

## Personal development planning: guidelines and workbook

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# Personal Development Planning

## Guidelines and Workbook

April, 2003

# Personal Development Planning

## Guidelines and Workbook

This Workbook belongs to:

Name:	.....
Title:	.....
Section:	.....
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# Executive Summary

Personal Development Planning (PDP) is a continuous development process that enables people to make the best use of their skills and helps advance both the individual's plans and the strategic goals of the organisation. It is a working strategy which helps identify development needs. The process is continuous by its very nature. It benefits both the individual and the organisation. It also benefits the individual's line manager, his or her colleagues/peers and other staff with whom he or she works.

Participation in PDP is voluntary and is driven by the individual. It is a four-step process comprising: preparation; personal evaluation including the completion of a PDP workbook; the PDP meeting with one's line manager; continuous review. PDP ensures that employees receive recognition for their work through a process which acknowledges their achievements and provides them with as much information as possible about what they do and what is required in order to do better.

The PDP workbook provides a clear framework that allows people to identify in terms of personal development where they have come from, how they are getting on in their job at present, where they would like to be in the future and how they propose to get there. The questions to be completed are framed as follows:

- 1) where have I been?
- 2) where am I now?
- 3) where would I like to be?
- 4) how do I get there?

The workbook contains detailed guidelines to answering these important PDP questions. Answers that are accurate and comprehensive enable the individual to form an agreed personal development plan that will deliver the development objectives identified.

Careful preparation for the PDP meeting between the staff member and his or her line manager is crucial from both the participants' point of view. It is vital that line managers read this guide and be fully informed of what personal development planning is, what its benefits are, what should happen before starting the process, the process itself, who the key stakeholders are and what are their roles. The more information gathered by the line manager before the meeting the richer the outcome. For example, the line manager should review the staff member's job description and be prepared to provide constructive feedback based on past performance.

At the meeting itself the line manager should be in a position to validate feedback comments with actual examples of behaviour, and should encourage the staff member to openly discuss his or her personal development plan and any specific job advancement expectations. The meeting should be structured into two parts. The first part should focus on the job objectives and the second part should concentrate on an identification of development needs. At the end of the meeting the line manager should clarify what has been agreed and both line manager and staff member should agree dates for review as part of the continuous process of PDP. The line manager has an obligation to keep the staff member's personal development plan and all details of discussion at the PDP meeting confidential.

It is equally important that staff members prepare fully and carefully for their PDP meetings. They should complete the first three questions in the workbook prior to the meeting. They should also review their job descriptions and assess their skills in the light of the organisation's objectives. They should invite others to provide them with feedback – line manager, colleagues/peers and any staff which they themselves manage. It is important that they obtain as much data about themselves as possible.

At the meeting itself they should focus first on job objectives and then on

development needs. They should have their key questions prepared and well rehearsed, their development objectives clearly identified and the options that best suit their needs listed. In the light of this information their developmental needs can be analysed and appropriate developmental activities (such as formal training, coaching or mentoring) can be agreed. At the end of the meeting they should clarify what has been agreed, and fix timelines and dates to the PDP process. They should meet again with their respective line managers not later than six months into the process and they should have a final review not later than twelve to eighteen months following the initial PDP meeting.

The PDP process can then begin again as required.

The information contained in this pack is available **in more depth** on the Office for Health Management (OHM) website. It is strongly recommended that you visit **[www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning)**. You can register online, access the PDP elearning programme, and work through an interactive PDP workbook online. Also you will have the opportunity to visit links, including the OHM competency frameworks for health service staff and the OHM knowledge centre.

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**programme  
overview**



**help for first  
time users**



**start elearning  
programme**



**open PDP  
workbook**



# Section 1: Personal Development Planning Guidelines

## Introduction

This Personal Development Planning (PDP) Pack is divided into four sections. General PDP guidelines are outlined in **section 1**. These are intended to provide you with an overview of what's involved and the background to PDP. In particular they explain the various benefits of PDP, they look at the people involved in the PDP process and analyse their roles. Also included are some frequently asked questions (FAQs). The personal development plan workbook comprises **section 2**; this is a working document designed to answer four significant questions: Where have I been? Where am I now? Where would I like to be? How do I get there? Guidelines for line managers when preparing for and conducting the PDP meeting are covered in **section 3**. Finally, **section 4** provides guidelines for employees in preparing for the PDP meeting and deals with the steps involved in the meeting itself and the importance of the follow-up review process.

The information contained in this pack is available **in more depth** on the Office for Health Management (OHM) website. It is strongly recommended that you visit **[www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning)**. You can register online, access the PDP elearning programme, and work through an interactive PDP workbook online. Also you will have the opportunity to visit links, including the OHM competency frameworks for health service staff and the OHM knowledge centre.

## Background

The Personal Development Planning (PDP) initiative emerged from the 1997 management development strategy, *Statement of Strategy*, which made more than fifty recommendations to improve management development. PDP was suggested as a tool for improvement. In response to this, OHM established a strategy group of key stakeholders in health services to identify the best approach to implementing PDP within the health system. Following two piloting exercises the OHM and its key stakeholders designed a PDP framework which is firmly anchored in the new health strategy *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You* (2001) and *Action Plan for People Management* (APPM) (2002). Theme 5 of the APPM is entitled “Investing in Training, Development and Education” and it contains the following statement at p. 32.

A Personal Development Plan (PDP) is a form of self-managed learning that is owned by the individual and enables a strategic approach to setting learning and development goals. It provides people with the opportunity to benefit in terms of receiving feedback, planning their careers and receiving support from their line manager for their professional and personal development. For the organisation, PDPs provide a mechanism for managing and developing people effectively, enhancing quality of working life and supporting the provision of quality services on a value for money basis.

## What is Personal Development Planning?

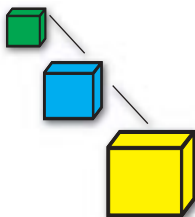
Personal Development Planning (PDP) is a continuous development process that enables people to make the best use of their skills and helps advance both the individual's plans and the strategic goals of the organisation. It also provides the framework to focus on development needs which may result from change in work roles, or from organisational or legislative change, or from challenges involved in managing people or working in teams.

PDP is a working strategy which helps identify development needs. The impetus of PDP lies with *you* the individual taking responsibility for your own development and not sitting back waiting on someone else to do it for you. The focus is on development versus task, which signifies that the process is continuous by its very nature. The individual is *developing*, not just learning, a new task. PDP is a planned approach to setting development objectives. It ensures that people are equipped and skilled to deal with existing or future job roles – they are not merely reacting to a situation when it happens.

PDP can be said to comprise the following.

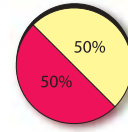


A **mechanism** that allows the individual and his or her line manager to identify learning needs, set objectives to meet those needs and pinpoint the resources necessary in order to achieve them. The main focus is on staff development – which must be agreed between the staff member and the line manager.



A **process** that can identify and measure the individual's learning needs against the objectives of the organisation. This means that personal development is in line with what the person needs – to do a better job or become more effective in a certain area of work.

An **open and transparent approach to development**. It is not simply a case of “he who shouts loudest gets the biggest slice of the budget for training and development”. As the plan is discussed and agreed by the line manager, the organisational objectives are fully taken into account.



A form of **self-managed learning**. This requires that individuals take responsibility for their own development and follow-through. The spin-off is that people are more motivated to learn what they have helped to identify as a learning need. Through this learning process PDP provides the bedrock to staff empowerment.



The great advantage of personal development planning is that it can be used in several different contexts. It can be used

- to develop **a whole life plan** which covers your personal life goals as well as career goals
- to **focus on your career** generally
- to focus on **how to get to the next level** within your organisation
- to determine what **you need to become more effective in your present role/job**.

Irrespective of the context, personal development planning benefits everyone in the organisation

## Benefits of PDP

PDP benefits both you and your organisation.

From your own perspective:

YOU	YOU GET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide support to organisation goals</li> <li>• become accountable for your objectives</li> <li>• work within a clear framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a development plan that meets your needs</li> <li>• included in training and development resource allocation</li> <li>• training and development support</li> <li>• work/life balance.</li> </ul>

### Who else benefits?

The benefits of personal development planning extend to others, in particular to your line manager, colleagues/peers and any staff you have line management responsibility for, and the organisation itself.

### The Individual (You)

- actively works with his/her line manager in preparing the individual plan
- works from a development plan that meets his/her needs
- is included in training and development resource allocation
- gets higher job satisfaction as performance is improved
- develops greater interest in his/her work
- becomes accountable for development objectives
- works within a clear framework.

## The Line Manager

- works with staff in drafting their development plans
- provides feedback about development needs
- initiates the coaching process with staff
- provides a structure and focus for improved line manager and staff communications
- aligns training and development allocation and links employees' plans to unit/department objectives
- achieves a more successful and productive team/department
- acquires a reputation as a developer of people.



## The Organisation

- becomes an employer of choice, provides development opportunities
- generates a return on investment from training and development
- improves the quality of working life
- achieves increased employee retention
- delivers improved organisational performance
- enhances general performance and ensures ongoing provision of quality services
- gains a reputation as a learning organisation.

## Before starting your PDP

Before starting a personal development journey it should be emphasised that participation in the process is voluntary. You, as an individual staff member, determine the scope of your plan and you may not want or indeed need to share all of it with your line manager.

For example, you may wish to discuss only those parts of the plan that directly relate to your job.



To reap the full benefit of the personal development planning process, you should take an holistic approach to development – this would cover development needs pertaining to your existing job, any career development needs and any personal development needs, such as working life/personal life balance. Since PDP is a continuous process there is no termination point. Once your plan has been achieved you start the process all over again.

## What is the PDP process?

If you decide to partake in Personal Development Planning, you follow a simple 4-step process.

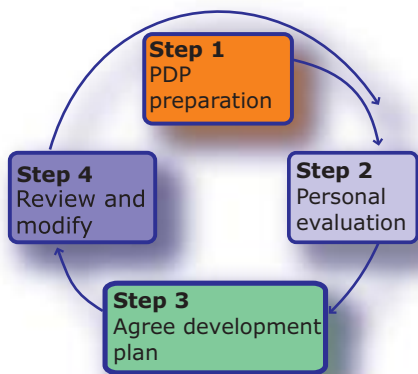
### Step 1 – PDP preparation

Contact the Human Resource/Personnel Department of your organisation who will provide you with the necessary information. Then arrange to attend the next PDP workshop if available and read the introductory sections of your PDP workbook.

### Step 2 – Personal evaluation

Complete your PDP workbook. Identify your strengths and development needs:

- use the self-discovery tools on the OHM website or other tools available to you within your organisation
- ask others for feedback on your performance
- use a competency framework for your specific discipline on the OHM website.



### Step 3 – Agree development plan

Meet with your line manager to

- receive feedback
- share your PDP workbook or those parts that you are comfortable sharing
- discuss and agree development opportunities.

You design your development plan based on information received.

### Step 4 – Review and modify

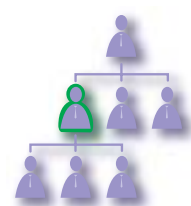
- Personally review your plan every 3-4 months and make sure to monitor your progress
- Meet with your manager every 6-12 months to discuss your plan
- Modify and update your plan on an ongoing basis
- Return to step 2

## Stakeholders and roles

Different stakeholders will have different roles in the PDP process.

Who should be involved in creating a PDP?

Well, firstly, **YOU** should be involved, because it is your plan. Your line manager's involvement is crucial too because he/she will be providing all the training resources you will need. The involvement of colleagues with whom you work is important too. They will help you get a sense of areas you need to work on. Finally, any staff you manage should also be involved. Their insights and views of you as a manager may very well be different to your own view of yourself.





Although PDP is something that is undertaken by you and your line manager, the role of others is vital in the planning stage. Gathering information from others can prove invaluable in determining your plan. Work colleagues/peers can provide professional insight and help you focus on organisational and team/department goals over and above your own personal and professional goals. Also, as already indicated above, staff whom you manage should be invited to give their views. The involvement of all these stakeholders is generally referred to as 360-degree feedback.

## The role of the line manager

According to Clutterbuck (1998) the role of the line manager is crucial because he/she

Creates the climate in which the maximum relevant learning can take place. Part of this is about managers' behaviour, encouraging people to ask questions and take responsibility for their own learning.

In addition the line manager has the primary task of ensuring that the development plan is aligned both to the individual's needs and the departmental/organisational objectives. This is achieved by providing "protected time" for the discussion and clear guidance as to what is expected. The role of the line manager in this context entails

- spending time discussing the individual's development needs
- actively participating in drafting the development plan
- creating a working environment conducive to giving and receiving regular feedback
- providing resources necessary to create development opportunities
- providing ongoing support and feedback to the individual.

## Your role as the employee

Your role as the employee is primarily to drive the process by requesting the PDP meeting with your line manager. You should answer the first three questions in the PDP workbook prior to the meeting. In answering the questions, it is important that you gather as much data as possible about yourself. There are different methods of doing this and there are different sources of information among colleagues, employees and others as outlined. Check out also other instruments available on [www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie).

Your role then in this context entails

- actively researching and preparing the plan before meeting with your manager
- requesting the meeting with your manager
- sending your manager a draft outline of your plan prior to the meeting
- detailing development objectives, activities and outcomes
- following up and arranging review date discussion
- starting the PDP process again.

## The role of colleagues/peers

Your work colleagues/peers, those people with whom you work daily, can provide valuable insights into your everyday work behaviour and style of approach. They can also help you focus on the needs of the wider department and provide you with feedback generally on personal and professional goals.

In summary they can

- help you focus on organisation and team/department goals
- help you identify personal and professional goals
- provide objective feedback on job performance
- assist you in completing an OHM 360 degree competency framework or other similar professional instrument designed to achieve this purpose.

## The role of direct reports (people you manage)

People you manage may have a completely different view of your management style than the view which you hold. Your direct reports can therefore provide invaluable observations on how those whom you manage see themselves as being managed.

They can

- help you identify any people management development gaps in your abilities and style
- assist you in completing an OHM 360 degree competency framework or other similar professional instrument.

## Frequently asked questions about personal development planning

### Possible questions from staff members



#### **What's in it for me as a staff member?**

Personal development planning gives you the opportunity to take an active role in your own learning and development. You decide what you need in order to develop and progress your career. Using the personal development planning process you can discuss and agree with your line manager access to the learning and development that gives you the best chance to advance your career and achieve your goals, both short term and longer term.

#### **What happens if I choose not to complete a PDP?**

Nothing. The PDP process is voluntary. However, it is hoped that over time more and more people will become involved, because PDP provides such a good starting point for negotiating on individual learning and development.

### **What happens if I don't trust my line manager?**

You can still go ahead with your PDP even if you don't trust your line manager. We would advise that you should still discuss your PDP with your line manager in order to gain agreement for your personal development. However, you should concentrate on gathering feedback on your performance from a range of sources other than your line manager, including colleagues with whom you directly work, your peers and direct reports. Requesting examples of performance issues is a very good way of validating feedback.

## **Possible questions from line managers**

### **Whose job is staff development?**

Everybody has a role to play in staff development. You have a role to play both in your own development and in the development of those around you. Whether you are a manager, a colleague or a direct report, you can provide useful information to others. As a line manager you should participate in the development of PDP for your team members.

### **How am I as a line manager to make time for all this development work?**

Obviously no one wants time spent in learning and development to impact negatively on the quality of one's primary work, for example in patient care. Chances are, however, that you are already spending a good deal of time engaged in staff learning and development, and what the PDP process will do is provide you with a more structured way to analyse and implement the process of staff development. If you have a large number of staff reporting to you, you may need to stagger the PDP meetings over the course of a few months.

### **What support is available to me as a line manager in this new role?**

If you feel that you need support in your role as line manager in the PDP process, you should contact your PDP co-ordinator/corporate learning and development manager or contact your human resource department which can give you advice, talk you through the process and provide you with details on relevant learning. The Office for Health Management has a website containing useful information in this area:

[www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning)

## **Possible questions at organisation level**

### **As an organisation, are we ready for PDP?**

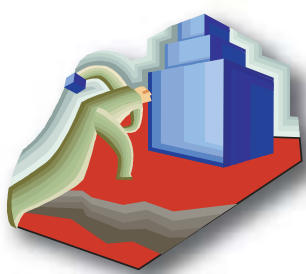
Not every organisation is fully ready at the present time; indeed it may take several years to establish the personal development planning process widely throughout the health system.

### **Are we creating expectations which we cannot meet?**

One of the reasons why the process requires that the individual meets with the line manager is to ensure that false expectations do not occur. It is the role of line managers to ensure that the personal development plans of their staff are realistic and can be achieved within the training budget.

### **How does PDP link to service planning?**

Currently there is no formal link between the two. However, individuals completing their PDP should be aware that they are more likely to benefit from the personal development planning process if they can link their needs to the general service plan. In reviewing the PDP process, line managers should strive to ensure that individual PDPs are in line with the service plan.



### **How does PDP differ from performance appraisal?**

The focus of PDP is on personal development only. It is pursued purely on a voluntary basis and is in no way linked to financial rewards.

## **Other possible questions**

### **Can all staff partake in PDP?**

Yes, and choosing to partake is voluntary.

### **What if planned training does not take place due to budget constraints?**

This of course may occur. If it does, you should try to devise alternative ways of receiving the desired experience in a more cost-effective way, for instance through job rotation/on-the-job coaching rather than through attending a seminar.



## **A final word on personal development planning**

Personal development planning ensures that employees receive recognition for their work through a process which acknowledges their achievements and provides them with as much information as possible about what they do and what is required to do it better. This should have the effect of increasing their motivation. For example, providing positive comments about employees' work, acknowledging their contributions at meetings and allowing them to undertake more challenging and responsible tasks are ways of recognising and endorsing employees' work on a regular basis.

It is vital to remember that personal development plans are not static documents. For example, they may need to be altered from time to time to reflect changes in key responsibilities which may occur in response to changing organisational priorities. Any changes made are effected through consultation between the employee and the line manager.

## Section 2: Workbook

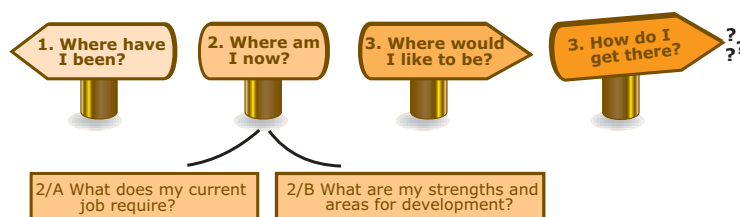
### Overview

The Personal Development Plan Workbook is an operational document. It provides a clear framework that allows people to identify in terms of personal development where they have come from, how they are getting on in their job at present, where they would like to be in the future and how they propose to get there. The answers to these important personal development questions will help you and others to put an agreed plan in place relating to development objectives that need to be achieved.

It is important to have read the preceding **section 1** before you continue with this workbook. In addition you should provide complete answers to all questions in the workbook before requesting a meeting with your line manager. As outlined in section 1 you should send a draft copy of your plan to your line manager at least one week before you meet.

### Creating a PDP

Creating a PDP entails asking yourself **four key questions**.



We explain these questions in the following pages and the PDP workbook provides space for you to answer each of them.

## QUESTION 1: Where have I been?

This is a relatively easy question to answer. Its aim is to gather information about you and your life history. You can go back as far as you wish, or you may wish only to focus on career moves.



Here are some more detailed questions to ask yourself.

- What is my background?
- What areas have I worked in?
- What is my range of expertise?

Now think about previous experiences: what have you learned from them? You may wish to compile the following dossiers.

### A note of significant landmarks

- childhood
- schools attended
- exams taken and results
- college(s) attended
- sports occasions or other leisure events
- first job (what, where, why, key responsibilities)
- other jobs and roles.

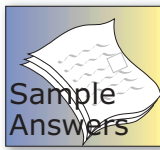
### A resume of your life history

- exams completed
- awards received
- your first job
- promotions achieved.

A good way of starting may be to focus on the past year:

- what major events have occurred in your life over the past year both professionally and personally (i.e. not work related)?
- what have been your major achievements in that time?
- what have you learned from these?





- Born in 1965 in Co Sligo, went to St Pats Primary School, did well at reading, slower at learning maths. Learned how to play the recorder.
- In 1977 went to St Pats Secondary School. Studied science subjects, was good at ... not so hot at ... Decided when I was fifteen I would like to be a nurse. Main reason for this ...
- Did my nursing study at ...
- Went abroad in 1989 to Australia, stayed two years there, worked in ... Decided to specialise in ... Did my training at ... under the supervision of ...
- Got a job in ...

#### **Major Events...**

- Met Brian in 1992, got married in ... Have ... children. Decided to go part time, this suited me because ...
- In 1997 went back to work full time. Came first in class in specialist subject. Moved to Cork in ... Had to change hospital.

# Question 1: Where have I been?

Write a brief resume of your life history. Consider the major events in your life.

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## Question 2: Where am I now?



Completing the PDP workbook requires that you have a full and clear understanding of your current position and role in the organisation. This will give you an excellent starting point from which to develop.

This is an area where your line manager can be of great help. S/he will be able to provide you with all the relevant information about your job and point you to those aspects of your work which need attention.

To help you focus on different aspects of your current role, question 2 has two parts:

- A** what does my current job require from me?
- B** what are my strengths and what aspects of my work practice do I need to develop?

Answering question 2 should be relatively easy because it focuses on you and your current job. Your answer will give you a good base for moving forward.

### Part A What does my current job require?

When you reflect on your current job, consider a threefold approach:

- 1 *Analyse the job you are doing.* What are the objectives of your job? In writing down the key objectives of your job you may find it useful to begin in broad terms and proceed to narrow things down. Consider the following:

- what is your role?
- what are your organisation's objectives?
- what are your department's/team's objectives?
- what are your job objectives?

- 2 *Focus on the tasks and responsibilities of the job you do.* If you have a job description and/or person specification, you may find that it will help you to focus.

You may also wish to discuss the above with your line manager to ensure that you have not overlooked anything that's expected from you. S/he may also have ideas as to what you may be doing in the future. Consider the following:

- are there any new tasks and responsibilities facing you?
- having regard to changes in the health services, what future responsibilities might you have?

- 3 *Focus on your current role.* Identify skills, knowledge and personal qualities which you need. These skills and personal qualities are collectively called competencies and it is these competencies which lead to job success. Identifying them provides a sound basis for measuring and improving performance.

An example of a competency might be "building working relationships", signifying that forming strong working relationships is important for the successful performance of one's job. Consider the following:

- are there any new skills, knowledge and personal qualities you need to develop?
- having regard to changes in the health services, what future skills, knowledge and personal qualities should you be thinking about?

- (1) Analyse the job you are currently doing

### Job analysis

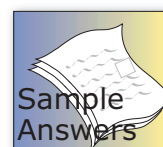
### Sample answers

Your role?

- Clinical Nurse Manager in ...  
Department of ... Hospital

Your organisation objectives?

- To provide excellent clinical  
care to patients/clients



## Job analysis

## Sample answers

Department/team objectives?

- To provide individualised care for all patients/clients
- To ensure that all nursing practices are research based

Your job objectives?

- To lead a nursing team and manage the ward staff of fifteen nurses
- To deploy nursing resources efficiently and effectively
- To empower the nursing team to be autonomous and accountable for their practice, ... and so on

(2) Break your job into tasks

## Job tasks

## Sample answers

Key work tasks of your current role?

- To assist the Director of Nursing Services in the performance of her duties
- To take responsibility for the total care of the patient and ensure that delivery of service is maintained to a high standard
- To work with staff in the development of their personal development plans
- To contribute to the service planning process
- To manage the ward budget etc

## Job tasks

## Sample answers

Possible future tasks?

- To take on the role of Acting Director of Nursing Services when required
- To ensure that statistical and management information is provided to management on a monthly basis, or as required

What skills and personal qualities (competencies) are required to do your job?

- The ability to build and maintain working relationships
- The ability to communicate effectively with staff and influence their acquisition of skills
- Resilience and composure
- The ability to plan and organise
- The ability to build and lead a team

What future competencies may you need?

- The ability to promote evidence-based decision making
- The ability to encourage service initiative and innovation.

## Question 2: Where am I now?

Part A: what does my current job require of me?

### Job objectives

Analyse the job you are currently doing. What are the objectives of your job?

What is your role?

.....

What are your organisation's objectives?

.....

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.....

What are your department/team objectives?

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What are your job objectives?

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## Job tasks

What are the key tasks/responsibilities of your current role?

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What tasks/responsibilities may you be required to undertake in the future?

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## Personal qualities

Consider the skills and personal qualities (competencies) required by you to do your job.

What competencies are required for success in your current role?

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What competencies may you need in the future?

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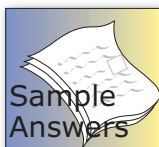
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## Part B: what are my strengths and areas for development?

Now that you have studied your job and identified what skills are required, you need to consider what aspects of your work practices you would like to improve and what additional skills you need in order to reach your career aspirations. How do you discover these? This brings us to the importance and value of receiving feedback from others.

When you receive feedback, reflect upon the main points which have come to light. Good feedback sources include your line manager, your colleagues, people you manage and self-discovery tools which you may have completed.



- Manager said that I had improved in the past year in the clinical aspects of my job. Need to concentrate on new technology. Would like to see me advance in next year so that I can act in her place when she goes on holiday. Also would like to see me getting on better with people outside the department.
- Colleagues' views converged with view of manager – need to “network” more. They said I am technically excellent in my field, though one of them said I needed to improve on ...
- My direct reports said they like me as a manager because I am dedicated to the department. They would like me to communicate with them more, devolve more responsibility and tap more into the expertise that is available within the team.

### Areas of strength

- mainly achieve a good balance between work and non-work activities
- approachable
- excellent relationships with patients – dedication

- technical knowledge of ... very good
- good at writing reports
- treat others fairly
- good listener
- supportive
- good at conveying information
- value all the team members

#### **Areas that require development**

- need to take more time out to exercise as a means of stress relief
- spend more time with kids
- need to improve my management skills – delegate more
- need to communicate more frequently with staff on the ward, and build better relationships with doctors
- need to learn more about new technology dealing with ...

### **Self-discovery tools**

A large part of personal development planning is endeavouring to discover who you are. What you are good at, what needs improvement and how you work with others are typical areas for analysis.

It can be difficult to discover these qualities simply by thinking about them on your own. Fortunately there are several self-discovery tools available to help you on the OHM website

([www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning)).

## Summary of some useful self-discovery tools

Competency frameworks	OHM has developed an on-line 360-degree analytical instrument for health service staff. Competency frameworks are available for your specific discipline.
Myers Briggs Personality Type	The Myers Briggs instrument is designed to enable you to understand your personality and the way you relate to others around you.
Belbin team types	Belbin team roles describes a pattern of behaviour that characterises one person's behaviour in relationship to another person when facilitating the progress of a team.
Learning Style Inventory from North Carolina State University	This is an extremely useful test that measures your learning preference in terms of four dimensions: Active versus Reflective learning, Sensing versus Intuitive learning, Visual versus Verbal learning and Sequential versus Global learning.

## Question 2: Where am I now?

Part B: what are my strengths and areas for development?

### Diagnostic resources

Now that you have considered your job and rated yourself against the competencies identified for your job (see the Competency Assessment tools on [www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning)) what are the main points arising from the feedback you received from your manager/peers/direct reports and from the Self-Discovery Tools (see [www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning)) you completed?

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### Areas of strength

Based on all information received and an analysis of your job, what do you believe are your main areas of strength?

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## Areas for development

Based on all information received and an analysis of your job, what do you believe are the main areas that require development?

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## Question 3: Where would I like to be?

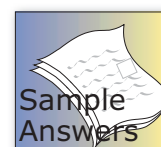
This is the most difficult question in the personal development planning process. It requires deep critical reflection. A good analogy is the process of peeling layers off an onion in order to get to the core; another is unravelling a ball of thread.

Some people simply passively accept promotion when it arises within their organisation because traditionally that is what is expected of them, even though they may not enjoy their new job when they get it. Other people simply stay where they are because they have no sense of what they really want from their career.

Question three asks

**“What kind of person do I want to be: now; in one year; in two years or five years?”**

Think of the changes in the health system and the health services that impact on your role, specifically those effected by *Quality and Fairness* (2001), *Primary Care Strategy* (2002) and *Action Plan for People Management* (2002), and try to envisage those skills which you need to develop to the level you desire?



### One year?

- Would like to be Acting Assistant Director of Nursing while ... is away.

### Three years?

- Would like to be Director of Nursing.
- Would like to remain in the clinical area but ...
- Would like to be working Monday to Friday, regular hours.

### Question 3: Where would I like to be?

In identifying and reflecting upon your aspirations, try to strike a balance between setting yourself challenging goals and at the same time remaining realistic.

Where would you like to be in one year?

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Where would you like to be in three years?

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## Question 4: How do I get there?

Question 4 provides you with the opportunity of writing down your development objectives.



Having gone through the process of answering questions 1, 2 and 3, you should now have a clear and objective understanding of

- 1 what development objectives you need to achieve
- 2 what development activities you will have to undertake
- 3 what resources you need to enable you to undertake your development activities.

Due to the structured nature of the personal development planning process, you will need to identify each development activity and establish a target date for the achievement of your development objectives. It is recommended that you build in a review date in order to maintain focus.

### *1 Decide on your development objectives*

You should examine what is your overall aim for the development process:

- try to strike a balance between setting yourself challenging goals and at the same time remaining realistic
- try to limit the number of development objectives to two or three – if there are more areas in which you wish to develop, you can note these down and undertake to address them at a later stage.

### *2 Decide upon the development*

#### *activities to be undertaken in meeting the objectives*

You should choose the activities you wish to undertake in order to meet your personal developmental objectives.

Remember, your development activities need not necessarily include formal training. Indeed the majority of your activities will be of the type that can be performed by yourself for yourself.





## Development objective

To improve my management skills.

### Activities to be undertaken to meet objective

- I will organise meetings with my team once a fortnight starting from next week.
- I will have one-to-one discussions with all my team over the next six months.
- I will read the One-Minute Manager book.

### Resources Required

- The One-Minute Manager book.

### Target Date

- To read book – 1 month (30/4/....)
- To meet with all staff (30/9/....)

## Tips

### Defining an objective

SMART objectives (see just below) are at the heart of PDP. With objectives that meet the SMART criteria you know where you are going and how well you are doing.

### Features of objectives

- Must be precise descriptions of what you have agreed to achieve in each area
- Must be stated in terms of outcomes rather than simply describe the task or actions required
- Must include success criteria that are clear and explicit
- Must build in a customer focus wherever possible – what are their success criteria for you? Remember there are external and internal customers. If you are not sure what your customers want



from you – ask them! Success criteria are stated in terms of quality, quantity, money and time

- Success criteria are established at the beginning of the planning stage and provide a measure of your achievement against what you agreed.

### Benefits of objectives

- They help you focus on what is important
- People work better if they know what they are trying to achieve
- If people identify their objectives they can recognise the problems which will affect their ability to attain them. They can then identify what they need to do in order to achieve success
- Everyone needs success criteria against which to measure how they are getting on.



### SMART objectives

When defining your objectives you should use the SMART criteria.

- **Specific:** Focus on no more than three main areas for development to start with.
- **Measurable:** Build in some mechanism so that you can measure how you are getting on and you can determine that there is a return on investment in the development objectives you set.
- **Achievable:** You should try to set your development objectives to a high enough standard to challenge your learning endeavour but not so high as to prevent you getting where you want to go.
- **Relevant:** The discussion with you line manager will help focus your development objectives so that they are in line with your development needs and the organisation objectives.
- **Timebound:** By building in a review date and a target date you will ensure that you remain on course.

## Selecting suitable activities

Resources for development do not necessarily have to include attending expensive courses and seminars. Nor do they have to entail embarking on an MBA programme for example. There is a range of development resource options available.

Some examples of development resources are

- on-the-job coaching – it is every manager's responsibility to coach and develop his or her staff. This may take the form of assisting a staff member in developing a specific skill, e.g. managing conflict or influencing people
- action learning – where managers work in groups on real live organisation issues and problems. Is this type of development activity available to you?
- job rotation – is it possible to move around and learn from this experience?
- project work – can you get involved in a particular project in your department/organisation?
- shadowing – could you shadow someone who has a skill you want to develop?
- courses and seminars – yes in some cases you may need to attend a specific course or seminar
- mentoring – do you have a mentor? This might be your development resource.

## Question 4: how do I get there?

You need to decide on your development objectives and the activities and resources required to fulfil each objective (use a separate sheet for each key objective).

What is your development objective?

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What is your target date for completing this objective? .....

What evaluation criteria will you use to assess whether you have completed your objective?

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What activities do you need to carry out to complete this objective?

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What resources do you need to complete this objective?

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What is your development objective?

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What is your target date for completing this objective? .....

What evaluation criteria will you use to assess whether you have completed your objective?

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What activities do you need to carry out to complete this objective?

.....

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.....

.....

What resources do you need to complete this objective?

.....

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.....

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....  
*(Employee)*

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....  
*(Line manager)*

## Section 3: Preparation for the PDP meeting

### *“How to” guide for managers*

#### Introduction

The purpose of this “how to” guide for managers is to set out the minimum standard to be adhered to in the implementation of personal development planning. The key components to be considered when planning, implementing and reviewing personal development plans are outlined. This guide is designed primarily to support all managers responsible for undertaking personal development planning with staff. It is concerned with the preparation for the meeting, the meeting itself and the follow-up review. A guide to assist employees to fully participate in their own personal development plans is also available (see **section 4**).

It is vital that line managers read **section 1** of this guide which outlines what personal development planning is, what are its benefits, what should happen before starting the process, the process itself, who the key stakeholders are and what are their roles.

#### Preparation

Planning for the PDP meeting is crucial. The more information gathered before the meeting the richer the outcome. A starting point is to review the staff member's job description in line with the department's objectives/service plan. In addition be prepared to provide positive and constructive feedback based on past performance. It is a good idea to be in a position to validate feedback comments with actual examples of behaviour. An objective way of assessing the skills and personal attributes the staff member possesses is to research the OHM competencies and

look at other self discovery tools available at [www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie/elearning) There are several different assessment instruments on the market; check them with your Corporate Learning and Development Manager/HR Department and learn what you can from them so that you are as fully briefed as possible.

Because a personal development plan is a working document the staff member must complete the first three questions in the workbook prior to the PDP meeting (**see section 2**).

## The role of the line manager

As outlined in **section 1** the role of the line manager is crucial in encouraging the staff member to openly discuss his or her personal development plan and any job advancement expectations. The line manager should initially take the lead at the meeting and then allow the staff member to take over. As a rule of thumb the meeting should be structured so that the staff member is encouraged and facilitated to talk for about **80%** of the time while the line manager's contribution is limited to **20%** of the time. In this context the line manager's role is to

- create a relaxing atmosphere where staff members feel safe to discuss their development needs and job aspirations openly and honestly
- ensure that protected time, a minimum of one hour, has been scheduled for the meeting and that the meeting is not interrupted (phones are switched off etc)
- gather as much information about the staff member as possible prior to the meeting, i.e. relevant job description, projects being undertaken etc
- ensure that he/she has received a draft copy of the staff member's PDP before the meeting



- have thought about the staff member's current position and his/her development needs
- have prepared an assessment of job performance supported by examples that highlight development needs
- be confident about managing the meeting and dealing with any unrealistic expectations and be well prepared to provide constructive feedback comments (**see appendix II**)
- sign off agreed objectives, activities to be undertaken, reviews and target dates
- provide the necessary development opportunities and resources
- continuously review PDP progress.

## The PDP meeting

The PDP meeting should be structured into two parts. The first part should focus on the job objectives and the second part should concentrate on an identification of development needs. The line manager should have key questions prepared, telling examples of job performance, and suggestions for development that best suit both the staff member's needs and the line manager's budget.

### Typically PDP meetings should

- allow staff members the opportunity to discuss their career aspirations and expectations
- help them to identify the skills and knowledge required for their current position, and offer them learning activities to bridge any knowledge or skills gaps
- outline the objectives of the organisation, the department, the section and the specific job
- cover any key responsibilities staff members may have, work activities, projects, initiatives etc.

## Key questions to ask

- what skills does the staff member need to develop further in order to better perform the current job?
- what is the essential knowledge required in the position
- what are the essential skills required for the current position
- what is the essential behaviour required in the position
- what does the employee need to achieve over the next twelve to eighteen months
- in establishing development objectives, which objectives contribute most significantly to the work priorities of the department
- how will the development activities be resourced and supported
- what is the end result/outcome sought?

Following this, if the staff member wishes to discuss further development of his/her career, the discussion should focus on broader career planning issues and development requirements.

*The **key** purpose of the discussion is to ensure that any developmental needs that have been identified can be analysed and appropriate developmental activities can be noted.*

Various training and development options include, but are not limited to

- formal training and education
- on-the-job training – practical work experience
- coaching
- mentoring
- secondments/job interchange/rotations
- special work-based projects and assignments
- on-line learning materials etc.

Development objectives may be based on

- corporate or strategic goals
- departmental goals
- specific deadlines
- budgets
- availability of people to complete the work.

Development objectives need to be **SMART**.

- **S**pecific (unambiguous)
- **M**easurable (observable)
- **A**chievable (realistic and attainable)
- **R**elevant (clearly related to organisation objectives)
- **T**ime bound (include timescales and review dates).

It is vital that the line manager takes responsibility to ensure that development objectives are linked to the organisation's strategic and operational plans and that the agreed personal development plan is manageable and appropriate to the person's level.

## End of the meeting

When the meeting is over, the line manager should clarify what has been agreed. It is essential that dates and timescales are agreed and set for a review meeting. In this regard the line manager should

- discuss and identify a timeline for each development objective
- ensure that a timeline is in place for each identified action
- discuss and identify appropriate actions to achieve each development objective
- ensure that the personal development plan is simple and easy to understand

- ensure that the necessary resources are available to the staff member to achieve his/her development objectives; any limitations placed on the plan by external factors must be acknowledged and discussed
- set a date to review progress
- complete and sign off appropriate documentation
- periodically update with the staff member the achievement of development objectives, in preparation for the review meeting
- where agreement cannot be reached with the staff member, refer the issue to the Corporate Learning and Development Manager/Human Resource Department for an appropriate response and outcome.

## Confidentiality

The line manager has an obligation to keep staff members' personal development plans confidential. Any details of discussion during the PDP meeting are confidential. Access to the documentation should be restricted to the staff member and the relevant line manager.

## Skills required for an effective personal development planning meeting

Effectively managing the PDP meeting requires specific skills in regard to providing feedback and in the area of coaching. Useful information on these skills is available in **Appendix I and Appendix II**. In addition see OHM guidelines on coaching at [www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie).

## Follow-up review

Follow-up is an integral part of the continuous process of PDP. It is recommended that the line manager and staff member meet not later than six months following the first meeting. A final review meeting should take place no later than twelve to eighteen months following the initial discussion.

The purpose of a review is to

- assess progress against development objectives
- monitor skills development
- detect and address any problems that may have arisen which may impede progress in achieving development objectives
- make any necessary amendments to the personal development plan.



## Section 4: Preparation for the PDP meeting

### “How to” guide for staff members

#### Introduction

The purpose of this “how to” guide for staff members is to set out the minimum requirements necessary for the implementation of personal development planning. The key requirements to be considered when planning, implementing and reviewing personal development plans are outlined in this guide. These cover in particular the preparation for the meeting with your line manager, the meeting itself and the follow-up review. Their purpose is to provide support to all staff members undertaking personal development planning with their line manager. A guide for line managers is available in **section 3**.

It is important that you read **section 1** which outlines what personal development planning is, what its benefits are, what should be undertaken at the start of the process, what the continuous process entails, who are the key stakeholders and what are their roles.

#### Preparation

Planning for the PDP meeting is crucial. The more information gathered before the discussion the richer the outcome. A starting point is to review your job description in the light of the department’s objectives. Get a copy of your department’s service plan for example. You can assess and

measure your skills and attributes against the competencies frameworks and other instruments available at [www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie](http://www.officeforhealthmanagement.ie). It is recommended that you invite others to provide you with feedback – your line manager, your colleagues and any staff that you yourself may manage. They too can inform themselves about the competency profiles on the OHM website. Such feedback is described as 360 degree feedback. In addition, there are several different assessment instruments available on the market. Check with your Corporate Learning and Development Manager/HR Department.

Because a personal development plan is a working document, you must complete the first three questions in the workbook (**section 2**) prior to the discussion.

## The role of the staff member

Your role as the staff member is to request the discussion with your line manager. You must send a draft copy of the workbook to your line manager at least one week prior to the meeting. It is important when answering the questions that you obtain as much data as possible about yourself.

Your role in this context is to

- gather as much information as possible
- provide complete answers to the first three questions in the workbook (**section 2**).
- request a meeting with your line manager
- send your line manager a draft outline of your plan at least one week prior to the meeting
- actively engage in the planning process before meeting with your manager
- follow up and arrange review date discussion
- start the PDP process again as required.



## The PDP meeting

The meeting should be structured into two parts. The first part should focus on the job objectives and the second part should concentrate on an identification of development needs. You should have your key questions prepared and well rehearsed, your development objectives clearly identified and the options that best suit your needs listed.

- The earlier drafting of the plan will have provided you with the information necessary to discuss with your line manager your career aspirations and expectations.
- The discussion should focus on identifying the skills and knowledge required for your current position and exploring learning activities that may be necessary to bridge any knowledge or skills gaps.
- The discussion should cover the objectives of the organisation, the department, the section and your specific job.
- You should discuss any key responsibilities that you may have, your work activities, projects, initiatives etc.
- You should expect to do about 80% of the talking, leaving your line manager to talk for about 20% of the time.

### *Key questions to ask*

- what skills do I need to develop further in order to better perform my current job?
- what is the essential knowledge required in the position?
- what are the essential skills required for the current job?
- what is the essential behaviour required in the position?
- what do I need to achieve over the next twelve to eighteen months?
- what is the end result/outcome sought?

In establishing your development objectives, you must carefully consider which objectives contribute most significantly to the work priorities of the department. In the light of these, discuss and identify with your line manager the desired development activities and how these will be resourced and supported

Following this, if you wish to discuss how to further develop your career, the discussion should focus on broader career planning issues and development requirements.

*The **key** purpose of the discussion is to ensure* that any developmental needs that have been identified can be analysed and appropriate developmental activities can be noted.

Various training and development options include, but are not limited to

- formal training and education
- on-the-job training – practical work experience
- coaching
- mentoring
- secondments/job interchange/rotations
- special work-based projects and assignments
- on-line learning materials etc.

Development objectives may be based on

- corporate or strategic goals
- departmental goals
- specific deadlines
- budgets
- availability of people to complete the work.

Development objectives need to be **SMART**.

- **S**pecific (unambiguous)
- **M**easurable (observable)
- **A**chievable (realistic and attainable)
- **R**elevant (clearly related to organisation objectives)
- **T**ime bound (include timescales and review dates).

It is important to remember that your plan should reflect the learning and development you need, commensurate with meeting your department's objectives.

## End of the meeting

When the meeting is over, you need to clarify what has been agreed. It is essential that fixed dates and timelines are inserted in your plan at this stage and that a review date is agreed and recorded. In this regard you and your line manager should

- discuss and identify a timeline for each development objective
- discuss and identify appropriate actions to achieve each development objective
- ensure that your personal development plan is simple and easy to understand
- ensure that the necessary resources are available to achieve your development objectives
- set a date to review progress
- complete and sign off appropriate documentation
- periodically update achievement of the development objectives in preparation for the review meeting
- where agreement cannot be reached with your line manager, refer the issue to the Corporate Learning and Development Manager/Human Resource Department for an appropriate response and outcome.

## Follow-up review

Follow-up is crucial. It is recommended that you meet with your line manager not later than six months into the plan. A final review meeting should take place no later than twelve to eighteen months following your initial discussion.

The purpose of a review is to

- assess progress against development objectives
- monitor skills development
- detect and address any problems that may have arisen which may impede progress in achieving development objectives
- make any necessary amendments to the personal development plan.

# APPENDIX I

## Coaching

Coaching is a process designed to bring out the best in your staff. Over the years, the managerial function has gone through many changes. More democracy and flatter organisational structures mean that line managers are more likely to guide, facilitate and nurture their staff to achieve personal and organisational goals.

However, as a line manager, quite understandably, you might worry about where you will get the time to coach staff and question your ability to actually do the coaching. First, we'll look at a common concern about the impact of coaching in the workplace.



"If I spend all this time coaching my staff to become so good at their jobs, then there will be nothing left for me to do! People will be asking questions about me – sure what does she do all day?"

The main reason for coaching is to reach this aim – to create a self-sufficient, self-starting staff that can work with a little help from a clued-in, effective managerial coach.

## Opportunities for coaching

The two main concerns about coaching are 1) where will line managers get the time and 2) what is the extent of their ability to do the actual coaching. Fortunately, these concerns can be met quite easily.

Coaching does not mean that you need to put formal structures in place – the PDP process will help you to do this. Quite simply, as a part of your

day-to-day work, you as an effective manager will be able to find many coaching opportunities. Here are two good examples:

**1 Observing a member of your team**

**having difficulty in managing a meeting.**

Give the staff member the benefit of your skills in this area – perhaps you have a few tips on how to keep meeting attendees from wandering off the point. You might also consider getting him or her to shadow you or someone else who is good at managing meetings.

**2 Noticing grammatical and spelling mistakes in someone's written work.**

When you spot the errors, go to the staff member and suggest that he/she makes sure to proofread on paper as well as on screen. This type of coaching literally takes seconds and can be typical of most opportunities for coaching.

As a line manager, try to create an atmosphere where coaching will work. For example, we all learn by making mistakes – so try to create a “blame-free” culture to allow this to happen. A “blame” culture forces people to hide their mistakes and therefore miss important development opportunities.

## Benefits of coaching

Investing time and effort in coaching others will lead to a significant return. By drawing out more from individual staff members, personal performance and productivity will increase as they realise more of their potential. Because the coach is working primarily from the other person's agenda the commitment to achieve is significantly increased. People who have been coached effectively will be more self-motivated if they can see that their personal goals can be achieved as well as those of the organisation.

Some of the key benefits that accrue from effective coaching are:

- **Improved performance**

People being coached will be able to perform tasks, take on greater responsibility and be more productive than they would have been before coaching. Measurable improvements in performance can be identified. This will improve their contribution to the organisation, which will continue to grow as they develop their own process of continuous improvement.

- **Staff development**

Systems that assess individual competencies need follow-on coaching. Employees can be given assistance through coaching to raise their level of competence. This not only encourages people to do their existing jobs better, but also to be developed to assume more challenging, responsible and senior positions in the future. On-going coaching of employees who are already competent in the basics of their current jobs provides a form of grooming and development.

- **Job satisfaction**

People become frustrated and stressed when they are having difficulty doing their jobs or are seen to be under-performing. Personal productivity goes down as they fail to achieve. Coaching individuals to perform key tasks effectively and to an acceptable standard encourages greater job satisfaction and a sense of achievement. People who feel good about themselves produce good results.

- **Better interpersonal relations and team working**

As a result of developing a coaching culture, people become used to communicating more openly, tackling problems more constructively and giving and receiving support. This creates a

climate that is conducive to teamwork where conflict is minimised and more easily resolved. Individuals who have been coached effectively are more likely to coach other team members to improve overall performance.

- **Increased delegation**

Coaching creates more competent, confident staff, so that managers are more likely to delegate increasingly responsible tasks. This frees managers for more strategic thinking time and planning. Good coaching identifies areas where individuals willingly accept delegation from managers and look for more opportunities to take on greater responsibilities.

- **Creativity and innovations**

Good coaching encourages the person being coached to think things through and make decisions. It involves the individual in defining and committing to ways of improving performance. There is always the potential for any coaching session to produce really creative and innovative ideas that can benefit the whole organisation.



## APPENDIX II

### Feedback

Put simply, constructive feedback can be the lifeblood of your organisation. If we accept that no one does a perfect job 100% of the time, then we can see that there is always room for improvement.



But how do you know what needs improving? Well, by giving and receiving feedback to and from your employees. The bottom line is that everyone wants to know how he or she is doing.

Giving feedback has the following benefits:

- improves performance – reinforces positive behaviours and modifies negative behaviours
- provides information and insights – increases awareness of ourselves and the consequences of our behaviour
- builds better working relationships
- promotes a more open working environment
- increases job satisfaction.

### Receiving feedback

How do you react to receiving feedback?

Your reaction to feedback often dictates whether the feedback will make any impact on your personal development. Try to identify patterns in your reaction to feedback and note any adverse or unhelpful reactions.

For example, if you always act defensively to negative feedback, you might miss excellent opportunities to improve yourself. In the same way, playing down positive feedback by saying things like

“I didn’t think I did that well ....”

“Well it wasn’t really me – it was down to a team effort ....”

can diminish your own strengths and achievements.

The best way is to accept feedback for what it is and act accordingly to make improvements.

## Successful feedback

For feedback to be successful, receivers should feel that they can

- volunteer their ideas and opinions
- discuss problems and express personal feelings freely
- recognise their performance shortcomings
- discuss their job performance objectively
- accept suggestions and forward direction.

Feedback is less likely to be effective if the receivers feel

- defensive
- hostile or antagonistic
- too self-confident
- hesitant to air their complaints or discuss their problems openly.
- that they don’t want the feedback or aren’t ready to receive it.

## Do's and Don'ts

Here is a list of Do's and Don'ts when giving and receiving feedback. As you read through these, ask yourself if any of them apply to you and try to make appropriate changes.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept and clarify praise</li> <li>• repeat positive behaviours</li> <li>• accept and clarify criticism</li> <li>• suggest and identify ways forward</li> <li>• ask, "What can I learn from it?"</li> <li>• ask, "How can I use this information?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept vague praise</li> <li>• minimise or argue praise</li> <li>• argue or contradict criticism</li> <li>• overreact emotionally</li> <li>• belittle the feedback giver</li> <li>• treat it as absolute truth.</li> </ul>

## Giving feedback

Think about the following questions when giving feedback.

**What** situations/opportunities are there in your job to give feedback?

All situations/opportunities should be used to give feedback.

Situations that may have a negative impact on a staff member's performance or on the team should be used to give constructive feedback. Also, a job well done should be used as an opportunity to provide positive feedback. Giving effective feedback should be seamless and an integral part of your daily activities. The bottom line is that effective feedback should never be perceived as something negative – used correctly it can lead to a healthy work environment.

### Who should you give this feedback to?

As a line manager, it is your role to give feedback to your staff. As a staff member there may be areas of your work or your service that you wish to discuss with your line manager and give him/her positive and constructive feedback.

### When should you give feedback?

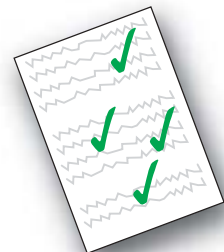
Start by becoming more aware of the behaviours of those who work with you. When giving feedback it is extremely important to support your comments with a recent and valid example of what you are talking about. This provides objective validity of effective feedback – and does not allow it to become personalised.

## Positive and negative feedback

When giving positive and negative feedback, there are several Do's and Don'ts you should be aware of.

### Positive Feedback

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be specific and sincere</li> <li>• give attention to progress</li> <li>• praise efforts and achievements</li> <li>• acknowledge improvements in poor performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• praise vaguely/generally</li> <li>• add "But" ...</li> <li>• over praise</li> <li>• patronise</li> <li>• be begrudging.</li> </ul>



## Negative Feedback



### Do

- limit to a few points only
- discuss problems early
- ask first
- confront the issue not the person
- identify consequences of behaviour
- ask for ideas on how to address problems
- use positive language
- ensure a two-way process.

### Don't

- generalise, e.g. *"you are always late"*
- be biased/presumptuous
- be judgmental, using words such as *"worst"*, *"bad"*
- focus on personality issues.

## Things to watch out for

There are common pitfalls that you should watch out for when you are giving feedback.



**First impressions** – generally it only takes four minutes to decide if we like a person or not. We then spend the rest of the time justifying our decision. Become aware of this, bearing in mind that objectivity is the bedrock of effective feedback.

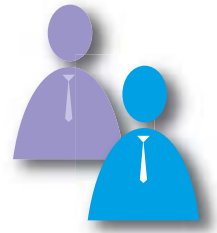


**Halo effect** – imagine the saint! This person may remind you of yourself and therefore you see no wrong in *anything* he or she does or does not do.



**Horn effect** – imagine the bull! This may be a clash of personalities or just a case of not liking the person. Therefore you see no right in *anything* he or she does or does not do.

**Comparing and contrasting** – imagine “one size fits all”! This happens when we compare and contrast between people. We can fall into the trap and expect people to work and behave the same way and, when they do not, we unfairly compare them to others they could never be. It is human nature, but it is important to allow space for each member of staff to develop his or her own unique and individual working style.



**Being overly lenient/harsh** – look at the seriousness of the incident. What has been learned as a result of the mistake? You can cause more damage by being overly lenient, or indeed overly harsh about something which might be quite trivial! Think before reacting – use the STOP analogy.



**S**=stop

**T**=think

**O**=organise

**P**=proceed

## Preparing for feedback sessions

When preparing for a feedback session, you should

- define an agenda/content of the feedback session
- agree objectives/expectations – have some idea of what you want to achieve from the session, keep it to one or two points and be realistic about what can be achieved
- decide on a timeframe – plan in advance and allow for protected time; for example, start with a one-hour limit
- set up the situation – make sure that you have a designated room to meet in and ensure that phones are switched off

- have examples of performance to hand
- anticipate reactions and approach – if you think the person is going to react negatively, plan your approach carefully
- have a 360° questionnaire – completing the questionnaire in advance is ideal – this will give you something concrete to work from
- communicate all details to the staff member well in advance of the meeting (at least one week).

## Non-verbal behaviours



### Woman, happy, smiling, open posture

In this photo the woman is happy and smiling. Her arms and hands are open. If you were talking to this woman in a meeting, it is likely that you would not be threatened or antagonised by her non-verbal style.



### Crossed arms, clenched fist

In this photo the non-verbal communication is closed – folded arms, clenched fists and an unhappy facial expression. If you acted like this in a meeting, consider the effect it would have on other people. Closed body language like this usually indicates that the subject is unhappy.

If you want to keep your emotions in check generally, try to be aware of your communication abilities in the following areas:

- **Proximity** – don't invade others' body space. For some people, sitting or standing too close can make them uncomfortable.
- **Posture** – try to relax as much as possible. This will also help the other person relax.

- **Head movements** – nodding gestures while others are speaking can assure them that you are listening and hearing what they are saying.
- **Eye contact** – look at the person while he/she is speaking. It is very off-putting if someone is looking away (out a window) while you speak. You might well be listening, but how is the other person to know that?
- **Facial expressions** – try hard to remain neutral. For example, don't raise your eyebrows and frown in reaction to what someone says.
- **Gestures** – it is important for example not to point a finger or start tapping a pen.

## Active listening

Most of us have probably attempted to use the techniques of good listening such as

- show interest
- don't interrupt
- clarify and check your understanding.



However, the term active listening is something a little more sophisticated. Active listening means knowing what others have said and have meant to say – reading between the lines. Most importantly, it means leaving people comfortable that they have had their say.

The problem is that we all listen well only when we want to or have to. Most of us need to learn how to listen when we don't want to. Listening does not mean you accept or agree with the person – it just means listening.



## Questioning skills

In many feedback situations, as well as giving information you will want to elicit important facts. To do this, you should ask questions. There are a number of different question types.

- Open:** How is work going for you at the moment?
- Probing:** Give me an example of what you mean?
- Gauging:** How do you feel about that?
- Cueing:** And then what happened?
- Interjecting:** Before you go on to that, can you explain how you resolved the problem?

## Potentially difficult scenarios

You may encounter many different types of employee within your team:

quiet, unassertive • generally competent, older • under-performer • high-flyer • overstates • cynical • emotional • friend

### Quiet

This individual tends to say nothing at all or to agree with everything you say. S/he is reluctant to give an opinion and looks to you to drive the meeting and give direct feedback rather than engage in discussion.

To work with quiet employees

- ask open questions, e.g. ask for their opinion about a known interest or accomplishment
- reflect back their exact words to get them to expand, or use the “tell me more about ...” statement
- do not be tempted to fill all the gaps in the conversation – give them plenty of time to speak



- use non-verbal signals to get them to continue speaking; e.g. head inclined to one side, nodding, eye contact, as well as short, non-committal responses such as “Uh-huh”, “Yes”, “I see”.

### **Generally competent, older**

In some instances these people may not see the point of a PDP/receiving feedback – they think it is all a waste of time because they are unlikely to change their ways. They have particular difficulty accepting changes and new ways of doing things.

To encourage the generally competent older employees

- go over the objectives of the session
- stress the need for open and honest dialogue
- get them to review the changes that have taken place recently
- encourage them to talk about the changes that are coming up and why they think the organisation is introducing these changes
- ask them what they can/will do to help.

### **Under-performer**

These individuals are not achieving their objectives and/or are performing poorly in terms of key competencies. They are likely to be defensive and aware of the problem. Consequently they might want to avoid talking about it and may raise other topics to divert attention.

To work with and help under-performers

- there should be no surprises in the session itself – poor performance should be pointed out at the time it occurs
- look for and point out positive aspects of their behaviour, and reinforce a job well done by positive comment
- make notes of the points you wish to cover to avoid being distracted. Prepare your facts beforehand. Be prepared to back up your constructive feedback comments.

### High-flyer

These people are exceptionally able and need to be constantly challenged.

To work with and encourage the high-flyers

- get them to assess themselves (they may be their own best critics)
- congratulate them on their performance
- address their development gaps
- find out what motivates them
- define challenging goals with them
- identify their next career step.

### Overstater

These are people who find it difficult to take a realistic view of their activities. They may describe everything in a positive way and be reluctant to acknowledge areas of poor performance.

To work with people who overstate their behaviour

- prepare beforehand so that you have actual examples of behaviour to discuss
- give praise where it is due
- probe and use your prepared notes to identify and agree precise details of what has actually happened
- get them to re-evaluate their performance in the light of the facts.

### Cynical

These are people who are dismissive of the whole PDP/feedback process. They don't believe it can do any good either for themselves or for the organisation. They are likely to find fault with the system and all its component parts. They can do the job, but are not doing it to the best of their ability and they may have low morale.

#### To work with cynical employees

- discuss the purpose of the session
- say you will make it as positive an event as possible
- gain commitment to a discussion – but do not promise what you cannot deliver
- find out what they enjoy, and set the objectives in these areas as much as possible
- identify problem areas and ask them what could be done to make work more satisfying.

#### **Emotional**

These are people who become angry or upset when you point out development gaps in their performance or give them negative feedback.

#### To work with emotional employees

- do not make things worse by losing your temper
- let them talk
- listen patiently
- if they remain emotional, re-schedule the session
- try to calm them down by explaining that you want to give them another chance to talk after they have had some time to think things over
- do not let them leave while still upset
- begin the second session by discussing why they first became so emotional. Offer the reassurance that the session is not an inquisition. Emphasise the positive values of feedback to employees and to the organisation. Discuss their achievements

#### **Friend**

This is someone you socialise with inside and/or outside of work. This should not normally present any problems. However, there might be instances where you find it hard to separate your role as a manager.

To present feedback to friends who are also subordinates

- recognise that your friends have the same right to a fair and honest feedback about their performance as other staff
- try to take an objective view of their performance overall. The views of others may help, for example the views of your manager and your peers
- try to keep the meeting on track – stick to the point of the discussion
- state the need for work and personal relationships to be kept separate
- do not allow a personal relationship to cloud a work performance issue
- remember to avoid the halo effect!



# APPENDIX III

## Key words

### **Line manager**

The person you report to and who has direct line responsibility for supervising your work, coaching your development and ultimately signing formal documentation on your behalf, i.e. annual leave card, attendance sheets etc.

### **Colleague/peer**

A person you work with at the same level/grade within your department/organisation.

### **Direct Report**

Member or members of staff that you have direct line responsibility for.

### **Staff member/employee**

Applies to every member of the organisation who has a line manager.





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