

Business Administrator

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)



Introduction

Improving your performance in the way that you carry out your responsibilities will show your employers that you are capable of taking on further responsibility, leading to promotion, bonuses and increases in pay. As you gain experience of more responsible tasks you will be able to use this experience in future situations.

Taking greater responsibility will make your job more interesting, give you greater variety of tasks and make your work more satisfying. This will help to create a happier atmosphere in the team, which will have a motivational effect on your colleagues and help them to work better.

In this theme you will learn the following skills and knowledge:

- 1. be able to manage your own personal performance**
- 2. be able to manage your own time and workload**
- 3. be able to identify your own development needs and justify the reasons why**
- 4. gain feedback from your employer on your performance and take the feedback on board**
- 5. be able to fulfil a personal development plan**
- 6. be able to coach others**
- 7. take responsibility for carrying out your own CPD activities**

Explanation of words used in this booklet:

Evolve: To develop gradually, often into something more complex or advanced

Network: To build up or maintain informal relationships, especially with people whose friendship could bring advantages such as job or business opportunities

Prescriptive: Establishing or adhering to rules and regulations

Empathy: The ability to understand how someone feels because you can imagine what it is like to be them

Identifying personal and professional development requirements

Most people are ambitious to progress their career as far as they can. Even if you feel you have reached a level of responsibility that you are comfortable to remain at for the immediate future, the demands of your job role will change as the organisation **evolves**, or new processes or procedures are introduced. Identifying your development needs can be difficult.

Career progression will for some people involve getting another job with more or different responsibilities, either within the same organisation or with another employer. For others, career progression may mean taking a sideways job change or even a downward step to gather more or wider experience in order to progress through a career change at a later date. For other people, career progression may involve improving the skills they are already using in their present role. Whichever route you choose to develop your career, it's important to remember that the only person who can make this happen is you.

There are three broad questions to ask when considering your professional development needs:

- What do you want to do next?
- What skills and experience do you have to offer?
- What would you like your next job to look like?

Your organisation will offer regular one to ones and annual appraisals, take the opportunity to discuss your development needs with your line manager. Discuss the changing requirements of your role as well as your personal development objectives. It is important to consider your development needs before your supervision or appraisal meeting as this will enable you to make the most of your discussion.

Make notes under these headings in order to prepare yourself:

- The skills, knowledge and behaviour needed to perform your current role well.
- Your level of competence in these skills, knowledge and behaviour.
- Any development you need to reach the required level of competence.

Your role should have a job description and a person specification. The job description will list the things that you are expected to do, while the person specification will identify the skills, experience, knowledge and behaviours that you need to do that job well. You may find it helpful to talk to your line manager if you feel you want to clarify any of the requirements set out in the person specification.

The annual appraisal meeting is an opportunity to have this discussion, but you can raise the issue of development with your manager at any time. It's also worth thinking about the skills, knowledge and behaviours that you may need to develop in the future in your current job. You may know, for example, that your role will be changing, that you will be working on different projects or that you are interested in a career change. Trends and developments that influence the need for professional development may include changes in:

- systems
- technology
- the market
- competition
- legislation
- socioeconomic changes

Other sources of information include bodies that your organisation may be a member of, for instance:

- professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of marketing or management
- professional networks such as the Government Communication Network or the Higher Education Network
- trade associations such as British Property Federation (BPF) or Institution of Commercial and Business Agents (ICBA)

Any of these will be able to provide information on development activities which are appropriate to your position in your organisation. Information can also be found from:

- your organisation's employee development department
- training organisations
- the internet.

It is important to recognise the new or different skills, knowledge and behaviours you will need. Make a list of the current and likely future skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours that you need and ask yourself how effectively you match against each one. You could consider talking this through with a friend or colleague, or with your line manager. It's important to ask yourself some difficult questions at this stage and to answer honestly:

- Are there areas of your work where developing more confidence would make a real difference to your success in your job?
- Are there knowledge, skills and behaviours that you only need on occasion that would benefit from some development?
- Can you identify areas where you feel confident and believe you perform well that could be an even greater strength for you with some development?

One way to identify the skills you need but may not have is to carry out a skills gap analysis. Identify the critical and non-critical skills needed to carry out your job role effectively. Critical skills are those required to complete a task successfully. Non-critical skills are those that enable a task to be completed more quickly or efficiently, or at less cost. If you lack a skill but can still complete the task satisfactorily, the skill is non-critical; if you complete the task but the outcome is unsatisfactory, the missing skill is critical.

By applying skills gap analysis it is possible to find out which skills and knowledge shortfalls you have. It is then possible to concentrate on the necessary skills that require the most

attention. Skills gap analysis can be used to produce personal development and training plans, and to support appraisals and pay reviews.

Try to be as detailed and specific as possible about what you need to be able to do differently. This will help you decide how to address your development needs, and to review and measure your success. For example, when it comes to deciding what development you need, identifying that you need to learn how to use the software available on your computer to sort, prioritise and store your emails will be much more helpful than simply identifying that you need to be more organised. It will also help you check how much difference any training you undertake actually makes to your ability to be organised.

It is not a good idea to try to identify your development needs by looking at the training courses available and deciding which of those would be most helpful. It is better to try and identify what the development need is and then to work out ways of meeting that need, which may or may not be a training course.

Benefits of Personal and Professional Development

Personal and professional development brings benefits to both you as an individual and the organisation you work for. When evaluating the benefits, however, it is important to consider the costs involved, both financial and personal.

Skills developed in the past that may have become a little unpractised will be polished. It is always good to review these skills because if they are not used constantly they can start to fade away.

Professional development will allow new skills and knowledge to be learnt. This will spread your talents and help you perform tasks that are more highly skilled and demanding. It allows you to build specific knowledge and competencies that are related to your current role and the role you aspire to.

It is important to ensure you are up-to-date with industry trends and developments as this will help you perform your own role and also help the organisation understand their position in the marketplace, which can assist strategic decision making.

Professional development allows you to see fresh viewpoints from outside your organisation and your current role, and to think about new ideas and opportunities. By reflecting on these, you can introduce creative solutions to the organisation. You will learn to use important tools and best practices that can be incorporated into the organisation's strategies and performance.

Professional Development Activities

By going on courses, visiting industry events and taking other opportunities for professional development, you will meet new people and **network** with industry experts, leaders and like-minded individuals. Building relationships like this can be extremely useful for finding out about future career opportunities, work-related guidance, business opportunities and insider information. This network can come in handy in your current role as well as in your future

career. Professional development allows you to consider and appreciate the opportunities available to you. With more skills and advanced knowledge you will begin to appreciate what your career prospects are and where your career path can potentially lead.

Sometimes it is a good idea to take a break and refresh your mind. It can be energising and make you feel like new. By taking time out to personally develop, you will be taking a step away from your everyday role to do something different. The energy and sense of fulfilment can be used positively in both your job and personal life.

Most organisations are not **prescriptive** about the types of activity that count as professional development, recognising that you are the best person to assess the value of an activity.

However, nothing should be accepted automatically as professional development unless you have actually learnt from it. When considering whether an activity counts, refer back to your professional development plan to see whether it will help your development objectives.

Different types of professional development activity include:

- Home-based learning – private study, structured reading on particular themes or topics. The use of audio, video or multimedia resources and other distance-learning material.
- Action-based learning – a systematic, structured approach to solving problems in the workplace.
- Preparation of material for courses, technical meetings or publication.
- Supervised research.
- Work-based development – background reading, research or preparation required to tackle a new area of work.
- Conferences, seminars, workshops or other technical and professional events and meetings, including in-house training.
- Courses leading to a qualification.

There are numerous sources of information on professional development. Your organisation's human resources or employee development department and any trade associations, professional networks or professional bodies that you are a member of should be your first point of reference. They will be able to direct you towards any opportunities that are available and help you compare the various sources of information and their validity. Researching the internet will provide information on training organisations that may provide further opportunities.

When comparing sources of information it is important to look at their relative strengths and weaknesses, and to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each source.

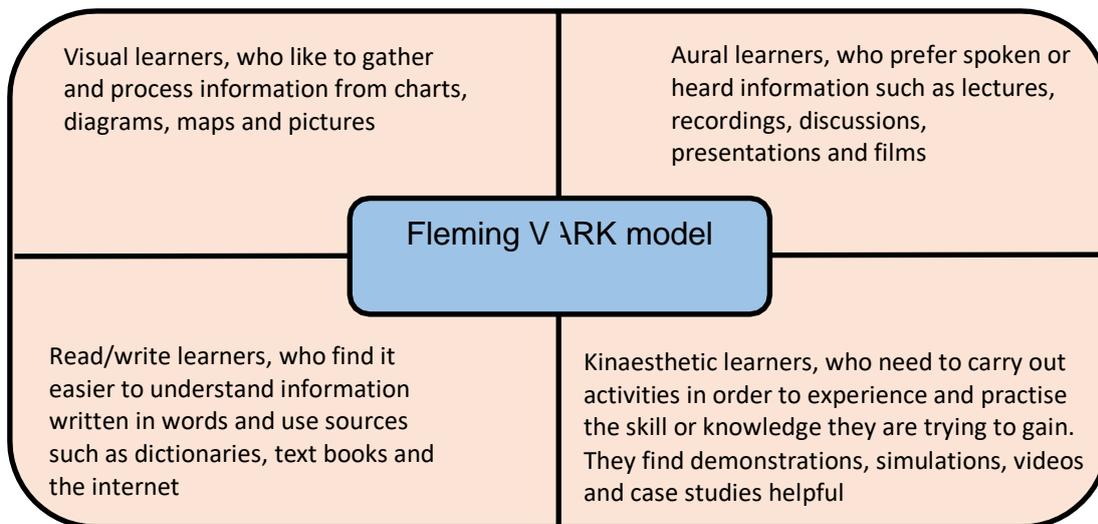
Fulfilling A Personal and Professional Development Plan

A personal and professional development plan will identify your learning objectives, the resources needed to achieve them, the timescales involved and the way that progress will be measured. One way to set out your learning plan is using these headings:

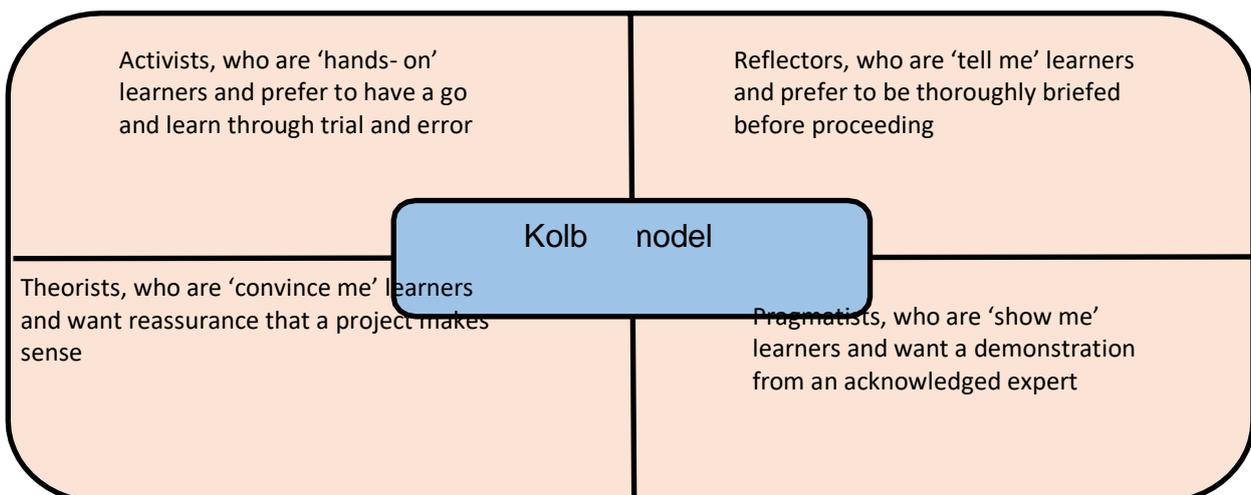
- What – the learning objective.
- Why – the need to be addressed.
- How – the learning activity that will address it.
- When – the timescale for addressing it.
- Measure – how you will know the objective has been achieved.

The learning plan should be agreed with all relevant parties, such as your line manager, the training and development department and the budget holder. The best way to identify which are the most appropriate opportunities for you is to recognise your learning style. The two most common learning styles models are the Fleming VARK learning model, and Honey and Mumford's adaptation of Kolb's experiential model. Both of these models were introduced to you at the start of your apprenticeship (request a copy of your VARK questionnaire from your TLC).

In the Fleming VARK model, learners are recognised as being inclined to one of four learning styles, unconsciously preferring that style. The four learning styles are:



You can take the Honey Mumford questionnaire in your Learner Hub in the tile named 'Learning Style Questionnaire'



Although each of us has a preferred learning style, in practice a mixture of two, three or even four styles will usually be the most effective.

You should prioritise your learning objectives. If you are unable to complete all of them within the timeframe of the learning plan, identify which would cause the greatest loss or threat to the organisation, the team or yourself if they were not achieved. Some learning will be able to be carried out in stages; this may allow you to more conveniently fit it in around other tasks. Either way, regularly review your progress against the learning objectives and update them.

Learning objectives that involve gaining skills or knowledge of new systems are best scheduled for times when you can access the system, allowing you to practise. If a new system has a fixed date for going live you should, of course, aim to complete the learning activity on or before that date.

The learning objectives could have been identified from the self- evaluation carried out for your annual appraisal. Development activities to meet the learning objectives should take into account the overall business needs of the organisation and the objectives of the team that you are part of or leading, as well as your own individual goals.

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are development methods based on discussions to improve the skills, knowledge or work performance of individuals. The two are in many ways identical. Coaching aims to improve performance at work and usually focuses on specific skills and goals, although it may also have an impact on personal attributes such as social interaction or confidence. Coaching usually lasts for a fairly short period.

Coaching is basically a non-directive form of development that concentrates on performance at work, although personal issues may be discussed. Coaching activities have both organisational and individual goals and provide feedback on both strengths and weaknesses. A key skill in your apprenticeship is to learn how to coach others.

Mentoring is an effective way of helping people progress their careers and is a partnership between two people, normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences. A mentor is a guide who can help you to find the right direction and develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely on having had similar experiences to gain ***empathy*** and an understanding of the issues. Mentoring provides an opportunity to think about career options and progress. A mentor helps you to believe in yourself and boost your confidence. They will ask questions and challenge, at the same time as providing guidance and encouragement. Being mentored allows you to explore new ideas and is a chance to look more closely at yourself, your issues and your opportunities.

Skills Gap Analysis

It is important that your personal and professional development plan is executed within the agreed budget and timescale. This will require your personal commitment to completing the agreed actions. One of the most important elements of a thorough personal development plan is a SWOT analysis, which is used to develop personal skills, highlight achievements, confront weaknesses and identify potential barriers. SWOT analysis identifies:

- Strengths – the skills you already possess.
- Weaknesses – the areas for improvement that you have identified.
- Opportunities – the resources or tools you have that can help you add strengths.
- Threats – the possible barriers to meeting your goals.

SMART is an acronym used to help determine whether an action plan for personal development is reasonable. Ask yourself if your plan is:

- Specific – the plan is clear, unambiguous, straightforward and understandable.
- Measurable – the plan is related to quantified or qualitative performance measures.
- Achievable – resources are available to meet the goals included in the plan.
- Realistic – the plan is linked to business needs.
- Time-bound – the plan includes a completion date and review dates.

Some objectives will be more difficult to measure than others, for instance if you are looking to improve in areas such as leadership, team working or flexibility, or in using your initiative. In these areas, the measure to be used may have to be 'an improvement in feedback'.

Remember to continually review your progress against the objectives in your personal development plan and be prepared to amend the plan in the light of feedback received and your own observations. Maintaining the Relevance of a Personal and Professional Development Plan

Evaluating your progress is vital to successfully executing personal development plans. Record keeping can be carried out either using a professional system or by keeping a detailed spreadsheet. Outline any new skills you develop while executing the plan. Keeping a record helps you to measure your progress.

One of the keys to evaluating your own performance is to encourage feedback from others, including your line manager, customers and team members and, having encouraged it, being prepared to accept it even if it is critical. Encouraging feedback is best done by preparing a series of questions for people to answer about your performance, rather than relying on a general query such as 'How do you think I am doing?' to which the most likely response is 'OK'.

You should carefully select the people you seek feedback from; it is no good asking people who:

- do not know your work well enough to give an opinion
- have a vested interest in undermining your confidence

- always look on the bright side of life.

Include your line manager in your feedback panel because you need to know how they view your performance. Asking for and acting on feedback from your line manager can give you an opportunity to correct weaknesses perceived by them that you were unaware of, and to do so before they become an issue. You may have performance shortfalls brought to your attention that have not been recorded during your appraisal. This may be because your line manager didn't feel they needed recording officially but does want to give you the chance to improve on them.

Before inviting feedback from others you should have already carried out a self-appraisal, identifying what you think are your strengths and weaknesses, so that you can target the questions at areas where feedback from others will be particularly useful.

Make sure the people you have selected to give you feedback understand that you really do want honest opinions, that this is not an exercise in self-justification. Explain that you are looking to improve your performance and would appreciate their help in doing so.

The questions you choose to ask should stem from your self-evaluation and will be different for each individual, but the common thread is that they must be open, specific and not defensive.

When you receive responses to your questions, you shouldn't be drawn into debate or argument. You asked the questions, so you need to listen to the answers. If you don't understand the response then ask for clarification, but if you disagree simply thank them for their input.

When you have read or heard all the responses, you should be able to recognise patterns in them. This will allow you to look at the positive comments, which should reinforce your own views of your strengths. When looking at negative comments, don't try to justify them, even to yourself, or you will not learn from them. If several people have identified a similar issue then it is likely to be a genuine issue, so look at how you can address it.

Other sources of feedback could include organisational performance indicators, customer and employee surveys, or simply informal observations or comments made. Everybody has weaknesses; the object of seeking feedback is to improve your performance by recognising where improvements can be made.

Once all the feedback has been received and considered, go back to your personal and professional development plan and amend it in the light of the feedback.

Skills Gap Analysis Activities:

Look at your Apprenticeship role job description and the Job Description of your future 'dream role' – What do you need to learn to 'fill the gaps'?

Complete the following SWOT template for discussion with your TLC

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Strengths: | Weaknesses: |
| Opportunities: | Threats: |