

Personal/Leadership Development Plan

EMBA60616—Spring 2011

Goal:

To help you apply what you have learned in this course by developing a plan to achieve greater personal/leadership effectiveness.

Philosophy:

1. We all have personal strengths and weaknesses. It is part of being human.
2. By honestly identifying personal weaknesses, we can deal with them. Addressing weaknesses permits us to take steps to overcome them so that they do not interfere with the pursuit and achievement of goals.
3. The short-term discomfort produced by confronting and dealing with one's weaknesses is less than the long-term frustration produced by remaining stuck with weaknesses that hinder one's effectiveness and the achievement of one's goals.
4. Change is difficult, but as management guru Stephen Covey notes, change is a function of knowledge (what kind of leader and person do we want to be), skills (how do we become the kind of person and leader we want), and motivation. The function of this report is to aid you in bringing these elements together, so you can become a more effective person and leader.

Requirements:

1. Select **FOUR** (4) people who you respect and with whom you have associated closely at some point in the recent past. These people can be friends, classmates, supervisors, coworkers, spouses/significant others, or relatives. You will be interviewing these individuals to elicit information about your personal strengths and weaknesses.
2. Contact these individuals to set up an interview. Be sure to set a time that is mutually convenient and during which you will not be interrupted. You may mention that you are interviewing them for a class project. Explain that you are interested in obtaining information to help you make plans regarding your career.
3. Interviews should focus on the following issues:
 - a. What do your interviewees see as your TWO greatest **strengths**? Why do they see these as strengths? Can they give you examples of when you demonstrated these strengths?
 - b. What do your interviewees see as your TWO greatest **weaknesses**? Why do they see these as weaknesses? Can they give you examples of when this weakness limited your effectiveness in completing an important task or activity?
4. Under no circumstances should you argue with your interviewees. You may only ask questions to clarify your understanding of what they mean or to probe their reasoning. In asking questions to clarify or probe, you must be sure to monitor your own behavior carefully to avoid giving cues that you are becoming defensive or angry. Avoid raising your voice, be sure to smile, and use reassuring verbalizations (e.g., "uh-hmm"). It can be more awkward for your interviewee to discuss your weaknesses than it is for you.
5. When you are finished with your interviews, generate a matrix summarizing your interviewees' feedback to help identify overlap in your interviewees' assessments. A sample of what this matrix should look like is provided on the next page. You should also indicate your evaluation of your interviewees' feedback: Do they match your own assessment of your strengths and weaknesses? If not, why do you think you got the feedback you did?

Sample Feedback Summary Matrix:

AREAS IDENTIFIED	INTERVIEWEES			
	Spouse	Boss	Coworker	Subordinate
Strengths				
• <i>Strong communication skills</i>	Write & speak well, very clear	Strong writing skills		Good job keeping me informed
• <i>Positive outlook on life</i>	Pleasant, friendly		Nice/cooperative	Optimistic, kind
• <i>Superior analytic ability</i>		High quality work	Superior work quality	
Weaknesses				
• <i>Perfectionist</i>	Overly critical of self	Too much time on details that don't add value		Picky, sometimes too detailed
• <i>Take on too much work</i>		Delegate more to subordinates	Little time left for self	Seem overworked & stressed
• <i>Avoid conflict even when needed/ too nice</i>	Let others walk on you		Be more direct in disagreements	

6. Using this summary, select **ONE** weakness to improve. The weakness should be something on which you and your interviewees agree is likely to hinder you in pursuit of your career goals. It should also be something you can realistically work toward improving.
7. Identify: (a) sources that can help you overcome or address the weakness; (b) situations in which you are likely to exhibit the weakness; (c) a plan for what you will do to overcome the weakness in those situations. For example, a weakness may be that your organizational skills are poor—e.g., you do not spend enough time planning; when you do plan, the schedules you set are unrealistic; and you do not follow through with deadlines. In the future, you may be working on several class or work projects that will require stronger organizational skills. Therefore, you will may decide that you will use these opportunities to practice your organizational skills. You may purchase books on improving planning/organizational skills. You may attend a seminar designed to aid you in time management. You might purchase an organizer and plan to use it.
8. The **self-management plan**, as part of the PDP, should include the following:
 - a. *How you will handle situations that arise—i.e., your **goals**.* What specifically will you do that will provide a more effective method for handling the situation than what you have done in the past? Goals should be *specific* and moderately *challenging*.
 - b. *What obstacles you are likely to encounter* as you try to change how you handle those situations. What specific challenges do you face?
 - c. *How you will monitor your progress.* Will you use a diary or plot your progress on a schedule? You **MUST** select a way to measure your performance over time. You must also decide how often to evaluate your progress—this will vary with the choice of weaknesses addressed.
 - d. *What rewards you will give yourself* for making progress? Rewards should be something meaningful and personally relevant.
9. You will track your progress over. Whatever monitoring method you choose should permit easy assessment on a regular basis.
10. Your PDP is limited to **5 single-spaced pages**, and is due in class on **May 14**.

Caveats:

1. This project is designed to help you learn how to develop your skills and talents. To get the most out of this project, you must take it seriously. Only by doing so will you learn from it.
2. I do not wish to embarrass or intimidate any student through this project. PLEASE—include only the information you feel comfortable in sharing. You need not disclose specific comments of your interviewees or particular problems you experienced. I require only that you provide me with a summary of issues raised by interviewees and the steps you took to confront and overcome one weakness. Grades will be based on the thoroughness of your analysis and application of course principles, not on how much you choose to disclose.
3. Your PDPs are confidential. Only I will read your PDPs and all information contained in them will be kept strictly confidential. So, while you should only share information you feel comfortable sharing, do not worry about your PDP being made public.
4. The personal strengths and weaknesses you identify should be relevant to your career plans and goals. On the other hand, if you or others believe a personal strength or weakness is relevant to your career, it probably is relevant and should be included in the PDP. Just make the linkage clear in your plan (i.e., spell out how the personal strength or weakness bears on your career plans or goals).

PDP Required Components:

1. **Introduction**
 - a. What are your career goals?
 - b. What skills are required to attain these goals? How do you know these skills are necessary?
2. **Summary of interviewee feedback in matrix form and discussion**
 - a. Which areas overlapped across interviewees? Which areas diverged? Provide specific examples that were given by interviewees to illustrate areas.
 - b. What feedback surprised you? What feedback came as no surprise?
3. **Analysis of how this information bears on your career goals**
 - a. What areas do you need to develop to pursue your career goals successfully?
 - b. Which weakness did you select to work on right now? *Why* did you choose this one?
4. **Summary of your self-management plan**
 - a. What resources did you find on how to improve your skills in this area? Where did you look for resources and information? What key points did you learn regarding improving your skills?
 - b. What situations will require you to exhibit skillful performance relevant to this weakness?
 - c. What are your goals for improving your skill in this area—what performance level do you want to reach? How will you know when you have reached this level?
 - d. What obstacles do you anticipate? How do you plan to overcome those obstacles? *Be specific!*
 - e. How did you monitor or track your progress (e.g., diary, chart, schedule)? Why did you choose this method? How is it adapted to your unique circumstances?
 - f. How will you reward yourself for goal attainment? When will you self-administer those rewards (i.e., at what milestones)?