

Member's Quarterly

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Perspective

Personal Training Plans: Plot Your Own Future

Career development doesn't happen on its own

You can sit around and wait for your employer to develop your training plan and send you on courses for your present job. That's an option and with today's challenges, you may be waiting a very long time. Most of us want more than that — to expand our horizons and reach higher. If you're of the same mind, why not consider creating your own personal training plan?

Start by assessing where you are today. Are your skills up to date for your current job and what your employer is asking of you? If not, chat with your manager and request some advice on training and support. You also should ask about the organization's plans and priorities for the future. That's really where your personal training plan should focus.

The objective of your plan should be to prepare you for where you want to go next with your current job, employer, career or somewhere else. Look at where you are now. How do your skills compare with your co-workers or peers in your field? Can you fully meet the needs that your employer or client base is asking of you? Once you feel comfortable with that and have a plan to address any shortcomings, you can then move to thinking about the future. Here you look at the knowledge or skills gaps required to reach your next level.

Your personal training plan should have some SMART goals. You know the drill. Once you establish your SMART goals, start working on your actual plan. For example, consider learning another language and moving into international sales. Look both inside and outside your organization for opportunities. You may already have internal resources available. Can you get a training opportunity in the international sales department? Will your employer let you shadow someone already doing this job or let you be part of the team that is designing next year's sales plan? Can you obtain access to documents relating to that particular position so that you can review them on your own time?

It's alright to ask your employer to provide you with insights and possibly help support your individual growth and training. Even in today's tough economy, the worst that can happen is that they refuse your request and tell you to do it on your own time and at your own expense. You've still demonstrated that you are eager to enhance your skills and grow within the organization. Perhaps they would help pay for a portion of your tuition or your learning materials. You'll never know unless you ask. Even if your employer cannot help pay for the program or materials, one basic element of any personal training plan should be that you are willing to devote the time and energy towards achieving your goals. You're worth it, no matter what else is going on in your life. If you don't look after your own needs, who will?

Investigate courses and both formal and informal professional development opportunities. Look at seminars or workshops offered and research online resources for the latest trends in international sales. Keep in mind that there is no cost associated with doing research and contacting others on your own time.

Make sure you have all the information required prior to making a final decision. Don't hesitate to contact others who are already working in the field both internally and externally. People love to talk about their work and most will be happy to share how they got there. Business networks such as LinkedIn provide you with an endless list of potential contacts and advisors. You could be one of them as well in the future.

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