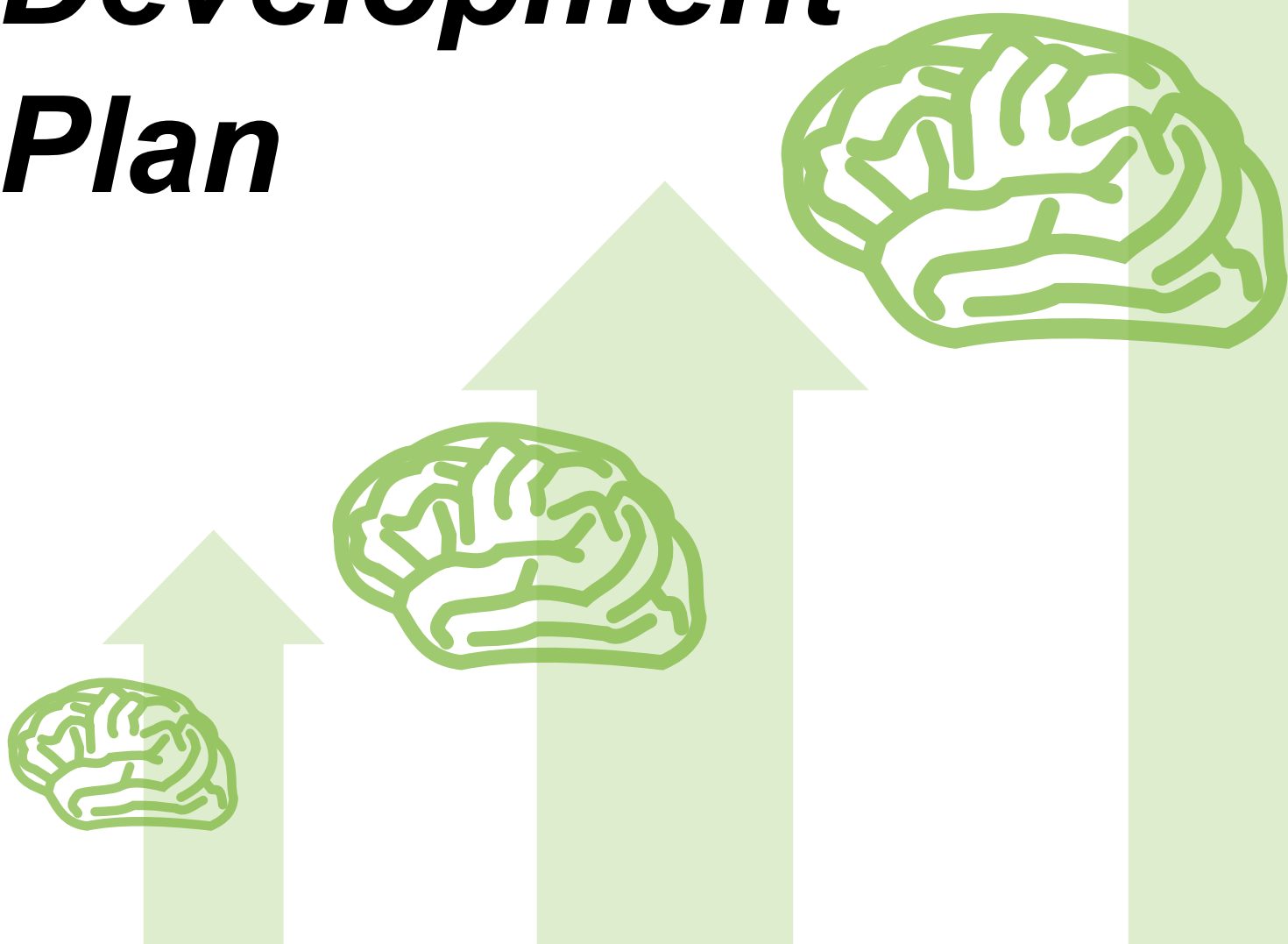


# ***Professional Development Plan***



written by **Kristian Rother**

Distributed under the conditions of the Creative Commons  
Attribution Share-alike License 3.0



# What a Development Plan is good for

*“As long as you breathe, you learn.” (活到老學到老, Chinese proverb)*

What do you need to do to improve in your profession, to work towards a career goal, or to simply get your daily job done better? Consider learning as a normal part of human development, something that you do every day anyway. How can you guide your own learning into a direction that you consider beneficial?

Learning opportunities are everywhere. It is not the lack of information that often prevents us from growing, rather a lack of focus. A Professional Development Plan is a tool that helps you to gain focus. It lets you pick a few areas you want to improve, select actionable goals and keep the result as a written record. The idea of these goals is that you can complete them one by one. Seeing how you make progress or having completed everything is something you can be very proud of.

## ***How to use this guide***

To start writing your own Development Plan, print the next two pages and fill in the blanks.

A good Development Plan contains ambitious goals, but not overly ambitious. When you read your own plan once it is finished, it should be pleasant and encouraging to read – neither boring nor intimidating.

For the start, a plan covering 3-6 months is absolutely sufficient. Once that works well you can still write another plan afterwards. If you feel want to plan your career on a long-term basis, you can write a plan for one, two or even five years.

## Professional Development Plan

### ***Step 1: Start with a goal***

Why do you want to develop?

What is your dream? What do you love to do? What would you like to be able to? What person do you hope to be? What are you unsatisfied about? What mess would you like to bring under control? Any of these questions may yield a valid goal.

**Describe your goal in a few words:**

### ***Step 2: Select three skills you would like to improve***

What skills do you need to reach your goal, or at least get closer?

#### **Examples:**

lab methods (Next Generation Sequencing), technical skills (plumbing), theoretical skills (statistics), background knowledge (yeast metabolism), computer skills (HTML), project management, networking, teaching, presenting, grant writing, leadership, clairvoyance.

**Write down three skills that you would like to improve:**

## Professional Development Plan

### ***Step 3: Identify actions that improve your skills***

What can you actually do to become better at these skills? The form below has space for up to three actions per skill. Take care to select something you can comfortably do beside your day-to-day duties or even incorporate them. Actions are particularly effective when it is 100% clear when they are done (e.g. using the SMART definition<sup>1</sup>). See **examples** on next page.

Actions for skill #1		
Action	Date	Done

Actions for skill #2		
Action	Date	Done

Actions for skill #3		
Action	Date	Done

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.academis.sites.djangoeurope.com/blog/posts/smart-goals-project-goals-hard-measurable-criteria/>  
**www.academis.eu**

## **Professional Development Plan**

### **Examples for actions:**

- start a side project
- run an experiment
- read a book
- take an online course
- take a face-to-face training
- find a mentor or coach
- talk to an expert
- join an organization
- watch Youtube videos
- publish a short article on the lab wall
- give a presentation.

## **Step 4: Get going!**

Now you are ready to start. For a good start it may help to discuss your plan with someone (spouse, friend, colleague, supervisor). Consider visualizing your actions (I have them above the breakfast table).

Most of all, reward yourself once you get something done.

***Good luck & have fun!***

## Acknowledgements

This guide would not have been possible without Michal Talaga and Monika Kasprzyk who encouraged me to work on my leadership skills. Both gave me a tiny push to take charge of my own professional development one and two years ago, but I still feel moving. I would like to thank Jo Li for the correct spelling of the Chinese proverb.

**Feedback on this guide is most welcome:**

[krother@academis.eu](mailto:krother@academis.eu)

**Also on [www.academis.eu](http://www.academis.eu):**



Version 0.5 published October 2013

© 2013 Kristian Rother

Released under the conditions of a Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike License 3.0.