



Development Plans

Purpose? A development plan is a series of actions designed to improve relationships, hence effectiveness.

Importance? The development plan lets the person know how they can close the gap and establish better working relationships. Because specific behaviors have been spelled out, then change can be observed and supported. It is a tangible expression of the person's engagement and commitment to the team. It is a means to grow and develop the individual first, then the team and finally the company.

Why use it? A plan takes vague statements or observations about behavior and makes them tangible and measurable. A balanced plan is about strengths that are taken for granted and under developed, as well as about blind spots. A plan that is implemented and supported can develop a good employee into a great one. It can demonstrate the company is committed to investing in their employees and help retain high potentials as well as cut down on recruiting costs.

When use it? Use the development plan when you want to invest in an employee. When you want to retain them. When you want to prepare someone for the next position or there is a change in assignments. When they need help in leadership and interpersonal skills. When you believe your business is about growing people. When you believe as people grow so do profits. When you want to demonstrate commitment, revitalize under performers, and reduce stress.

With whom should you use it? I hope this was answered above.

How should you use it? As the boss you can give the direct report one strength you have identified they should use more and spell out specifically the behaviors you want to see and what they look like. Then no more than two development areas. Pick the ones that are high leverage and don't try to correct all the problems at once. Let them experience success quickly as possible.

The boss should commit to meetings every six weeks to review progress of the plan. Before the meeting the boss should seek out feedback from others. The meeting should be 45 minutes, however, a 15-minute phone conversation is better than no meeting. Review the feedback from others, and give your feedback. (See CEO-Level Feedback.) Ask them, "What is working and what isn't?" Ask them what their barriers are and if you can help. Reinforce the value of working the plan by asking, "Assume you have worked your plan to perfection, what difference will it make to you? What difference will it make to those around you? Close by scheduling the next meeting.

Expected outcomes? Higher retention, bench strength, better relationships equals better results, less stress, open communication and less time spent “dancing around people and issues” Individuals will have honest feedback and clarity of expectations. Well executed development plans are contagious. As others see changes they will be drawn into the process.