

Individual Development Plan

It's never too late to be who you might have been. — GEORGE ELIOT, Writer (1819-1880)

Introduction

What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

The IDP is a personal action plan, jointly agreed to by you and your supervisor that identifies your short and long-term career goals. An IDP also identifies the training and other developmental experiences needed to achieve those goals, for the benefit of the individual and the organization, within a specified time frame.

Benefits

The IDP enables you to take ownership of your career and identify what you need to obtain maximum satisfaction from your work. IDP's benefit organizations by aligning individual goals with organizational goals, providing opportunities for succession planning, and increasing the morale and motivation of employees.

Underlying Assumptions

The IDP does not guarantee a promotion, a raise, or a new job. It is based on the belief that individuals appreciate challenge and find work more fulfilling when they are developing new skills and they are working to their potential.

Finding a "Buddy"

Experience shows that you will be more likely to complete this process if you partner with someone you trust. A buddy can provide feedback and encouragement. A buddy can also hold you accountable to complete tasks and meet deadlines you set for yourself. A buddy also makes the experience more fun.

How do I Prepare an IDP?

There are five stages to an IDP:

1. Self Assessment
2. Gathering Feedback
3. Developing the Plan
4. Implementing and Maintaining the Plan
5. Evaluating Your Success and Determining Next Steps

Each of these stages is described in this document along with worksheets to assist you with the process.

Stage One - Self-Assessment

The next few pages include worksheets to assist you in gathering information to achieve an understanding of your current and future developmental goals. These include:

- Current Career Issues – A list of career issues that you may be facing at this point in your life, from getting up to speed in a new field to planning for retirement.
- Work Environment Assessment – Questions designed to help you identify the challenges, expectations and changes taking place in your field and at Vanderbilt that may impact your future.
- Personal Assessment – Questions to help you think about what you need to know about yourself in order to find fulfillment and be successful in your work.
- Personality Assessment Tools – A number of personality style/type assessments are available to assist you to reflect on your strengths and preferences and how those impact your relationships with others.
- Integration – Bringing all the information from the earlier assessments together.

Current Career Issues

Which of the following statements apply to you at this point in your career?

- You are new in your job and must learn the basics to get up to speed.
- You have been in your job for a while and are striving for increased competence.
- You need to improve your performance in specific areas of your current job.
- You need to update your skills or expertise to keep up with changing technologies.
- Your job duties are changing and require new skills or expertise.
- You want to develop skills to move to a different job.
- You want to prepare for a promotion or move to the next higher level of responsibility.
- You want to broaden your skills to allow for more flexibility in the future.
- You want to be stimulated by learning new skills.
- You want to prepare for retirement.

Work Environment Assessment

1. How is the mission of my department changing? What other changes are occurring regarding our customers/patients, services, work processes, organizational structure, reporting relationships and personnel? Is this a change I want to be a part of or is it time for me to consider a move?
2. What are the organization's changing needs regarding the workforce and what new expertise and skills will be required or desirable?
3. What opportunities are available for developing new skills and expertise? What competencies are required for my work? How proficient am I with these competencies and which ones do I need to develop further?
4. How might my job change in my organization? How can I prepare for or develop new skills for these changes?
5. New expertise and skills my department and Vanderbilt want me to learn include...
6. What new projects in my department or within Vanderbilt appeal to me? What are the department and/or Vanderbilt's future needs? What kinds of development activities would help position me for participation in fulfilling those needs?

Personal Assessment

1. Of all the new and recent developments in my organization or field, what interests me the most?
2. What are my current strengths for pursuing these interests? What do I need to do or learn so that I can get involved in these new developments?
3. Of all the things I have done in the past five years, what specific activities and functions have energized me the most? What developmental activities – work experiences, learning, skill building – would help me grow in or increase these energizing functions?
4. Other things I would like to learn are...
5. What non-work related issues do I need to consider that will likely impact my career plans (e.g., health, family, financial, and social)?

Personality Assessments

There are numerous assessments and inventories that you can take in order to help you understand your strengths, preferences and working style. Some require that you work with a knowledgeable facilitator while others can be completed on-line or with the use of inexpensive resources. Three that fall in the first category are the DiSC, the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) and Keirsey Temperaments. Trained facilitators for these inventories are located in both HR's Organizational Effectiveness Team and the Center for Organizational Learning. Other assessments that you can access on your own include:

- The Platinum Rule – the Platinum Rule materials help you identify which of four behavioral styles you most resemble. It also provides simple ways for you to identify the styles of others and provides suggestions about how to modify behavior in order to interact more effectively. Either the book or the workbook provide you with the information you need to make these assessments and use the information to enhance your growth and development.
 - Alessandra, Tony; O'Connor, Michael; *The Platinum Rule: Discover the Four Basic Business Personalities and How They can Lead You to Success*, 1996
 - Alessandra, Tony; *The Platinum Rule Workbook*, 2000
- People Styles at Work – Very similar to the Platinum Rule, this book also provides you with information to assess yourself and others.
 - Bolton, Robert; Bolton, Mary Grover; *People Styles at Work: Making Bad Relationships Good and Good Relationships Better*, 1996
- The Strengths Finder 2.0 – Based on work began by the Gallup Corporation, this on-line assessment, which you can access after purchasing the book, identifies your top 5 strengths or themes. It also provides a guide to help you identify how to best utilize your talents.
 - Rath, Tom; *Strengths Finder 2.0*, 2007

All of these tools provide information to help you in the workplace. Once you have completed any of these assessments, reflect on the information you have learned by answering the following questions:

1. What does this information suggest to you about ways to utilize your abilities most effectively?
2. What can you do to enhance your effectiveness?
3. How does this impact your professional development decisions?

Integration

1. In what areas do my interests and personal plans overlap with the needs of my department and the university or medical center?
2. What knowledge, skills or abilities are important for increasing or maintaining the quality of my performance in my present assignments?
3. What knowledge, skills or abilities would help prepare me for opportunities or roles I might have in the future?

Stage Two – Gathering Feedback

Now that you have spent time thinking about your work environment and identified what you would like to know in order to continue to grow professionally, it's time to consult with others about your assessment. Take some time to meet and talk with others whose opinion you respect and who could provide you with confirmation of your thoughts as well as additional insights.

In addition to speaking to the person to whom you report, consider talking to:

- co-workers
- colleagues in other departments with whom you interact
- leaders in other areas of the organization
- internal customers

When you meet with these individuals, ask them if your assessment of the work environment is consistent with what they know and believe. Ask for their opinion about your strengths, particularly as they relate to future needs of the organization. Find out what else you should consider when making your developmental plans. Ask for their suggestions about professional development opportunities and where you might look for those opportunities. Keep asking questions until you feel confident you have an accurate assessment of what you should learn in order to meet your developmental needs.

Stage Three – Developing the Plan

During this stage, you will develop your goals by using the information you have collected. Think of this process as personal brainstorming and use the tools that will aid you in this process the best – paper and pencil, computer, white board etc. You will also need your planning calendar.

1. Begin by stating what you are interested in learning and developing. State as clearly as possible what you will know or be able to do when you have reached your goal. If you are describing a skill or competency, what are the components of that competency and how will you know you have been successful?
2. If you have multiple goals, put them in priority order.
3. Break each goal into distinct and obtainable steps and identify what you need to do or learn at each step. You may need additional information at this point if you are not sure how you are going to attain the learning that you have identified. Remember that there are many ways to learn and develop. Consider:
 - a. Formal courses
 - b. Workshops
 - c. On-line courses and/or research
 - d. Self-designed reading and research
 - e. Finding a mentor
 - f. Shadowing someone
 - g. Committee involvement
4. Identify how long it will take to complete each step.
5. Combine each step and create a timeline for each goal.
6. With your planning calendar, map each goal. Consider whether you can work on some concurrently or whether you need to do them one at a time. Remember to consider all of your commitments when creating the schedule.
7. Create a finished document to discuss with your one-up leader. This should include the goal as you've defined it, the date you hope to accomplish the goal, and some of the steps along the way. Use him or her for feedback about the steps you're taking, the proposed timeline, and the methods you've identified to obtain the knowledge you're seeking.

Stage Four – Implementing and Maintaining the Plan

This stage is simply to follow-through with all the planning that you did in Stage Three. If you have allocated the appropriate amount of time to complete each activity, this stage should proceed smoothly. The difficulty during this stage is staying on track and completing the steps you've identified within the timeframe you identified.

To stay on track, consider the following:

- Regular meetings with your one-up leader to check-in and to help you develop a Plan B if you become side-tracked.
- Meetings with your "buddy" to encourage you and provide additional suggestions for getting back on track.
- Carefully recalculating steps and timelines if needed in order to be successful. Remember to take into account other commitments and be realistic about what you are able to accomplish.

Stage Five – Evaluating Your Success and Determining Next Steps

Once you've completed your plan, look back at your answer to question 1 in Stage 3. This question asked you to:

Begin by stating what you are interested in learning and developing. State as clearly as possible what you will know or be able to do when you have reached your goal. If you are describing a skill or competency, what are the components of that competency and how will you know you have been successful?

Evaluate how you did in relation to your response to this question. If you were able to complete all the steps you have outlined, do you feel you obtained the results you were seeking? When you discuss this with the person to whom you report, does he or she feel you were successful? Are there some additional steps you need to take that weren't apparent when you began this process?

If you have completed your steps successfully, what do you want to do next? Perhaps you'd like to bask in your success for awhile. Perhaps you're ready to make a request for new job responsibilities. Perhaps you want to update your resume in anticipation of a new position. No matter what your next step, take time to congratulate yourself on a job well done and relish everything new that you know that you didn't know before.

Congratulations!

Resources

- Government Website – Three of the Stage One Assessments were amended from Self-Assessments from the US Department of Education website. The important questions asked in Current Career Issues, Work Environment Assessment and Personal Assessment come from this site.
- Rath, Tom, *Strengths Finder 2.0*, 2007