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Creating a Strong Professional Development Plan. A "How-To"

According to EdFuel's *Hidden in Plain Sight* report, 85% of systems-level education leaders cited a lack of internal career advancement and opportunities for development as the top drivers of attrition. When asked to specify the most effective development opportunities, the majority of leaders identified on the job learning and coaching/mentoring as critical to their success and desire to stay in their organizations. The research confirms that teams that focus on growing and developing their people in intentional and effective ways are retaining their most talented individuals in an environment where talent is hard to come by.

Six "Must Haves" for Strong PD Plans:

1	Define role-specific competencies
2	Utilize the 70-20-10 model
3	Ensure Co-Creation/Joint Accountability
4	Identify Measures of Success
5	Revisit Regularly/Build Habit
6	Connect to Year End Evaluation

This guide outlines best practices for creating highly effective and strong professional development plans that retain and grow the top talent in your organization.

MUST HAVE	WHAT IS IT?
Define role-specific competencies	− A set of shared competencies for hiring, performance evaluations, and professional development. − Ensures that development areas are not arbitrary, but are aligned to the functional role and/or necessary leadership skills of the employee.
Utilize the 70-20-10 model	− The Center for Creative Leadership pioneered the 70-20-10 approach, which has three times more impact on employee performance. − Focuses 70% of development on on-the-job training, 20% on coaching and mentoring, and 10% on formal training and self-study.
Co-creation/ Joint Accountability	− Both the manager and the employee invested in the design and creation of the plan leads to higher engagement, higher job satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of follow through.
Identify Measures of Success	− Measures of success are clear, measurable goals that will be reached once the professional development plan is complete (i.e. readiness to take on a new responsibility, a new direct report, etc.). − Two types of success measures are key: outcomes based measures and process based measures (i.e. check in once a month around lessons learned, etc.)
Revisit Regularly/ Build Habit	− In order to build habit and make this a priority, progress checkpoints must happen consistently throughout the implementation of the plan. − Ensures accountability and allows for problem solving, coaching, and feedback.
Connect to Year-End Evaluation	− Ensures that development areas not arbitrary, but are aligned to the organizations' strategic priorities and the priorities for this specific role. − Connecting the plan to the qualitative and quantitative metrics used to assess performance of employee allows for increased focus, investment, and follow through.

How to Create **Strong PD Plans**

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MUST HAVE	BEST PRACTICES	WATCH OUT FOR	RESOURCES
Define role-specific competencies	– 10-15 competencies per role – Balance of functional and leadership competencies – Defined and agreed upon at beginning of fiscal year or evaluation cycle – Select from those the 2-4 competencies critical for the employee's development	– Over complicated design that will be difficult to execute – Competencies defined too low or too high for individual – Selecting too many competencies	– EdFuel's Blueprint for Success functional and leadership competency maps
Utilize the 70-20-10 model	– Job-embedded training (such as a stretch project, or leading a team meeting) encompasses 70% of the plan – Mix of 3-4 projects during year that together address key development areas	– Overly complex projects – Too many developmental projects at once – Lack of alignment between PD plan and competencies – Pointing to projects after completion as learning experiences rather than discussing and planning together in advance – Unclear learning objectives that can't be evaluated at the end	– High Quality Job-Embedded Training: A "How To" – EdFuel's Sample 70-20-10 Professional Development Plan Template – Bridgespan's Sample 70-20-10 Plan
Co-creation/Joint Accountability	– Develop the plan in-person collaboratively – Employee owns heavy lifting when creating the document (i.e. they should be generating ideas and writing down content into the plan itself) – Manager comes to meeting with ideas for development opportunities, but employee gets ultimate say	– Manager doing the heavy lifting in creating the PD plan – Employee not feeling heard in process, thus not invested	– Sample Script: Professional Development Plan Creation Conversation
Identify Measures of Success	– Collaboratively identify what success at the end of the plan will look like – Use SMART goals to set measures of success (specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused, time bound) – Includes two types of success measures: 1) project outcome measures and 2) development process measures	– Measures of success that are ambiguous – Lack of alignment between actual skill building in plan and measures of success	– University of Virginia: Writing SMART goals
Revisit Regularly/Build Habit	– Collaboratively identify regular progress checkpoints – Add this as a section to weekly check-ins (1-2x/month) – Share plan with leadership team and team members as appropriate who can help highlight growth for employee – Manager takes responsibility for ensuring follow up on progress checkpoints – Dedicate time to both project review and staff reflection	– Allowing the plan to fall by the wayside – Focusing only on task completion vs learning and skill building	– Sample Progress Checkpoint Agenda – The Management Center's Sample check-in agenda
Connect to Year End Evaluation	– Include qualitative and quantitative metrics in plan that are used to measure employee performance – Set timeline to end prior to end of year evaluation in order to include results	– Professional development is inconsistent with year-end review.	– The Management Center's Guide to Performance Evaluation