

How to Write a Development Plan – “Thought Starters”

WHAT IS A DEVELOPMENT PLAN? Think of it as a map to help achieve career milestones – a means to set goals for progression or growth, professionally. But never think of one as set in stone; it should be frequently reviewed and altered over time and as circumstances change. Plans can be short or long, depending on the individual.

PREPARATION/DEVELOPMENT GOAL SETTING (Column 1) – Begin by considering what is important to you – for example, where you want to go with your career, areas you would like to learn/gain proficiency in, and skills and/or behaviors you’d like to develop. The questions below may spur ideas:

- What do you value and care about most when it comes to your career?
- Which part of your job do you enjoy most?
- What career aspirations do you find yourself thinking about?
- Is there a desired role you’d like to be in, and are there areas you need to experience/ gain proficiency in to be successful in that role?
- What areas of communications are you particularly passionate about?
- Are there areas you’re struggling with?
- What are your strengths? (*Did you know a person’s strengths are his/her greatest area of development potential?*)
- What else do you want to learn?
- What knowledge is important?
- What trends are affecting our industry?

MEASUREMENT (Column 2) – For a goal to be achieved, it must be measurable. In this column, describe the desired end result/outcome of achieving this goal. Specifically, what would it “look like” once realized? A job description can be a good reference for this section.

PROCESS (Column 3) – This section lists all the necessary and specific action steps/experiences necessary to achieve the goals. Here are questions to consider:

- Where do I stand right now as it relates to achieving this goal?
- Are there obstacles and, if so, how can they be overcome?
- How do I plan to achieve this goal(s); what are all the options?
- How, when and where will it take place?

In addition to seminars, workshops and webinars, here are some other experiences to consider:

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| • Cross-training/job shadowing | • Grovo.com |
| • Classes/industry certifications (e.g., APR) | • Take on a pro bono assignment/ community service |
| • Readings (books, white papers, trade pubs) | • Mentor (find one or be one) |
| • Lynda.com | • Board participation |
| • Special projects | |

- Teach something
- Author a blog
- POV assignment
- Present/public speaking (internal or external)
- Manage an intern
- Join an industry association
- Become a guru in a specific area

FACILITATOR (Column 4) – Add the people or resources that will direct or lead each step in the process (sometimes that is you).

TIMING (Column 5) – Provide deadlines for action steps within the Process column.