan

What does development really mean? Development is about becoming something different, whether that's in your work or in your life outside of work. It involves learning and it involves change. Learning new skills, new angles, new ways of dealing with people. Changing your perspective, changing how you react to situations, and - the prize - changing what you get back.

Why personal development? Your experience is a function of your environment, other people, your own behaviours and your perceptions. Personal development is taking control and responsibility for your part in your world.

Personal Development is about changing yourself in order to change what you get back.

Why use a PDP? The more clarity you have over what you want to achieve the more likely you are to achieve it. This is equally true of grand visions and of small changes. That's why the PDP starts from an individual, specific goal. What do you want to be different? It might be one of many things you've discussed with a coach, mentor, or manager. (If you're going to work on more than one just use another sheet, but be careful not to take on too much).

Different approaches. This is not the only structure for a PDP. It's one I like because you can get a meaningful chunk of work all on one page. It also works as a living document. You can use it for high-level strategies, or very specific action planning. That judgement is up to you.

How to use the form ...

Development Area: this is a chunk of your overall plan. It might be at the level of "developing skills for my new job", or "looking after myself". This, in turn, is broken down into ...



Goals: that is specific outcomes like “understand the annual report”, “getting my opinion heard”, or “run a marathon”. So you will have one or more goals in each development area. But this is still at the level of wish list unless you get on and do something. So ...

How will goal be achieved: what are you actually going to do. Remember “SMART” **S**pecific **M**easurable **A**chievable **R**elevant **T**imebound. This keeps your actions tight and moving forward. We ask the question ...

Where will development take place so that you start to rehearse mentally what you need to do. Things that have been rehearsed are more likely to succeed.

Start. Not everything is urgent. Give this particular action a start date.

Review. Decide when and how you’re going to review progress. It’s useful to set some kind of schedule because it means you know you’ve got a checkpoint somewhere. You don’t have to think about it all the time confident that you have a mechanism for picking up on problems or changes in circumstances.

Target can be a date (for a specific action), or a quantitative or qualitative measure of something you are building (20 miles/week).

The **Reviews** section gives you enough space to record progress. It’s really useful to have this assessment on the same bit of paper. It creates a better picture of both what has been achieved and, perhaps, what you need to alter on your plan.

There’s nothing in the world stopping you from drawing a line under a goal that turns out, when you review it, to be less relevant than you thought. Or adding a different one. As you make progress it’s almost inevitable that you learn more about what you need to do. That’s what learning’s like.