

Employee Development

Employee development is one of the most important elements of the supervisor and employee relationship. It is about helping an employee to move toward new goals. It involves partnering with the employee to build on strengths and interests and identify strategies to improve. The focus of professional development can be:

- The employee’s current job – employee takes on additional responsibilities and challenges.
- The employee’s professional and career aspirations – employee gains the necessary experiences and qualifications to meet the employee’s future goals.

Employee Development can occur through:

- Structured learning experiences such as workshops, professional conferences and academic classes.
- Unstructured learning experiences such as observing others, gathering information from the web, or participating in discussions.
- Challenging job assignments such as leading a project, creating a new product or improving a process.
- Meaningful mentor or coaching relationships with respected colleagues resulting in honest feedback, advice, and resources.
- Participating in assignments outside of one’s typical job duties, such as sitting on a work group or a problem solving team coordinated by another unit.
- Facilitating the learning of someone else by providing informal coaching or by creating a structured learning experience.
- Reading a specific work or many publications on the same topic.

Supervisor’s Role

Supervisors and managers can support their employee’s development by:

- Giving ongoing feedback and encouraging the solicitation of feedback from others.
- Suggesting and financially supporting attendance at conferences and workshops.
- Temporarily “freeing up” the employee from work obligations.
- Working with the employee to achieve adequate office coverage while the employee is away at a professional development opportunity.
- Asking the employee about “lessons learned” from formal and informal professional development experiences.

Organization and Human Resource Consulting

Encouraging Employee Development

Supervisor's Role, continued

- Making introductions for people to connect for purposes of coaching, mentoring and networking.
- Engaging the employee in a discussion about his/her career goals. Some questions to consider asking are:
 - Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years? What steps will get you there?
 - What skills and/or knowledge would you like to obtain to position yourself for the future?
 - What tasks and assignments would you like to be involved in to increase your skills?
 - What is something new you would like to learn?
 - In what new ways would you like to see yourself contributing to this unit? How can we make that happen?
- Reinforcing and supporting the knowledge and practices gained at a workshop or conference.