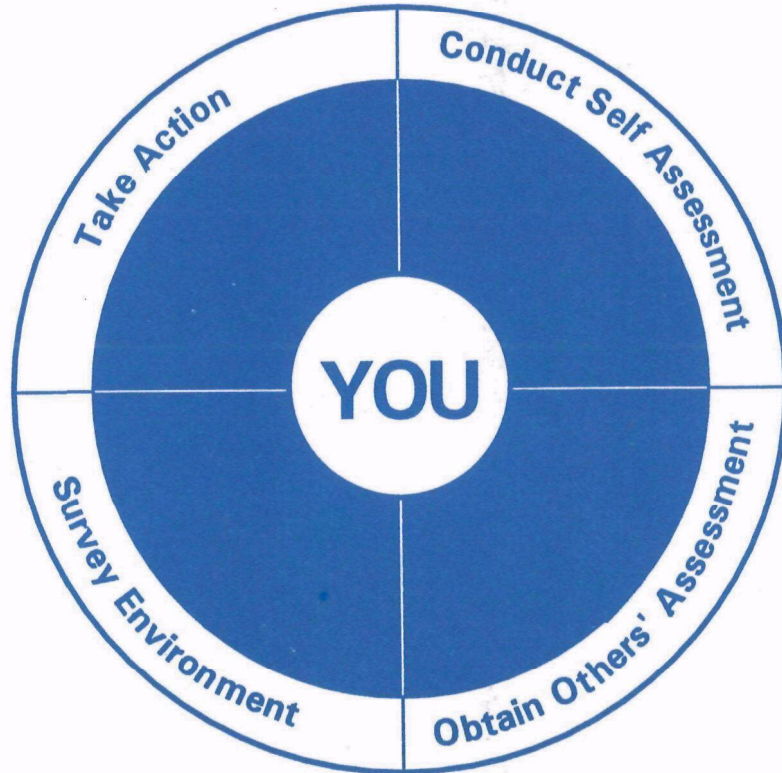




Creating Your Individual Development Plan



Foreword

The primary purpose of this guidance is to provide assistance in establishing an Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is both a valuable planning process and an excellent communication tool. The process helps individuals identify short-term needs for improving current job performance and long term career aspirations. As a result, both the individual and the organization benefit from the opportunity to exchange ideas, concerns, and important developmental information.

The target audience for this guidance is EPA managers. They are expected to implement an annual IDP which reflects a minimum of 40 hours of management development. Due to numerous requests and inquiries from non-management employees for IDP guidance, this guide has been updated to facilitate use by all EPA employees. Non-management employees should consult their supervisors for policy and guidance regarding IDP's in their specific organization.

It is the responsibility of the organization, the supervisor and the individual to ensure that the IDP is established, revised as needed, and completed within the year. Managers who have questions or need help, should contact their Human Resources Officer, Program Management Officer or the Office of Human Resources Management, Management Assessment Services staff at (202) 260-8830.

**“IF
YOU DON'T
KNOW
WHERE YOU'RE
GOING YOU'LL
PROBABLY
END UP**

. . . . SOMEPLACE ELSE”

*DAVID P. CAMPBELL
PRESIDENT, STRONG & CAMPBELL, INC.*

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INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

INTRODUCTION

Individual Development Plans (IDP's) provide the individual with a planning process that identifies both developmental needs and career objectives. Furthermore, IDP's serve as a communication tool between employees and their managers.

The **goals** of the IDP process are to help individuals identify:

- Short-term needs for improving current job performance.
- Long-term career opportunities and options they want to pursue.

Some very specific benefits of the IDP process are:

-- **Organizations** benefit by having motivated employees who have good skills, high morale and job satisfaction. These factors contribute to the organization by creating a more efficient, productive work force.

-- **Supervisors** benefit from understanding the strengths and career aspirations of their employees. The process encourages them to readily and openly discuss developmental objectives with their employees.

-- **Individuals** benefit when they can communicate their goals and developmental objectives to their managers and focus on achieving their career aspirations.

BASIC STEPS IN THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROCESS

STEP 1: Conduct Self-Assessment

- Examine your interests and values
- Assess your skill strengths and limitations
- Establish long-range (3-5 years) and short-range (1-2 years) career goals
- Examine management priorities
- Rank developmental areas

STEP 2: Obtain Others' Assessment

- Obtain objective assessment of performance from supervisors, employees, peers and customers
- Obtain others' perception of potential

STEP 3: Survey Environment

- Identify job options and developmental opportunities
- Consider constraints: time, money and personal responsibilities
- Adjust ranking of top three strengths and limitations

STEP 4: Take Action

- Commit your plan to paper
- Discuss it with your supervisor
- Implement
- Revise and modify as needed
- Begin again

STEP 1: CONDUCT SELF-ASSESSMENT

- **Examine Your Interests and Values**

-- Interests and values determine how satisfied you will be in your career. To identify interests and values, start by examining what you like and don't like about your present job, such as:

- Work setting
- Relationships with co-workers
- Supervision received
- The work itself
- Compensation
- Ability to balance job and personal responsibilities

-- Next, think back to your earlier jobs, and identify the most satisfactory and the least satisfactory ones. Look for any patterns in your likes and dislikes.

-- Finally, consider elements you find desirable in jobs held by others. Recall occupations you have always been interested in learning or doing.

This exercise will give you an idea of your interests and values.

- **Assess Your Skill Strengths and Developmental Areas**

-- A critical part of career planning is taking a realistic look at your current abilities. Use assessment tools to examine what is needed to improve present job performance or meet the requirements of a promotion or career change.

-- Assessment tools can be formal or informal. Formal assessment tools are structured or systematic in nature. They can include instruments such as assessment surveys, workshops or courses. Informal assessment tools are unstructured. They can be as simple as writing a checklist or asking the opinion of others.

- **Establish Goals**

A goal describes a particular direction or outcome which an individual wants to pursue. For example:

I want to be a second level manager in the Air program in a region. (Tangible)

I want to achieve a greater balance between my personal and professional life. (Intangible)

-- Establish both long-term goals (3-5 years) and short-term goals (1-2 years). With clearly defined goals, you will be ready for opportunities that come along. Although goals can change, they provide a sense of direction and focus.

-- Short-term goals will normally apply to what you can do in your current position; long-term goals may involve several options, including a promotion, a career change outside of the organization, or perhaps a lateral move with a new set of responsibilities.

-- To be effective motivators goals should have the following characteristics:

Personal

- Challenging and achievable
- Specific and measurable (How will I know when I get there ?)
- Reasonably controllable
- Compatible with your values, priorities, and existing obligations
- Compatible with the organization's needs
- Build on your interests and values
- Time bound -- specific start and target dates

Format: Concise, clear, simple, short (10-45 words)

- **Examine Management Priorities**

-- Another critical piece of information is determining whether your goals and development needs are compatible with the management priorities in your organization. If they are not, the challenge is to work with your management to identify developmental activities which allow you to continue to contribute to the organization's priorities while still moving toward your long-term goal.

- **Rank Developmental Areas**

-- Prioritize those developmental areas to achieve the best balance between your individual needs and the needs of the organization.

-- For example, although your long-term goal may point to a certain set of developmental areas, high priorities in your organization may require focusing on another set of developmental areas to maintain an acceptable level of performance in your current job.

STEP 2: OBTAIN OTHERS' ASSESSMENT

- **Obtain Objective Assessment of Your Performance**

-- The act of assessment analyzes and evaluates aspects of performance in order to determine developmental needs and activities to improve them. When analysis comes from a variety of sources, it provides a different and more comprehensive perspective. Therefore, a good assessment should involve input from others, including your supervisor, employees, peers, customers, mentors, family and friends.

-- How well you manage your personal relationships, and your work is very important. Career success is largely determined by how well we serve our customers, work with peers, relate to employees, and deal with managers.

-- Similarly, the reputation you create has a profound affect on your career. How others perceive you is critical to your success.

-- Ask others what they think are your strengths and developmental needs. Seek suggestions on ways to improve developmental areas.

- **Obtain Others' Perception of Your Potential**

-- Get others' view on your future career progression.

-- Ask them what position they see you holding 5 or more years from now.

STEP 3: SURVEY ENVIRONMENT

- **Identify Job Options and Developmental Opportunities**
 - Now that you have decided on goals and identified priority developmental areas, gather information to determine their feasibility and appropriateness. How well do your goals match the organization's goals and objectives? Do the types of jobs you are interested in exist in your organization; if not, where are they? What developmental opportunities are available to you?

 - Considerations for "**Choosing the Most Appropriate Developmental Activity**" are discussed on page 11.

- **Consider Constraints: Time, Cost and Personal Responsibilities**
 - Finally, be realistic about developmental areas that can be addressed within the effective dates of your IDP. Your work schedule, budget constraints or family responsibilities may influence the types of development opportunities that are right for you at a particular point in time.

- **Adjust Ranking of Developmental Areas**
 - The information you collect in this step may require that you adjust your ranking of development areas. For example, although your highest developmental need may be to broaden your perspective by taking on work in new areas, it may not be possible to address that need in the near-term because of the workload demanded by current projects. Similarly, attempting to address all of your developmental needs at once is unrealistic. Therefore, it is recommended that you focus on no more than your top three developmental areas within a given year.

STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

- **Commit Your Plan To Paper!**

-- Now that you have both long-term and short-term goals, write them down along with the remaining steps outlined below. Writing your goals down promotes clarity and indicates a commitment to yourself.

-- An optional **IDP format** is provided on page 13. You are free to use other formats that you or your organization may prefer as long as the same minimum information is recorded. Those organizations that have automated IDP's are encouraged to use them.

Establish Effective Dates

IDP's are established at the Midyear Performance Review and cover one full year. Therefore, the effective dates should be May 1 of the present year through April 30 of the next year.

Identify Specific Developmental Objectives

-- Objectives are a group of intermediate actions taken towards a goal. They are shorter in time, more specific and immediate.

-- Draw your objectives from the developmental areas identified earlier. Be specific about what you want to accomplish. Being specific will help you figure out which developmental opportunities will help you the most.

-- Keep in mind the difference between a developmental objective and a goal. A developmental objective is a specific knowledge, skill or ability you want to improve to help you achieve a goal, and a goal is where you want to be at some future point in time.

Define Developmental Activities and Time Frames

-- What specific activities will you be undertaking? What time frames do they have? How will you know when you have succeeded in changing a developmental need to a strength? Answering these questions helps both you and your supervisor plan for the activities.

-- Refer to "**Choosing the Most Appropriate Developmental Activity**" on page 11. Keep in mind that there is more to development than formal classroom training.

-- At a minimum, the developmental activities must **reflect 40 hours of management development** for executives, managers and supervisors. Although technical development should be pursued if needed, it does not substitute for the 40 hours intended to focus attention on managerial abilities.

- **Discuss the Completed IDP With Your Supervisor and Co-sign**

-- Discuss your plan with your supervisor and reach an agreement. Both of you sign the completed document to signify this agreement. Documenting your agreement helps ensure that you both understand what is involved in your development.

- **Implement Your Plan**

-- You've made a good start on your lifelong journey of learning and development, now it is time to take action. Your plan is just the beginning of your development and serves as the road map to your success. Start acting on your plan today.

- **Revise and Modify Plan As Necessary**

-- Remember that your plan is not cast in concrete; you will need to modify it as circumstances change. The challenge of implementation is to remain flexible and open to change. Continue discussions with your manager and others who can provide useful perspectives.

-- Review your plan in six months to see if you are on track. This will help keep your development plan realistic and up-to-date.

-- It is the responsibility of the organization, the supervisor and the individual to ensure that the IDP is established, revised as needed, and completed within the year.

- **Begin Again**

CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITY

There are a variety of ways to develop your competence in any given area. They are not limited to formal classroom training. Choosing an effective developmental activity involves more than checking to see what courses are available. Actively seek developmental opportunities and be creative.

You should consider whether you need to:

- Build skills;
- Increase knowledge or understanding; or
- Gain experience.

Developmental activities may include:

Developmental assignments

- On-the-job training
- Rotations

Formal training

- Classroom training
- Developmental programs
- Workshops

Self-Development

- Task forces
- Professional associations
- Reading/video tapes

Refer to current EPA Management Development Directory for a list of formal developmental opportunities

Environmental Protection Agency Individual Development Plan

Name: _____ Effective Dates: _____

Long-Term Goal: _____

Short-Term Goal:	Specific Development Activities	
Development Objectives	Description	Time Frame

13

See reverse side for signatures

