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worldwide

STEP UP YOUR SKILLS

A guide to investing in your own personal development and training

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WHY INVEST IN TRAINING?

If you want to succeed in your chosen career, you need to identify any gaps in your skills and experience and find ways to overcome them. With the right knowledge, your skills will improve and give you the competitive edge to help you progress in your career.

Reach your career goals

Ultimately, if you want to progress, you will need to continue to learn and develop your skills to reach your personal career goals, whatever they may be.

Whether that's honing your knowledge in a particular technical field or developing transferable skills such as communication, project management or leadership.

Be invaluable to employers

Skills shortages in the UK have been well documented, so ensuring you have the skills employers are looking for will open up more opportunities for you.

More training means that means greater opportunities to move between teams, earn a promotion, or secure a new job in a different organisation.

Keep on top of new developments

The world of work is constantly changing requiring new skills and knowledge to tackle changes in legislation, regulation, technological innovation or wider economic

and political shifts. This means it's essential for you to stay up-to-date and refresh your skill-set to remain relevant in your chosen career.

This guide aims to give you the tools and insight you need to take control of your own career by helping you to identify areas for development and offering guidance on how to get the training you need.





ASSESSING YOUR EXPERTISE

Before you consider any training or development, you need to understand your current skill set and identify any gaps.

Ask for feedback from your manager

Speak to your manager to find out what you need to do to achieve your immediate and future career goals, whether that's stepping up to managing a team, moving to a new area or department or broadening your skill set. You could do this as part of a regular review process or arrange a specific one-to-one meeting.

Being proactive about your development will make an excellent impression on your manager, demonstrating your commitment to progressing and adding value within your current organisation.

Complete a skills self-assessment

Identify your own skills gaps and outline an action plan (with your manager) to ensure you can obtain the skills needed to successfully progress. We've included a skills self-assessment in this guide to help you identify any areas for improvement.

Over the next few pages, list down your Core Skills, which are general everyday skills you use all the time (i.e project management, timekeeping and communications) and rate them on a scale of one to ten according to your confidence.

Follow this by doing the same thing with your Technical Skills - these are more specific, can relate to data analysis or specific software suites.

Follow the instructions overleaf to conduct your personal skills self-assessment.

“ Speak to your manager to find out what you need to do to achieve your immediate and future career goals, whether that's stepping up to managing a team, moving to a new area or department or broadening your skill set ”

SKILLS GAP ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

The following exercise is designed to help you assess your own competency level against the top three core and technical skills required for your current role, or to progress into your next role.

Step 1: Skills audit

Identify the top three core and technical skills (e.g. time management, leadership, communication, etc.) and rate what you believe to be your competency level against each:

Core skill 1: _____

0 | | | | | | | | | 10

Unskilled ←————→ Expert

Core skill 2: _____

0 | | | | | | | | | 10

Unskilled ←————→ Expert

Core skill 3: _____

0 | | | | | | | | | 10

Unskilled ←————→ Expert

Technical skill 1: _____

0 | | | | | | | | | 10

Unskilled ←————→ Expert

Technical skill 2: _____

0 | | | | | | | | | 10

Unskilled ←————→ Expert

Technical skill 3: _____

0 | | | | | | | | | 10

Unskilled ←————→ Expert

SKILLS GAP ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (CONTINUED)

Step 2. Practical review

For each of the skills you have identified write out what actions and/or work examples demonstrate a high aptitude for the specific skill, as well as areas that you believe you need to develop. Try completing your assessment for specific projects.

Challenge yourself to write a detailed list of actions or results that demonstrated your expertise and/or where there were gaps.

Example

Core skill 1: Analytical/data interpretation

Project: Customer assessment

Goal: Use insights from assessment to build a more profitable advertising programme for the next financial year.

Actions:

- Collected all data that would help identify sources, as well as customer trends and patterns
- Mapped out ROI by source
- Identified patterns in consumers by demographics
- Provided marketing leader with recommendation for:
 - Channels for advertising
 - What content to advertise on specific channels based on patterns and activity
- Wasn't able to collate all data to understand patterns
- Manager identified I hadn't looked at user journey and drop-offs – where we lost potential customers
- Manager also identified consumer behaviours/patterns that I didn't pick up or look for

Conclusion: I have strong data interpretation skills, but need to improve my market research.

SKILLS GAP ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (CONTINUED)

Step 2. Practical review

Core skill 1:

Project:

Goal:

Actions:

Conclusion:

Core skill 2:

Project:

Goal:

Actions:

Conclusion:

Core skill 3:

Project:

Goal:

Actions:

Conclusion:

SKILLS GAP ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (CONTINUED)

Step 2. Practical review

Technical skill 1:

Project:

Goal:

Actions:

Conclusion:

Technical skill 2:

Project:

Goal:

Actions:

Conclusion:

Technical skill 3:

Project:

Goal:

Actions:

Conclusion:



Step 3. Re-rate skills

Based on your honest assessment of tangible examples, re-rate what you believe to be your competency level

against each of the outlined core skills, using the template from [step 1](#).

Step 4. Action plan

If a skills gap has been identified, make an action plan for your own upskilling and professional development. If you require support or mentoring from your manager and/or others on your team, discuss the areas for improvement with your manager.

Example action plan

Based on the review, list the areas you need to upskill in:

- What will the benefits be to the business/team/role if you improve your skills in these areas?
- How does upskilling in these areas help with your own career development and path?
- What professional development support do you believe you need?

The following pages should give you an idea of possible training options to help you develop your skills.

“ If you require support or mentoring from your manager and/or others on your team, discuss the areas for improvement with your manager. ”

TRAINING OPTIONS

Now that you've acknowledged your areas for improvement, you now need to identify how you will develop your skills.

On the job training

Be proactive about seeking opportunities to broaden your skills in your day-to-day job. For example, junior professionals should look for opportunities to sit in on meetings or work on projects to learn the core skills required from their leaders, and middle to senior management should keep prioritising professional development through exploring new approaches and learning from others in their organisation.

Mentoring or one-to-one coaching

You can skip a whole host of steps and avoid a lot of mistakes if you learn from someone who is already where you want to be. Talk to them about how they got to where they are and what they learned along the way. You will gain plenty of professional insight talking to somebody with more experience. You can also clarify which skills you still need to develop.

The benefits of a mentor are two-fold. Not only can they offer you guidance and support, they can also be a positive advocate for you to other people in the organisation, or potential employers in their network in the future.

It's also worth stating that mentors aren't only for interns starting out in their careers. We can all benefit from them, no matter what stage of our careers we're at. Many C-suite executives rely on a mentor to help as a sounding board.



Your recruitment consultant may also be able to offer suggestions on training courses. In some cases we can offer discounts on training through our partnerships with professional and training bodies, as well as offering access to specific online courses.

Speak to your consultant to find out more.

Formal training

Speak to your manager about formal training options. There are two options here:

Internal training

If you work for a large organisation, they may have a training team who run their own formal in-house training programmes to develop skills such as presenting, negotiation, effective communication and time management. These are a great option, if available, as in-house training often holds little or no cost to your department or organisation. If there are courses available in an area you need to develop, speak to your line manager to see if they can book you into a relevant session.

External training

If you work in a smaller organisation or you want to hone expert skills in a niche area, it may be worth exploring external training options through a relevant professional body or training institution, whether through a day course or a longer term qualification. Speak to your manager, colleagues or peers in your sector to see if they can make any recommendations.

There is usually a cost associated with external courses, so it is worth doing your research to ensure the content is relevant and that it will add value. Many organisations do have training budgets available, so speak to your manager about whether they can support with some or all of the cost.

When you discuss this, it is worth clearly outlining the benefits of their investment in your training and the advantages it will bring to the organisation. If relevant, you could even suggest setting up a lunch and learn session following your training, to pass on the key things you have learned to your wider team, so everyone benefits.

Some organisations may ask you to sign an agreement that you will pay some or all of the cost of the course if you don't complete it, leave the organisation within a certain time period after completion, or if you fail. You may also have to pay for resits, so you need to ensure you are fully committed to completing the course and are able to afford the fees if required.

OTHER WAYS TO DEVELOP YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Although many employers offer both on the job training and the chance to take more formal qualifications, it's still up to you to keep your skills sharp and abreast of developments in your field.

You don't necessarily have to spend a lot of money, or use significant time and budget. There are many timely, cost effective, and even free ways that you can learn in your own time, whether it's at home, during your commute or on holiday.

1. Learn a new language

The job market is becomingly more and more globalised. If you're fluent in another language, you open yourself up to new opportunities; be it multilingual, overseas or both. Being able to speak another language is also a specialist skill which can attract greater demand and a much higher salary.

As well as formal classes, try [Duolingo](#) – a free and gamified language learning experience. Download it on your phone and take it with you everywhere, so when you have a spare five minutes, you can pick up where you left off.

When you're a little more advanced install [Readlang Web Reader](#) on your desktop. This extension allows you to read web pages in another language and translate the words you don't know.

2. Volunteer

Volunteering allows you to step outside of your comfort zone and adapt to unfamiliar environments. You will meet new people, learn new approaches and gain new insights, whilst also giving something back.

Employers think of the above qualities when they see voluntary work on a CV, and it speaks volumes about your attitude.

3. Train or mentor others

Nobody else has had the same journey as you. You will have your own stories and life lessons, and could offer a lot to somebody as their mentor. In addition, you will find yourself learning just as much during this process.

You will most likely learn something from the mentee, particularly about their experiences and approaches to working life. Mentoring will also boost your coaching and leadership skills as you grow confident in teaching others.

Moreover, explaining something to someone else can really solidify how much you know in your own mind, and show you where the gaps are in your knowledge.

4. Network

Talk to others inside and outside your industry, both online and offline. Speak to people from a wide range of ages and backgrounds. In doing this, you will broaden your mind set, your circle of connections and your interpersonal skills, whilst also teaching you what life might be like outside your current role.

5. Keep an eye out for webinars, podcasts and live events

Webinars and podcasts are great because there's often a recording so you can tune in when and wherever is convenient. You'll be absolutely spoiled for choice on pretty much any subject you can think of if you do a quick Google search, but narrow it down by asking what other people recommend.

Live events mean you do have to spend a little travel time and money, but you'll get the double benefit of face to face teaching and meeting new people. Make sure you remember to take a notepad or use the Notes function on your phone so you can list any ideas that you want to follow up on. This is another great way of learning from the experts and building your own know-how.

6. Start a blog

Start researching your area of interest. Read up on industry news and opinion pieces. Follow other bloggers on your chosen topic.

Once you start writing, look at blogging tips which teach you how to get your content noticed. There are plenty out there in the form of podcasts, webinars and blog posts themselves. This will give you the chance to build upon your existing knowledge, develop a keyword-rich online portfolio and impress anyone who might be looking to hire.

8. Read about your field

An obvious one, but Amazon is teeming with books on all sorts of subjects, and it's a great way to expand your awareness. You may even find the biographies or autobiographies of some of the leaders in your field.

8. Teach yourself to be social media savvy

If you're not on social media these days, you will find yourself missing out. Job vacancies, thought leadership pieces and networking opportunities are often posted on everything from Twitter to LinkedIn.

Show off your knowledge on forums and in groups on your subject, and build a presence to be proud of. Once again, this is another simple way to keep your finger on the pulse with any developments in your area of interest, whilst also promoting yourself to prospective employers.

Build your social media profile carefully, however to maintain your professional brand. For more information on this, read our guide to 'Building your personal brand'.

While you're doing all that learning, don't forget to document and formalise it all so you can present it to your current or future businesses. Remember to update your CV and social profiles with any new skills you have learned.

In summary, whether you're looking for a new job in the same field, a complete change of career or even a promotion, your chances of success are much higher if you follow the steps outlined in this guide. These effective methods will ensure that you are continuously developing yourself throughout your career, and showcasing that to your employer and potential recruiters.

Your Hays consultant can offer advice and guidance on the skills required for the type of role you are looking for. We hold a number of networking events and webinars offering advice on developing your career, and provide key market updates and insight across a wide range of professions through our email updates and publications.

To find out more and take your career to the next level, contact your local Hays consultant at hays.co.uk/offices

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