Planning Individual Development Activities

Tools, Ideas and Suggestions

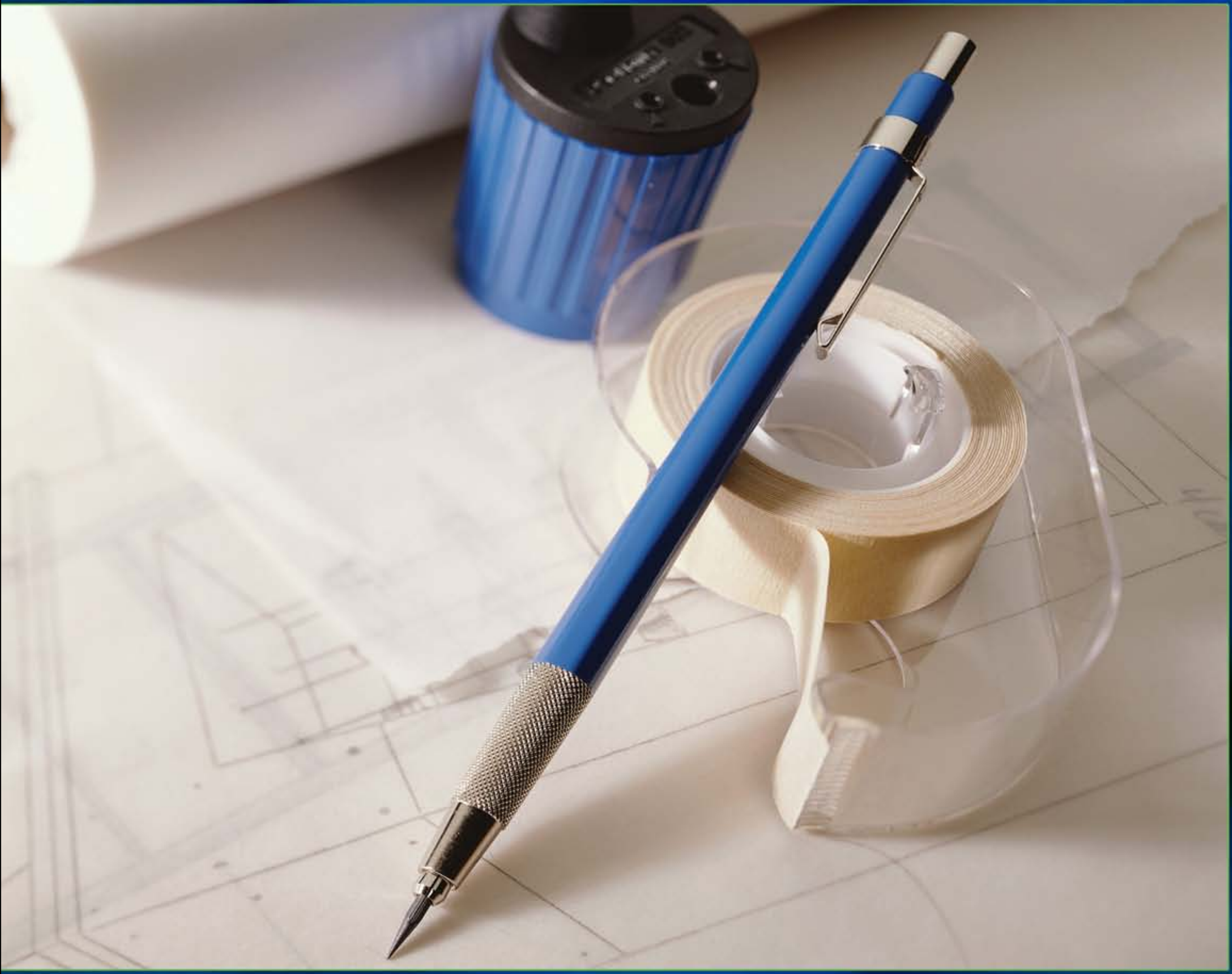

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Developmental Activities

Introduction

Our most valuable resource is our people. By encouraging developmental activities for individual employees, the State Department as a whole will benefit from increased motivation, morale and capacity for service.

Approved activities may be directly or indirectly job or career related. This could include any activity, which would enable staff to become more effective in their current position; would prepare them for advancement within the Department or would enhance personal development and lifelong learning. The relevance, desirability and timing of participation in developmental activities are determined through work planning and goal setting discussions between an employee and his/her supervisor, with the supervisor having the final approval.

This toolkit provides guidance, tools and suggestions on how to go about designing developmental activities in the workplace.

What is a Developmental Activity?

Not all training and development takes place in a classroom. A developmental activity or assignment provides employees with an alternative work experience that allows for ongoing experiential learning. This experience enhances an employee's knowledge and skills and can range from on-the-job training to details or rotations outside an organization.

Growth and development are key motivators for employees. Encouraging and fostering ongoing developmental activities in the workplace will benefit both the employee and the organization.

In a nutshell, expanding opportunities for employee growth through job enhancement and enrichment can add depth and breadth to the skills and abilities of your organization. The assignment of additional responsibilities, a commitment to skill development, delegation of new tasks, an opportunity for more authority and autonomy create an engaged and valued workforce.

Employee development is a collaborative effort between the supervisor and the employee. It balances the employee's needs and interests with the organization's goals and objectives - a win-win situation for both. In the following pages you will find step-by-step guidance and worksheets to get you started on an employee development plan. You can use as much or as little of the information provided to tailor your developmental action plan to reflect the realities and constraints of your workplace. The important thing is to just get started. Even small changes can have a big impact. Consider the following.

Expectations

A supervisor's expectations of their employees (Pygmalion effect) and the employee's expectations of themselves (Galatea effect) are key factors in how well people perform at work.

According to Susan Heathfield, a management and organization development consultant, there are fundamental principles you can apply to performance expectations and potential performance improvement at work.

To summarize the Pygmalion effect, often known as the power of expectations, consider:

- Every supervisor has expectations of the people who report to him.
- Supervisors communicate these expectations consciously or unconsciously.
- People pick up on, or consciously or unconsciously read, these expectations from their supervisor.
- People perform in ways that are consistent with the expectations they have picked up on from the supervisor.

The Pygmalion effect was described by J. Sterling Livingston in the September/October, 1988 Harvard Business Review. "The way managers treat their subordinates is subtly influenced by what they expect of them," Livingston said in his article, Pygmalion in Management.

Developmental Activities

Heathfield states, “The Pygmalion effect enables staff to excel in response to the manager’s message that they are capable of success and expected to succeed. The Pygmalion effect can also undermine staff performance when the subtle communication from the manager tells them the opposite. These cues are often subtle. As an example, the supervisor fails to praise a staff person’s performance as frequently as he praises others. The supervisor talks less to a particular employee.”

Livingston says about the supervisor, “If he is unskilled, he leaves scars on the careers of the young men (and women), cuts deeply into their self-esteem and distorts their image of themselves as human beings. But if he is skillful and has high expectations of his subordinates, their self-confidence will grow, their capabilities will develop and their productivity will be high. More often than he realizes, the manager is Pygmalion.”

The power of positive thinking should not be underestimated. Expecting and believing that employees can positively contribute can have a significant impact. Holding a “big-picture” view of employees improves their self-esteem and as a result their own belief that they can succeed translates into a rise in performance that meets the level of their own expectations (the Galatea effect).
According to Heathfield, “the individual’s opinion about his ability and his self-expectations about his performance largely determine his performance. If an employee thinks she can succeed, she will likely succeed. Consequently, any actions the supervisor can take that increase the employee’s feelings of positive self-worth will help the employee’s performance improve”.

She recommends the following ideas as a way in which to encourage positive, powerful self-expectations in employees.

- Provide opportunities for the employee to experience increasingly challenging assignments. Make sure she succeeds at each level before moving forward.
- Enable the employee to participate in potentially successful projects that bring continuous improvement to the workplace.
- Provide one-to-one coaching with the employee. This coaching should emphasize improving what the employee does well rather than focusing on the employee's weaknesses.
- Provide developmental opportunities that reflect what the employee is interested in learning.
- Assign a successful senior employee to play a developmental mentoring role with the employee.
- Hold frequent, positive verbal interactions with the employee and communicate consistently your firm belief in the employee's ability to perform the job. Keep feedback positive and developmental where possible.
- Make sure the employee is receiving consistent messages from other supervisory personnel. How you speak to others about employees powerfully molds their opinions.
- Project your sincere commitment to the employee's success and ongoing development.

Harness the power of the employee’s self-expectations to ensure powerful, productive, improving, successful work performance.

Performance Improvement Functions:

- Performance analysis
- Exemplary practice identification
- Developing more optimal performance environment for workers on the job
- Increasing the effectiveness of training, for example by improving needs assessment and evaluation.
- Expectation Clarification
- Performance support tools and resources
- Communications enhancement
- Improving feedback and recognition systems

Types of Developmental Activities

Cross-Training

Cross training is training someone in another activity that is related to their current work. The name comes from the fact that you are **training** them **across** a broader spectrum of the organization's work. It provides more flexibility in managing the workforce to get the job done and it is good for employees too. It lets them learn new skills, makes them more valuable, and can combat worker boredom. See appendix C for a *Cross Training Record Sheet*.

Formal Training

Formal classroom training is the first thing that comes to mind when people think of employee development. This is just one small component of the larger developmental plan.

All employees are encouraged to take advantage of the training opportunities available internally and externally to enhance their support of bureau goals and their own professional development.

Internal Training

FSI's internet site: http://fsiweb.fsi.state.gov/ contains information about their course offerings and schedules. See appendix B for additional information on how to apply for training.

External Training

Department of State employees may also take advantage of training opportunities provided by other government agencies or domestic training institutions, colleges and universities, and private vendors. The FSI Office of the Registrar manages the Department of State's External Training Program, reviewing and approving all requests for external training including conferences and seminars, for Department of State employees, and maintaining external training records. External training may be bureau-funded or FSI-funded, subject to funds availability.

Matrix Teams

Matrix teams include work groups, cross functional teams, task forces, problem solving teams, committees, Special Project teams, etc. They are normally composed of a small number of people from different departments, functions, or organizations, who have banded together to solve a common problem or achieve a goal through collaboration and the sharing of their knowledge and skills.

Mentoring

There are many definitions of mentoring. In its simplest form, mentoring is the process of one person helping another to grow and develop. Mentoring occurs in several forms. However, all mentoring relationships fall into one of two categories: formal or informal.

Formal Mentoring

A formal mentoring relationship is characterized by three traits:

1. An explicit agreement between mentor and protégé to engage in the mentoring process.
2. A specific set of developmental goals.
3. A structured process for the mentoring to take place (e.g., a formalized meeting schedule, an explicit agreement on roles and expectations, etc.).

Formal mentoring can occur within the context of a structured, office-sponsored program, or it can be self-initiated by the individual mentor or protégé. Annually, the Department runs a formal mentoring program.

Informal and Situational Mentoring

This type of mentoring relationship is characterized by a looser structure and less explicit agreement. Informal mentoring is almost always initiated by the individual mentor or protégé. An employee sees a quality in another person that they admire and would like to develop. Or a mentor sees something in another person that reminds them of themselves. If you have ever been "taken under someone's wing," that has most likely been an informal mentoring relationship. In these cases, the relationship may have happened without the two partners ever negotiating specific agreements on how they would work together or what they would work on. Nevertheless, the mentor was there to provide the protégé with advice, insight, and supportive challenge.

On-the-Job Training - *Seizing opportunities in your own workplace.*

There are various developmental activities that can take place right in the workplace - from formal and structured on-the-job training to informal, reflective, self-directed activities. Appendix A offers ideas for development as they relate to the OPM Leadership Competencies.

Training an employee in their own working environment has several advantages:

- Managers or supervisors can assess improvement and progress over a period of time, making it easier to identify problems and intervene and resolve them quickly.
- This type of training is also productive, as the employee is still working as they are learning.
- Training "on-the-job" provides an opportunity to get to know staff they might not normally interact with.

Pitfalls

- Not everyone is a good teacher.
- The person training may not be given the time to spend with the employee to teach them properly, which translates to substandard training and poor learning.
- The trainer may possess bad habits and pass these on to the employee being trained.

We only get about 25% of what we use in our jobs through formal learning. The other 75% of learning happens as we creatively adopt and adapt to ever changing circumstances. It happens when we ask a coworker a question and get an answer or when we collaborate with members of our team on a project. Take advantage and foster opportunities for informal learning through the use of mentors, coaches, subject-matter experts, etc.

Position Enhancement - *Job Enlargement & Job Enrichment*

This involves modifying an employee's responsibilities to meet a personal development objective. Job responsibilities are stretched in some way. This can either be vertical or horizontal. These can be permanent or temporary.

Job Enlargement is the horizontal expansion of a job. It involves the addition of tasks at the same level of skill and responsibility. It is done to keep workers from getting bored.

Job Enrichment is the addition to a job of tasks that increase the amount of employee control or responsibility. It is a vertical expansion of the job.

Self-Directed Learning Projects

An employee is assigned or voluntarily undertakes a specific project that promotes the expansion of skills and knowledge through self-directed learning or research and produces a final product that contributes to organizational objectives. Self-directed learning may also include reading, self-study, FSI's Distance Learning and FasTrac courses. For more information on these courses visit: http://fsi.state.gov/admin/reg/default.asp?cat=Distance%20Learning

Special Assignments

A Special Assignment is a learning strategy in which the employee performs temporary duties on a full or part-time basis. These duties may be performed within or outside the current organization. For example, the leader of a cross-functional team, service on a task force, etc.

Excursion Tours

HR/CDA offers a limited number of opportunities for State Department Civil Service (CS) employees to bid on Foreign Service (FS) Hard-to-Fill (HTF) positions. These positions are announced o/a March 1 every year.
The CS to FS HTF Program is designed to help meet critical FS staffing needs while providing opportunities

for CS career development. Employees will be selected to fill one or two-year assignments depending on the Post.

CS applicants must be career employees with a tenure code of 21 and have served in permanent State positions for at least three years. In order to be eligible to apply for FS HTF positions with responsibilities to supervise American staff overseas, CS employees must have completed their one-year supervisory probationary period here in the Department, and this includes writing EERs for career-conditional/career State employees.

Selected employees will be required to have the appropriate medical and security clearances for the posts of assignment prior to receiving travel authorization. HR/CDA will provide MED with the necessary authorization for the exam and will request the required clearances from DS. With the exception of IMS positions, applicants must hold at least Secret clearances. After selection, candidates with Secret clearances will be processed for Top Secret clearances before going to post. The process for upgrading clearances may take up to four months and cause delayed arrivals at post.

Language training beyond a five-week familiarization course will not be authorized for CS applicants. Other job specific training (e.g. consular, public diplomacy, etc.) will be provided as needed to applicants selected for these positions. Total training, however, cannot exceed eight weeks.

A key requirement in the application package mandates that all CS applicants obtain Bureau-Specific reemployment rights as a precondition to applying for the Program. This will guarantee that applicants will be placed into permanent CS positions following excursion tours. The reemployment rights memorandum granting Bureau-Specific reemployment rights should be signed by the Executive Director (and cleared by the supervisors) of the releasing bureau to the Director, HR/CDA. Please note that this does not preclude CS employees from applying for CS vacancy positions as they near the completion of their excursion tours. However, should new positions not be obtained by the date of return, CS LNAs will return directly to the losing bureaus. The 30-day grace period has been eliminated.

Developmental Assignments

A Developmental Assignment is an economical and effective way to receive hands-on experience and opportunities to enhance skills, knowledge, and abilities. A developmental assignment can be arranged within the same organization, with another Agency or outside organization and usually is approved for a period of one to three months. When working on a developmental assignment, the employee is still assigned to their regular duty station, but for a period of time, they will work for a different supervisor.

During the assignment they will perform tasks assigned, based on the identified career goals and interests and/or the position they are filling. It can be a great learning experience and can assist the employee in their career goals and help them determine if a particular job would be right for them. It broadens their knowledge of other functions and departments and offers them different and challenging job experience.

Types Of Developmental Assignments

There are generally two types of developmental assignments:

Job Rotation

This is a career development strategy that allows the employee to temporarily move info an established or "shadow" position either inside or outside the current organization. An employee could complete a series of job rotations. Two employees of similar grade and experience could also arrange a "job swap" to learn different skills or about another organization.

Detail

A detail provides the employee with an alternative work experience generally in another part of the Department or another government organization. They could temporarily perform the duties of a vacant position or be detailed to work on specific projects. This is negotiated between the two organizations.

Benefits of a Developmental Assignment

- Broaden knowledge of other functions and departments in the organization
- Prepare for career advancement
- Seek a different or more challenging job experience
- Enhance knowledge or skills in a particular area
- Get exposure to a different career field

How to pursue a Developmental Assignment:

- Conduct a Self-assessment: Identify your career goals and those skills and/or learning experiences you would like to receive as a result of the assignment.
- Discuss with your supervisor: Describe how you and the organization will benefit from the experience.
- Identify and contact an organization or Agency that could provide you with a developmental assignment: Utilize your network contacts, conduct informational interviews and/or job shadowing.
- Develop a formal written agreement: Approving officials can discuss all logistics and determine if they can enter into an agreement to provide you the opportunity.

Roadblocks to Developmental Assignments:

- Discussions are held with your supervisor and he/she has determined that the assignment cannot be approved (e.g., staff shortages, organizational needs, budgetary constraints).
- The organization/Agency to which you are requesting a developmental assignment, can not approve your request (e.g., staff shortages, time constraints, lack of interest).
- An agreement between the approving officials could not be reached, based on established conditions for the developmental assignment.

There are lots of different approaches and circumstances involved in seeking a developmental assignment. Be creative in your discussions with your supervisor, identify a work place that can utilize and benefit from someone with your skills and talents, and see if it can work out.

Developmental Assignments

Tips for persuading your supervisor

People are persuaded by different things. Some people are impressed by a strong, logical argument, while others are swayed by a forceful, impassioned explanation. To be most compelling, adapt your persuasive style to suit your supervisor. Consider the following:

- What is important to your supervisor? What will be his/her main concerns?
- How will this benefit the office and your supervisor? What will he/she get out of supporting this?
- Prepare your argument ahead of time. Jot down the three most important points you wish to make. Be ready to address the concerns you uncover during the investigation process.
- Give your perspective on why you believe this is a good idea. Sell it! Show enthusiasm. Clearly relate the benefits of your proposal to his/her concerns.
- Run your ideas by a few trusted coworkers before presenting it to your supervisor. Get their input on its feasibility and ask them to challenge you on the various aspects of your proposal. Use this information to analyze things you might not have considered.
- State positive expectations.
- Know what you want from three perspectives: 1) What is absolutely necessary; 2) What is ideal; 3) What you would be willing to give up.
- Understand the needs of the organization vs your personal desires.

In summary, be prepared; know your supervisor's position and needs; be creative in coming up with alternative solutions to any obstacles and most importantly know how your objectives will benefit your supervisor and your office.

Developing a formal written agreement

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) needs to be drawn up between the two organizations. Certain details need to be covered such as time and attendance, length of detail, etc. Be sure you include any information the gaining agency needs, such as security clearance. The following page contains a sample MOU. This sample can be used as a guide when establishing a developmental assignment.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
(EMPLOYING DEPARTMENT)
AND
(GAINING DEPARTMENT)
AND
(EMPLOYEE)

This Agreement between the United States Department of State and (gaining organization) is undertaken for the purpose of detailing (employee name) from the Department of State to (gaining organization). The detail is voluntary and at the employee's request.

1. The purpose of this document is to set forth the terms and conditions of an agreement pertaining to (employee's name) developmental assignment as (working title) within the (office/organization). This Agreement is entered into under the authority of 5 CFR 300.301 and the authority of the Agencies involved.

2. The terms of the assignment shall commence on (date) and, subject to prior termination, shall continue to and expire on (date). The terms of this agreement may be extended to a date mutually agreed upon by both parties. Should it be necessary to amend this agreement or to terminate it earlier than planned all parties to this agreement must be consulted and notice of one (1) month received in writing by each party.

3. (employee's name) is currently classified as a (classification/grade) and will continue to remain classified at that level and receive his/her current salary of (salary) per annum, less any withholdings and deductions required by law for the duration of the assignment or any extension thereto. All rights and benefits currently received by (employee's name) including eligibility for salary adjustments will be maintained and paid for by (the Home Organization).

(employee's name) time and attendance and leave will be administered by (gaining organization) for the duration of this detail. For pay and record keeping purposes, the (gaining organization) will sent to (Home organization) via fax copies of sign-in/out sheets and copies of approved leave slips on a biweekly basis no later than noon on Wednesday of the second (and final) week of each pay period.

4. Any travel or training costs deemed necessary due to the assignment will be borne by ______________________________.

5. The duties and responsibilities to be performed by (employee's name) is set out in Appendix A.

6. Because (employee's name) assignment is a developmental experience (Assignment Supervisor's name) as the Assignment Supervisor has a commitment to (employee's name) to ensure that his/her developmental needs are satisfied by the assignment.

The Assignment Supervisor agrees to:

- Establish with (employee's name) performance requirements and standards and the goals and expectations for the assignment period;
- Give general direction to (the employee name) to achieve specific job objectives and personal development goals;
- Review with (the employee name) his/her progress on an as required basis and complete at the end of the assignment a formal performance assessment for evaluating the performance of (employee's name) in accordance with 5 CFR 430 and agency requirements. A copy of the evaluation shall be provided for (the employee name) record.

Developmental Assignments

As the Employee on assignment, (employee's name) agrees to:

- Establish, in addition to the job objectives, personal developmental goals to be attained during the course of the assignment:
- Maintain a consistently fully satisfactory level of performance;
- Participate in progress reviews and the formal performance assessment to be completed at the end of the assignment.

7. It is agreed that the goals and expectations of the assignment in terms of job results, learning expectations and personal developmental goals to be attained will be established in writing prior to the assignment commencement date.

It is further agreed that the goals and expectations will be forwarded to (employee's name) Human Resources Office and subsequently form part of the Memorandum of Understanding.

8. It is agreed that on conclusion of the assignment, (employee's name) will return to his/her former position with (office/bureau) area of the Department of State.

The terms and conditions of this Memorandum of Understanding are acceptable to all parties as indicated by the signatures below.

______________________________	______________________________
SIGNATURE (Employee)	DATE
______________________________	______________________________
SIGNATURE (Receiving Manager or Director)	DATE
______________________________	______________________________
SIGNATURE (Consenting Manager or Director)	DATE

Appendix A: Duties and responsibilities to be performed

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

As with Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, you do not have to "go over the rainbow" to discover something that is in your own backyard. There are strategies and ideas you can apply immediately to your own workplace to enhance your development and skills.

Experiential Learning

Learning-by-Doing

In the book **Experiential Learning,** David Kolb describes learning as a four-step process. He identifies the steps as (1) watching, (2) thinking (mind), (3) feeling (emotion), and (4) doing (muscle).

To be effective learners we must (1) perceive information, (2) reflect on how it will impact some aspect of our life, (3) compare how it fits into our own experiences, and (4) think about how this information offers new ways for us to act. Learning requires more than seeing, hearing, moving, or touching to learn. We integrate what we sense and think with what we feel and how we behave.

Active learning results in longer-term recall, synthesis, and problem-solving skills than learning by hearing, reading, or watching.

When you consider that we remember:

- 20% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we see and hear
- 70% of what we see, hear and discuss
- 90% of what we see, hear, discuss and practice

It is no wonder that learning-by-doing is very effective!

Teaching/Learning Moments

Experience and learning seems to happen in fits, stops and starts. Sometimes it seems one is going nowhere or even backwards. Other times there is steady, plodding progress. And yet other times seem to be peak learning moments, when everything comes together. Such learning moments are often very memorable.

In such moments, an individual is primed for discovering and developing a new understanding of a situation, task or issue. It is a "teachable moment".

The teachable moment may not be comfortable. In fact it is often incredibly uncomfortable, and unless one confronts it head-on, leaving the known comfort zone, the moment's learning potential may not be fully realized. The event might also be quite accidental, fortuitous, or may come disguised as bad luck.

Teachable moments often occur unexpectedly. Taking advantage of an unplanned opportunity almost always leads to learning on an expanded level. Recognizing teachable moments requires both mindfulness and a learner-based mind-set. Stay open to the opportunities. Every moment offers a potential learning opportunity.

Personal Best Experience

A "personal best" experience is an event or series of events that you believe to be your own standard of excellence. It is your own "record setting" performance, a moment or period when you did your very best. It is something you measure yourself by, a time to look upon as a peak personal experience.

Identify your own "personal best" moments/events. Identify the qualities these experiences shared.

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

Defining Moments

Defining moments are those instances when we face exceptionally difficult and fateful decisions. A few such moments stand out because:

- the stakes or risks were exceptionally large, or
- the outcome has had a major impact, or
- the stress or tension was exceptional

Ask yourself:

- What did you do right?
- What did you wish you had done differently?
- What did you wish you had done ahead of time?
- What is the most enduring lesson for your actions now?

Unlearning

Unlearning is the intention to let go of what we have already learned or acquired. It is not about right or wrong. It is about being open to and exploring new ideas and new and different ways of doing things. It can help you become open to new skills, experiences, behaviors, and knowledge.

In order to pick up a new skill, even if it's similar to something you already can do, learn what makes it different. All of us repeat things that worked in the past, even when they don't apply to the now. Repeating isn't always a bad strategy, but when there is a significant difference, the old approach holds you back.

By refusing to unlearn old rules and old ways of doing things with the thinking, "this is the way we have always done it", you miss learning opportunities and avoid moving forward.

Here are some ways to accelerate the unlearning of old judgments and limitations:

1. **Learn to play again.** Let go. Be creative and innovative.

2. **Take more risks.** Seek out new experiences. Do something that gets you outside your comfort zone. These experiences invite the brain to consider things it might not otherwise encounter.

3. **Seek out experiences that help you not take yourself so seriously.** Taming the ego allows you to make mistakes, even fail, and still feel okay about yourself.

4. **Trust your unconscious.** Our unconscious mind, or intuitive self, has a lot to teach us. Any way you can see beyond your ordinary consciousness opens you up to new ways of seeing.

5. **Ask for feedback.** The more people who can help you reflect on your behaviors, the greater your chance to gain an accurate sense of how other people perceive you and which actions to unlearn.

6. **Examine your beliefs.** Your beliefs determine your behavior and it's difficult to act inconsistently with your beliefs for very long. When you believe you already know the right way to do things, everything else can seem wrong. Why then would you want to unlearn what you're currently doing, let alone replace it with something else?

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

Learning from Mistakes

When we make mistakes, very often as a first reaction, we think and feel negatively. We become irresolute, lose self-confidence and don't dare to try new things. Behaving like this we forget that we can learn from mistakes more than from successes. Mistakes give opportunities to grow. They are necessary costs. Follow the motto: "Celebrate your mistakes".

Learning from mistakes requires three things:

1. Putting yourself in situations where you can make interesting mistakes.
2. Having the self-confidence to admit to them.
3. Being courageous about making changes.

Even a mistake may turn out to be the one thing necessary to a worthwhile achievement. **Henry Ford**

Some of the best lessons we ever learn we learn from our mistakes and failures. The error of the past is the wisdom and success of the future. **Tyron Edwards**

Turning an Experience into a Developmental Activity

(Robert W. Eichinger & Michael M. Lombardo, Center for Creative Leadership)

Below is a list of opportunities that make experiences developmental:

1. Involves possible success and failure that will be obvious to others.
2. Requires aggressive, individual "take charge" leadership.
3. Involves working with people not worked with before, with a lot of people or with a lot of new people.
4. Creates additional personal pressure (e.g. tough deadlines, high stakes, heavy travel or longer hours).
5. Requires influencing people, activities and factors over which you have no direct control (e.g. superiors, peers, clients, political or economic situations, participation in volatile markets, tough competition).
6. Involves high variety and diversity: doing something very different (e.g. switching from line to staff, changing functions, using new technologies).
7. Involves one's being watched and monitored by people whose opinion counts.
8. Requires building a team; starting something from scratch, fixing or turning around a team, project or operation.
9. Involves tremendous intellectual, strategic or problem-solving challenge with little or no history or guidance.
10. Involves interacting with a significant boss or senior executive (e.g. someone who is notably supportive or unsupportive, a positive or negative role model, or someone whose style clashes with your own).
11. Features an important missing element (e.g. top management support, necessary resources, skills or technical knowledge, credentials, credibility).

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

Learning Styles

What are learning styles?

Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning.

What are the types of learning styles?

Visual Learners:

learn through seeing....

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs.During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

Auditory Learners:

learn through listening...

They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners:

Tactile/Kinesthetic persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

What is your Learning Style?

This chart helps you determine your learning style; read the word in the left column and then answer the questions in the successive three columns to see how you respond to each situation. Your answers may fall into all three columns, but one column will likely contain the most answers. The dominant column indicates your primary learning style.

When you..	**Visual**	**Auditory**	**Kinesthetic & Tactile**
Spell	Do you try to see the word?	Do you sound out the word or use a phonetic approach?	Do you write the word down to find if it feels right?
Talk	Do you talk sparingly but dislike listening for too long? Do you favor words such as *see, picture*, and *imagine*?	Do you enjoy listening but are impatient to talk? Do you use words such as *hear, tune*, and *think*?	Do you gesture and use expressive movements? Do you use words such as *feel, touch*, and *hold*?
Concentrate	Do you become distracted by untidiness or movement?	Do you become distracted by sounds or noises?	Do you become distracted by activity around you?
Meet someone again	Do you forget names but remember faces or remember where you met?	Do you forget faces but remember names or remember what you talked about?	Do you remember best what you did together?
Contact people on business	Do you prefer direct, face-to-face, personal meetings?	Do you prefer the telephone?	Do you talk with them while walking or participating in an activity?
Read	Do you like descriptive scenes or pause to imagine the actions?	Do you enjoy dialog and conversation or hear the characters talk?	Do you prefer action stories or are not a keen reader?
Do something new at work	Do you like to see demonstrations, diagrams, slides, or posters?	Do you prefer verbal instructions or talking about it with someone else?	Do you prefer to jump right in and try it?
Put something together	Do you look at the directions and the picture?		Do you ignore the directions and figure it out as you go along?
Need help with a computer application	Do you seek out pictures or diagrams?	Do you call the help desk, ask a neighbor, or growl at the computer?	Do you keep trying to do it or try it on another computer?

Adapted from Colin Rose(1987). Accelerated Learning.

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

Learning Journal

A Learning Journal is a collection of reflective comments concerning educational and developmental activities or events. It could contain an entry for each developmental activity, meeting, discussion, training class or workshop that you participate in and regard as relevant to your learning plan. Each of these entries should reflect on the following:

What was my aim for the event?

What were my objectives?

What did I review?

What did I learn that was new?

What did I find that was most useful from it?

What did I not find useful about it?

How could apply what I have learned in practice?

A Learning Journal is a log of daily activities, a summary of your readings in a training course, or a track of your psychological state and your inner feelings about life. On the other hand, it is an intellectual exercise in reflectively describing and explaining, in a form that can be shared with your mentor, coach or supervisor, your own experiences and observations in terms of your overall perspective and feelings about a developmental activity. It is a record of your personal growth through your development plan. For example, you might find you are suddenly placing more emphasis on some aspect of your development, or are more interested in another occupational/skill area, than you had originally thought. The fact that you had a change of emphasis is worth noting. Can you think why you are making that change and articulate it in your journal? Can you explain the value to your learning of making that change?

Purposes of a Journal

Journals are used to stimulate critical thinking through reflection. Journals provide you and your mentor, coach, or supervisor with an insight into your knowledge at the higher levels of learning involving analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information.

Journals encourage you to make your learning personal by thinking about and articulating your thoughts. They will also focus your attention on your own values, attitudes and beliefs and help you make them explicit when they might previously have been implicit and unexamined.

Journals allow you to reflect on all your learning and identify areas that you wish to peruse in more depth. We write journals for the following reasons:

- To record experience
- To facilitate learning from experience
- To support understanding and representation of the understanding
- To develop critical thinking or the development of a questioning attitude
- To encourage awareness of our own learning processes
- To increase active involvement in and ownership of learning
- To increase ability in reflection and thinking

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

- To enhance problem solving skills
- To enhance reflective practice
- To support personal development and self empowerment
- To identify and support changes in thinking
- To enhance creativity
- To improve writing
- To improve or give 'voice'; as a means of self expression
- To foster communication between the learner and mentor, coach or supervisor
- To support planning and progress in research or a project

The act of writing is associated with learning or the enhancement of learning - writing forces a learner to clarify thoughts, structure ideas and give voice to opinions. Language in a journal tends to be expressive and closer to conversation than more formal writing.

Starting your Journal

If you cannot think how you might start a journal, you could consider the following:

- What did I learn today?
- What did I find interesting?
- What did I find puzzling?
- Did I encounter any unexpected problems or issues?
- What learning highs did I experience?
- What learning lows did I experience?
- What do I feel about the way I am approaching the issue, subject or topic?
- How can I improve my learning techniques?
- What do I need to know more about?
- What other resources interested or inspired me (photos, websites etc)?

Structuring Learning Journals

There are several items that you can choose to include in your journal:

- Insights you have on the development activity, training class, etc. At what point did you finally understand a particular concept/task/skill set? What was it that gave you that understanding? Why had you had difficulties with this concept/task/skill set in the past?
- The big picture. How does your learning link to your personal and the organizational goals?
- Any readings you may have been doing relating to the concept/tasks/skill set you are trying to develop.
- Plans of action. Do you have any ideas about further development in this area? Have you been inspired to investigate related areas? You might wish to note thoughts that are not yet fully formed so that you can keep track of emerging ideas. You can then refine these ideas over time.
- Your feelings about the developmental activity and any plans you have to help yourself progress could be included.

Becoming a Sage: The Keys to Life-long Self-Development

From Susan McKeone, Sage Management Consulting

People define success differently. For some, success means having achieved financial security or career pinnacles. Some people judge their success by the positive impact they have made on others whether these are clients, students, associates, or family. Other successful people have acquired a level of expertise that is recognized and respected by peers. But despite these differing definitions of what constitutes success, successful people themselves have similar characteristics.

- First, they are self-confident without being arrogant. This comes from being self-aware: knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, knowing one's goals and remaining true to one's values and capabilities.

- Second, they are willing to grow by challenging their limits of knowledge and experience.

- And third, they are willing to reflect and learn from experience.

Webster's Dictionary defines a "sage" as one who is wise through reflection and experience. In ancient cultures, a group's sages were those who had experienced rich lives and were thoughtful about what they had learned through these experiences.

In contemporary times, groundbreaking research by the Center for Creative Leadership in the late 1980s found that successful executives were those who had benefited from the "lessons of experience."

So from these common traits of successful people, those striving for success can seek to practice three fundamental steps to self-development.

Self-development Step: Know Thyself

This is the most basic tenet of psychology, self-improvement, and emotional intelligence. If you think you need to get to know yourself better, try these basics.

Solicit Feedback Regularly:

Perception is reality. Seek to understand how people perceive you. You may not be achieving the impact you expected in leading or working with others. You cannot adjust your approach without the benefit of feedback that can inform you in terms of how your intentions were received by others. Be proactive in finding out what people think about you and your style of interacting and your approach. Be open to and appreciative of the feedback you receive, not defensive. Seek to understand rather than to be understood.

Reflect on Performance:

Some successful people are gregarious and extroverted while others are reserved and introverted. But all successful people know how to spend time alone being reflective and thoughtful about recent performance and behavior. Take time every day to reflect on the day's work and interactions.

Always take ample time at the conclusion of major elements of work to reflect on the quality of what you produced and the effectiveness of your work with others. The key to reflecting on performance is remaining balanced in your self-assessment. Be self-critical: understand what you could have done better and learn from these mistakes. But also acknowledge success whenever warranted: celebrate and take pride in what you have done well.

Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses:

As you collect feedback and reflections, come to understand your personal strengths and weaknesses. Know that everyone has both. Successful people build success from their strengths while they limit the negative impact of their weaknesses. The reason to identify your key strengths and weaknesses is not so that you can improve your weaknesses. It is much more important to identify your key strengths and leverage these.

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

The management guru, Peter Drucker, in his classic article, "Managing Oneself", states: "One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence. And yet most people . . . concentrate on making incompetent performers into mediocre ones. Energy, resources, and time should go instead to making a competent person into a star performer."

Know Your Joys and Passions:
Be in tune to your emotions as you engage in your work. We all need to do elements of work that are tedious or displeasing, but the bulk of how you spend your day should satisfy you and make you feel good about your contributions and the impact of your efforts. Success is difficult to achieve without that level of satisfaction. Know that people who excel enjoy what they do and do what they enjoy.

Self-development Step: Learn From Experience

As stated earlier, contemporary research affirms what ancient societies have known all along: those who are the wisest amongst a group are those who have had rich experiences and have learned from them. Consider these aspects of learning from experience.

Development Occurs Within the Context of Work:
During most of the 20th century, companies and their employees tended to think about professional development as something that happened away from the job, in classrooms and workshops and seminars. These development options are useful to build basic skills and provide opportunity for workers to interact within a cohort, but they do not compare with the capacity for development of real skills learned on the job and through the experiences of meaningful work with real implications and results.

Growth Occurs Through Challenge and Stretch:
Once one achieves a level of comfort and ease within their job responsibilities then high performance may continue but growth and development will not. Individuals with the highest potential and talent need to continue to grow until their potential is reached. This means applying a consistent level of tension with respect to challenging the individual's skills, perceptions, and experiences. The appropriate "stretch" for development is consistently requiring job expectations that are just beyond those skills already mastered.

Diversity of Experience and Depth Versus Breadth:
Know that one's career goals need to shape career experiences or else career experiences will shape career potential. Understanding how to apply this goes back to the tenet of "Know Thyself." Know how you will define your career success so you can build the appropriate career path to get there. Are your passions energized through expertise: would you like to know all there is to know about a particular area? If so, you need to build an expert's career that is deeply steeped within that area of expertise.

Or perhaps your passions are energized by leading broad sets of people and your vision stretches across an organization or industry. In this case you need to build a leader's career that is broad and encompasses a variety of knowledge and perspective. However, whether you are building depth or breadth, diversity of experience is critical to ongoing development. Always be looking for the next challenge, the newest goal that will mix things up and add another layer to the fabric of your career.

Apply Your Lessons of Experience:
So, an important distinction in understanding how to develop through experiences is that the experience itself is only half the task. What is critical is that you learn from the experience and thus apply these lessons to future experiences. Again, this requires reflection and self-awareness and purposeful cognizance relative to learning. "What did I learn from that?" is a common question you should ask yourself following successes and failures. And when you have your answer to that question, be sure it is applied to your next experience.

Strategies and Ideas for Learning

Self-development Step: Learn from People

Learning from the experience – the task, the challenge, the work, the goals – is only half of the lesson's potential. Each experience puts you in touch with people – clients, peers, reports, bosses, teachers and mentors – all of whom have their own sets of lessons for you.

Seek Diversity of Perspective:
Just as you should seek diverse experiences to expand your skill set, you should also seek diverse perspectives to expand your own thinking. We all enjoy and have a comfort level with people who are "like me." But these people will only reinforce your current thinking without necessarily expanding or challenging you to think differently – and just as in experiences, collecting diverse perspectives results in growth and development.

Observe Others:
Be a people watcher. Be aware of how your colleagues interact with others and assess what works and what doesn't. Learn from those colleagues who are effective – borrow their strategies and approaches. Learn from those colleagues who are ineffective – guard against making the same mistakes you see them make as they interact.

Exposure, Exposure, Exposure:
Anytime you can work on a project that exposes you to new contacts, new audiences, new networks – do it! Remember this: it isn't really about who you know but it is all about who knows you.

Solicit Feedback Regularly and Ask for Support:
Okay, so you heard this one already in Step One. It's that important to hear it again. One way you learn from people is to learn what they think about you and can provide feedback about how effective you are in interacting with them. When you receive feedback that requires you to adjust your behavior or experiment with new ways of interacting, ask your feedback providers to support you and help you to improve by reminding you when you slip back to old patterns or acknowledging you when you successfully implement new ones.

Networks:
Successful people are well networked, period. It may seem as though their broad and loyal networks of friends and associates are effortless and naturally attracted to the successful person's charismatic style. But the truth is probably more likely that the successful person works hard to keep connected to these networks by remaining cognizant of comings and goings and by keeping proactive and systematic goals to stay connected.

Manage Your Own Performance Management:
Development on the job almost always means needing to learn from your boss. But some of us are more blessed than others when it comes to bosses who are natural coaches and mentors. Don't let a boss who is poor in performance management deprive you of the lessons you need to learn from him or her. Be proactive and persistent. Manage upwards: schedule time with him or her, come prepared to the meeting with a structured agenda, a self-assessment of recent performance, and be prepared to solicit feedback directly.

In closing, wisdom and success are within everyone's reach through three steps you should practice daily.

- **Know thyself:** solicit feedback, reflect, do what you love!
- **Learn from experience:** use work to learn, challenge yourself, expose yourself to diverse experiences, and apply your lessons of experience.
- **Learn from people:** seek diversity of perspective, be a people watcher, seek exposure, ask for support, maintain your networks, and take responsibility for your own performance management.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

In this section we will cover the steps necessary in designing and implementing a successful developmental activity plan. Throughout this process you should have an ongoing discussion with your supervisor.

Step 1: Self-Assessment
Step 2: Position Competencies
Step 3: Feedback
Step 4: Organizational Assessment
Step 5: Establishing Goals
Step 6: Creating an Individual Development Plan

Step 1: Self-Assessment

Purpose of a Self-Assessment

Carrying out a self-assessment can be described as performing an internal, in-depth self-scan. It can reveal your abilities, interests, attitudes, needs, strengths and weaknesses, unique values, beliefs and personality. The information can form the basis for you to examine your career and self-development options as they relate to your abilities, skills and personal style.

Some considerations for your self-assessment

- Constructively link your skills, interests, values and abilities with the job or developmental activity you are seeking.
- Describe what environment you learn best in.
- Describe the supervisory style you are most comfortable with.
- Identify your areas of strength and weakness.
- Explain your beliefs, attitudes and values that you bring to the job.
- Identify your needs. (What do you want from the job - security, advancement, money, challenge, etc.)
- Do you like working with people?

How do I know what I'm capable of and interested in?

Over the course of your lifetime, you will spend almost one quarter of your life at work. That's a lot of time, and it makes it important for your work to be fulfilling and rewarding.

A rewarding career often means there's a good match between what a person is interested in, the skills they have, their values and beliefs and the type of work they do. No matter what stage of your career you're at, it's important to have a good understanding of yourself, what you're good at and what you like to do. This applies to those who are thinking of making a career switch, or those who may want to take this opportunity to reassess their career assets. Not only is it important to assess our values, interests and skills in making career decisions, it is also important in making developmental decisions. You won't know what areas you need to work on if you haven't taken the time to take stock.

Assessment

One of the most important steps in finding out what you are capable of and interested in is assessment.

Assessment is a tool you can use to know your "work" self and make better career choices. You may have assessed your skills, values, interests and abilities when you first entered the workforce. Assessment provides you the opportunity to reevaluate, at this point in your career, how you can make the most of the time you devote to work.

The Career Development Resource Center can walk you through a process of assessment, discovering the options that are available, and assessing alternatives to help you make a decision.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Note to Supervisors

Identifying individual needs includes discussions, decisions, and commitments linked to individual performance results and required outcomes of organizational performance. These discussions may occur periodically; however, at a minimum, it is recommended that such discussions occur during performance appraisal meetings, which are designed to enhance the abilities of the employee on current tasks or to prepare for future assignments. Like performance appraisal, such assessments should also be a continuous process throughout the year.

Consequences of Not Conducting a Needs Assessment:

When needs assessments are not conducted, the following consequences may result:

- Valuable resources may be wasted on developing learning and development materials to teach skills and knowledge that employees already possess.
- Time may be wasted in teaching skills to employees that they do not need to perform their official responsibilities successfully.
- True training needs and barriers to job performance may go unaddressed.
- It may not be possible to determine if what was learned helped improve performance since no baseline measures of performance exist.

What is Needed to Conduct a Needs Assessment?

Conducting a needs assessment can be an informal discussion between an employee and a supervisor or it can involve an elaborate process. In either case, some basic steps to consider are as follows:

- Identify the Target Population. Gather the data needed in order to describe who actually needs to be developed (i.e., employee or group). Ask yourself, "Who needs this development? Who can best benefit from it, NOW?"
- Identify the Competencies Currently Used to Perform Specific Functions/Tasks. Develop a list of functions/tasks and competencies performed by the employee or group. Identify established performance expectations and current levels of performance. Identify potential barriers to job performance. Determine the most important functions/tasks to be included in the developmental experience.
- Identify Competencies Needed to Perform New/Desired Tasks and Functions (Desired State). Determine what new or enhanced competencies are required in order to perform the new/desired task or function. This may include benchmarking successful organizations where "expert" performance models or best practices exist.
- Identify Gaps Between Current and Desired Competencies. These gaps are the developmental needs. It is important to note that there may be some root causes of deficiencies and/or barriers to effective performance (i.e., business processes, motivation, conflicting policies, workload, etc.).

Questions to Ask When Assessing Needs

Characteristics of the Learner:

- What do we expect the learner will be able to do or know as a result of the development?
- Are there preferences for certain development delivery methods and media?
- In what past development experiences has the learner been involved in?

Job Function/Task Information:

- What accomplishments does the organization expect?
- Are the functions/tasks being performed expected to change?
- How well is the learner currently performing the functions/tasks?
- What potential barriers impact successful performance?
- Which functions/tasks are most critical?

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Competency Information:

- What does the employee need to know and do in order to perform the critical functions/tasks associated with the job or mission?
- What special abilities/traits does the employee need to possess in order to perform the critical functions/tasks?
- What competencies do successful performers possess?

In the practical, day-to-day operation of an organization, decisions on the devotion of staff time to developmental activities often involve the consideration and balancing of a number of factors including:

- linkage to strategic plan/mission
- the needs of the office
- the needs of the employee
- the time, cost, and availability of funds for development
- the prospect of benefits to the organization and individual
- the overall staffing and workload situation within the office.

These factors are largely a matter of the judgment of the supervisor.

How can you assess your skills, values, interests and abilities?

There are many methods and tools. To get you started we will briefly talk about self-assessment, competencies and gathering feedback from others.

Why is self-assessment important to my career?

When your natural instincts and values are at odds with your work, you feel uncomfortable and unhappy. That's why knowing what interests you now and what values are important to you is vitally important when you're making career decisions, whether you're setting goals for your future or reevaluating your career plans. Self-assessment will help you reassess where your strengths and interests lie, and find out what your work values and skill sets are right now. It will also show you what skills you might be lacking and may want to develop.

Worksheets for the activities below can be found in appendix C.

Assess yourself

You are one of a kind. You have a unique combination of interests, abilities and values that determines your career choices.

Consider the following questions:

- What do you like to do?
- What can you do well?
- What makes work meaningful for you?
- What skills do you already have?
- What level of education do you have (or would you be willing to get)?
- What work experience do you have?
- What kind of training do you have (or would be willing to get)?
- What motivates you on the job?

- What are your expectations from work?
- What type of lifestyle do you want?

Your interests

Your work will be more enjoyable if you are doing something that interests you. Which types of activities do you enjoy?

- solving problems
- convincing others
- being physically active
- working with facts and figures
- helping people
- using your imagination
- building or fixing things
- creating things

List as many of your interests as you can think of. Then decide which are your strongest interests and circle them.

Your abilities

Which of the following activities do you do well?

- noticing differences in detail and recognizing errors
- learning scientific and technical principles and gathering information systematically
- planning and developing projects, coordinating and handling details
- listening, expressing feelings and getting along well with others
- working with numbers
- creating things and using your imagination
- imagining in three dimensions (e.g. blueprints)
- using and understanding words and ideas
- performing physical tasks
- understanding how things work and putting them together

List all of your abilities. Then decide which are your strongest ones and circle them.

Your skills

Your skills are abilities you have learned to apply.

- **Self-management skills** include personality traits like being dependable, responsible and having a positive attitude. What words would you use to describe your best characteristics?
- **Transferable skills** such as social skills, communication skills, leadership and problem solving skills can be applied in many different situations. What transferable skills do you have?
- **Technical skills** are the skills you need for a particular job (e.g. mechanics need specific auto repair skills).

List as many of your skills as you can. Then circle ones you want to use or develop further in the future.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Your values

Which of the following values motivate you?

- helping society
- dealing with the public
- competition
- variety
- independence
- prestige
- personal satisfaction
- security
- being in a position to make important decisions
- getting respect from others
- having time to pursue other activities
- having the opportunity to learn new things
- protecting the environment

Other considerations

- Think about your past work experiences. What would you like to be the same, and what would you want to be different in your future jobs?
- What were your best subjects at school? Would you be willing to go back to school? If so, for how long?
- What kind of environment do you like to work in (outdoors, near home, in the city, with a small group of people)?

Gaps Grid

Critical Information for Development

Where You Are	Where you Want To Go	
ABILITIES How you See Yourself	**GOALS & VALUES** What Matters To You	**Your View**
PERCEPTIONS How Others See You	**SUCCESS FACTORS** What Matters To Others	**Other's View**

David B. Peterson, Ph.D & Mary Dee Hicks, Ph.D Personnel Decisions International

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Step 2: Position Competencies

Analyzing learning and development needs includes an assessment of the organization in terms of the competencies needed by each office for successful mission accomplishment, as well as an assessment of the needs of each employee. Generally, the main objectives of assessing developmental needs are to:

- determine if development is, in fact, needed
- assess individual skill deficiencies and developmental needs
- assess organizational skill deficiencies and developmental needs
- obtain information needed for the developing or selecting the appropriate learning strategy.

Another way to see where your strengths are and what areas may need more work is to examine the OPM Civil Service leadership competencies. They describe the kinds of skills and behaviors federal employees need to develop now and in the future. These competencies in addition to those required for your position (as described in your position description) should form the basis of your evaluation.

OPM Competency Definitions

The FSI Leadership & Management Training Continuum provides a listing of courses offered that are designed to match the specific competencies you will be expected to demonstrate at different points in your career. To view the LMS Training Continuum visit:
http://fsiweb.fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms/default.asp?contentID=116

Basic Competencies (Non-Supervisory)

Oral Communication (Building Coalitions/Communication) - Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.

Written Communication (Building Coalitions/Communication) - Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner.

Problem Solving (Results Driven) - Identifies and analyzes problems; distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions; provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.

Customer Service (Results Driven) - Balancing interests of a variety of clients, readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands. Anticipates and meets the needs of clients; achieves quality end products; is committed to the continuous improvement of services.

Interpersonal Skills (Building Coalitions/Communication) - Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.

Continual Learning (Leading Change) - Grasps the essence of new information; masters new technical and business knowledge; recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development; seeks feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

Flexibility (Leading Change) - Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.

Decisiveness (Results Driven) - Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

Political Savvy (Building Coalitions/Communication) - Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

Technical Credibility (Results Driven) - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. Is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs. Understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.

First-Level Competencies (Supervisory)

Leveraging Diversity (Leading People) - Recruits, develops, and retains a diverse, high quality workforce in an equitable manner. Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results. Respects, understands, values and seeks out individual differences to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Develops and uses measures and rewards to hold self and others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.

Resilience (Leading Change) - Deals effectively with pressure; maintains focus and intensity and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks. Effectively balances personal life and work.

Conflict Management (Leading People) - Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.

Team Building (Leading People) - Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with customer groups; fosters commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

Influencing/Negotiating (Building Coalitions/Communication) - Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates “win-win” situations.

Human Resource Management (Business Acumen) - Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Using merit principles, ensures staff are appropriately selected, developed, utilized, appraised, and rewarded; takes corrective action.

Accountability (Results Driven) - Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities. Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans; focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Integrity/Honesty (Leading People) - Instills mutual trust and confidence; creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics; behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others, and demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Mid-Level Competencies (Managerial)

Creativity and Innovation (Leading Change) - Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

Financial Management (Business Acumen) - Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels. Prepares, justifies, and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies. Identifies cost-effective approaches. Manages procurement and contracting.

Technology Management (Business Acumen) - Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision- making. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.

Entrepreneurship (Results Driven) - Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization. Is willing to take risks; initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.

Service Motivation (Leading Change) - Creates and sustains an organizational culture which encourages others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well. Shows a commitment to public service. Influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.

Partnering (Building Coalitions/Communication) - Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities; collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

Higher-Level Competencies (Executive)

Strategic Thinking (Leading Change) - Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.

Vision (Leading Change) - Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change; builds a shared vision with others. Influences others to translate vision into action.

External Awareness (Leading Change) - Identifies and keeps up-to-date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.

Benchmarking Skills & Core Competencies

What is benchmarking?

Benchmarking is identifying the highest standard of excellence, learning and understanding those standards, and finally adapting and applying them to improve performance.

Once you decide what to benchmark, and how to measure it, the objective is to figure out how the superior performers got to be the best and determine what you have to do to get there. If you don't know what the standard is you cannot compare yourself against it and determine how to get there.

What are core competencies?

Core competencies are the skills, abilities, knowledge, and characteristics that help distinguish superior performance and competency and are the root essentials of an organization's or an individual's expertise. Competencies are any attitude, skill, behavior, motive or other personal characteristics that are essential to perform a job, or more importantly, differentiate superior performers from solid performers. In essence, it is the "quality bar" you set for yourself. Competencies provide a means of looking at those behaviors that differentiate the "best from the rest" and a common language for talking about critical on-the-job behaviors.

It is necessary for you and your supervisor to determine the relative importance of each competency for your position. *Core* competencies should be considered important. Role specific competencies depend upon the accountabilities of your position as described in your position description.

In discussion with your supervisor, determine which competencies are core and which are role specific and the importance of each. You will also need to determine the benchmark for performance of each competency. If you and your supervisor feel that you have met that benchmark in that competency then there is no need to focus your efforts on improvement in this area, unless you want to further strengthen this competency. Use the *Job Competency Profile* and the *Competency Self-Assessment* worksheets in appendix C to help you determine this.

The competencies listed in the *Job Competency Profile* are merely examples. You need to insert the competencies relating to your job and work environment.

After determining your *Job Competency Profile*, you can now do a competency self-assessment. Highlight the names on the *Competency Self-Assessment Worksheet* (found in appendix C) of those competencies that are included in your job competency profile.

For each of the competencies highlighted on your worksheet, complete the following steps:

1. Refer to the OPM competency model and review the behaviors. Also refer to your position description for your role specific competencies per the discussion with your supervisor.

2. Ask yourself which of those behaviors you demonstrate consistently *and* get good results with. If you consistently demonstrate those behaviors mark *Meet Benchmark*. If you do not consistently demonstrate those behaviors then mark *Below Benchmark*. See examples below.

3. Complete Steps 1 and 2 for the remainder of the competencies in your profile.

4. In the "Comments on Strengths/Developmental Needs" provide some comment on your next steps. For example, how do you plan to use and further develop your strengths? How do you plan to focus on areas of need?

EXAMPLE

Problem Solving	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies and analyzes problems.	X		I have trouble isolating the issue. I will spend more time identifying the problem.
B. Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions.		X	
C. Provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.	X		I need to speak up when I have ideas and solutions that will benefit the organization.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Customer Service	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Balancing interests of a variety of clients, readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands.	X		I have trouble establishing priorities and tend to be reactive rather than proactive. I will learn more about the work process and how this impacts my service to my customers.
B. Anticipates and meets the need of clients.	X		I will get to know the needs of my customers better through the use of a survey.
C. Achieves quality end-products.		X	
D. Is committed to continuous improvement of services.		X	I will demonstrate this commitment by continually monitoring output and seeking customer input.

Benchmarking Performance

Performance measures are the yardsticks used to determine how well employees produced or provided products or services. To develop specific measures of performance, you first must determine the general measures that apply. Once you determine the general and specific measures, you will be able to develop the standard of performance.

Quality addresses how well the employee performed the work and/or the accuracy or effectiveness of the final product. Quality refers to accuracy, appearance, usefulness, or effectiveness. Quality measures can include error rates (such as the number or percentage of errors allowable per unit of work) and customer satisfaction rates (determined through a customer survey).

Quantity addresses how much work the employee produced. Quantity measures are expressed as a number of products produced or services provided, or as a general result to achieve.

Timeliness addresses how quickly, when, or by what date the employee produced the work.

Cost-effectiveness addresses dollar savings or cost control for the Government. Cost-effectiveness measures may include such aspects of performance as maintaining or reducing unit costs, reducing the time it takes to produce or provide a product or service, or reducing waste.

Developing specific measures

To develop specific measures, you first must determine the general measure(s) that are important (i.e., quantity, quality, timeliness, or cost-effectiveness). Then, determine how to measure the quantity, quality, timeliness, and/ or cost-effectiveness. If you can measure an accomplishment with numbers, record the form of measurement. If you can only describe performance (i.e., observe and verify), clarify who will appraise the performance and the factors they will appraise.

The kinds of questions you should ask in this process include the following.

Decide which general measures apply:

- Is quality important? Does the stakeholder or customer care how well the work is done?
- Is quantity important? Does the stakeholder or customer care how many are produced?

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

- Is it important to accomplish it by a certain time or date?
- Is it important to accomplish it within certain cost limits?
- What measures are already available?

For each general measure, ask:

- How could [quality, quantity, timeliness, and/ or cost-effectiveness] be measured?
- Is there some number or percent that could be tracked?

If the element does not lend itself to being measured with numbers and can only be described, ask:

- Who could judge that the element was done well?
- What factors would they look for?

Write down or otherwise record the specific measures. If the measure is numeric, list the units that you will track. If the measure is descriptive, identify the judge and list the factors that the judge will look for to observe and verify performance.

Develop Standards

A measurement of “meeting expectations” or an equivalent standard needs to be established. If the measure is numeric, determine the range of numbers that would represent “meeting expectations” or equivalent performance.

If the measure is descriptive, determine what the appraiser would see or report that would verify that performance is meeting expectations. If growth goals are desired, determine what exceeding expectations would look like. Describe what the appraiser would see happening when expectations are exceeded.

Monitor Performance

Conduct ongoing observations and measurements to track performance and provide ongoing feedback about performance.

Things to Consider

- Are the performance expectations quantifiable, observable and/or verifiable?
- Are the performance standards attainable? Are expectations reasonable?
- Are the standards challenging? Fair? Applicable?
- Does the employee understand what is required?
- Is the “meeting expectations” standard surpassable? Is it possible for the employee to exceed it?

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Step 3: Gather Feedback from Others

An important option in your assessment journey is finding out whether your perceptions about yourself are consistent with what your supervisor, peers, clients or people who work for you have to say. But how exactly can you get this kind of feedback and make it a constructive and useful tool for your career management?

To start you on the right track, it's helpful to understand why feedback from these groups is important. Why would you want to gather feedback?

- To ensure that your perceptions based on self-assessment are in alignment with those of others.
- To develop individual competencies that will enhance skill sets required for your job that actively contribute to departmental goals.

Who could you approach?

- Supervisor
- Peers
- Clients
- Team members
- Direct reports
- Stakeholders

What kinds of things should you be asking these people?

- Observations related to your competencies and behaviors
- Use of new skills from your learning plan
- Questions should be linked to the OPM Competency Model.

When is feedback successful? When it:

- provides job related feedback,
- is easy to use and understand,
- translates into action, and
- is reliable, based on standardized questions (i.e. using feedback forms to ensure you are asking each person the same questions).

What other things should I keep in mind throughout this process?

- Rule of Thumb: The people that you choose to give you feedback should know you well enough to be able to provide you with relevant feedback. You may choose people like your supervisor who have observed a broad range of your behaviors and skills, or you may approach someone you have worked with on a narrower scope who can provide feedback on one or two competency areas.
- You may receive more effective feedback if you gather the data on a confidential basis.
- Not all competencies are related to every job. It may be beneficial to have a discussion with your supervisor or manager about which competencies are most related to your job, and gather feedback in those areas.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

How do I get started?

If you choose to embark on this process, it may be useful to use a feedback form found in appendix C. This form will need to be customized to accommodate the competencies, skills and behaviors that are related to your job.

Things to Consider

The following model illustrates the challenges associated with feedback. The material has been drawn from two sources. The model titled "Common Reactions to Feedback" was developed by Lester E. Smith Ed.D, and the remainder was adapted from the book The Lessons of Experience, How Successful Executives Develop on the Job by Morgan W. McCall, Michael M. Lombardo and Ann M. Morrison.

Each of us has a choice: We can either face shortcomings or avoid them altogether.

If we avoid, we may:

- Wait for a catastrophe to reveal weakness;
- Sooner or later encounter a big mistake;
- Sooner or later experience a missed promotion, negative appraisal, demotion or termination.

If we face we:

- Actively pursue an accurate portrait of self;
- Jump into new situations;
- Dig for information;
- Seek feedback from others;
- Are introspective.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

For those who choose to find out about areas for improvement, the feedback can sometimes be unpleasant, unexpected and unwelcome. Common reactions to feedback include:

Common Reactions to Feedback

DISBELIEF
HURT
DISAPPOINTMENT
ANGER

Our reaction and behavior choices include:

Take it **Personally**
Reject it….
- Deny
- Distort
- Attack
- Withdraw

Resist Change
- No learning
- No insight
- No improvement

Defensive behavior strengthened
- Self defeating

Take it **Professionally**
Accept it…
- Engage
- Analyze
- Discuss
- Understand

Commit to change
- New learning
- New insight
- Improvement

Self fulfilling behavior strengthened
Self development

You have a choice to either accept responsibility for the feedback or deny the information and message you receive. You should diagnose the areas for improvement and shortcomings identified. Are these shortcomings the result of:

- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of experience
- Lack of skills

Or are these shortcomings the result of:

- Personality
- Limited ability
- Situational misfit

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

The next step is to examine what to do about it. Again, you can choose to ignore the feedback or address the challenge in one of the following ways:

- Build New Strengths by finding situations where learning new things is essential and by finding ways to get help and support while learning.
- Anticipate Situations by asking dumb questions, seeking advice and counsel, spending time learning and using others' expertise.
- Change Self through intensive counseling and coaching, by personally changing effort and by changing just enough to get by.
- Compensate by avoiding certain situations, delegating to others, choosing staff to cover weakness or changing the situation.

For more information on feedback, see the Developmental Tools section.

See Appendix C for the Feedback Form.

Step 4: Organizational Assessment

Organizational Needs

Organizational factors to be considered include:

- strategic plans
- linkages to Government Performance & Results Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-62)
- Bureau plans
- program plans
- office work plans
- new legislation
- top management priorities
- results of program operational reviews and recommendations for areas of improvement
- the prospect of new or revised programs and work methods or techniques
- the supervisor's own assessment of his/her subordinates' abilities.
- Types of behaviors and skills the Department and your Bureau/office are reinforcing
- Strategic direction of your department. Are there changes taking place within the organization that may impact your learning and development priorities?
- What external changes could effect the organization? (changing demographics of stakeholders, including number, values, resources)
- changing rules and regulations; expectations and resources from customers, management, etc.;
- future business trends, especially those concerning your occupation or cone and what behaviors and skills will be needed?

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Step 5: Identifying Your Goals

(adapted from Mindtools.com)

Whenever you achieve something worthwhile you have probably either consciously or subconsciously realized a goal. Goals are useful as they keep you focused on your specific purpose. They can act as reminders, incentives or as steps that can assist you in doing the things you want to do.

The Purpose?

Goal setting is used widely; it is used by top-level athletes, business-people and high achievers in all fields. Goal setting can also be a more formal process for career and personal planning. The process of setting goals and targets for your career allows you to:

- Stay focused on your objective
- Decide what is important for you to achieve in your life and to start, step-by-step, achieving these goals.
- Be in control of where you go in life. By reflecting on and then recording exactly what you want to achieve, you know what you have to concentrate on to do it.
- Separate what is important from what is irrelevant. Goal setting helps you work out what not to concentrate on, what decisions to choose in relation to your goals and it keeps you focused away from distractions.
- Motivate yourself to achievement. It gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation. It focuses your acquisition of knowledge and helps you to organize your resources.
- Track and record your progress and achievements.
- Increase your self-confidence as you develop your level of competence in achieving your goals. This is very important, as self-confidence is critically important during the job searching process and many organizations place a high value on this quality.

How to Begin Setting Goals

You can create goals on several levels. You can create larger scale, overarching goals related to your personal and career wants and needs. You can then create sub-goals and tasks under different areas of the larger goals. You can also create short, medium and long-term goals. Once you have stated and recorded your goals, you can break them down into the smaller targets and tasks that will take you towards your long-term goals. Once you have a plan, you start working towards achieving it.

Goals should have the following qualities:

1. *Specific and Measurable*: Set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. What exactly will you be doing when you achieve your goal? When specifically will you do it? Who else, in particular will be there? If you do this, you will know exactly when you have achieved the goal and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.
2. *Observable*: defined as an action. You should be able to 'take a picture of yourself doing it and set definable limits so that you know when and whether you have completed the goal or not.
3. *Small Steps*: A goal can be broken down into small observable steps. Each step should be observable and specific. A series of mini-goals to attempt one-by-one. This helps to clarify the reality you face. (A question you could ask yourself is "what is the smallest goal I can set that would give me some sense of progress and accomplishment?").
4. *Important and beneficial to you personally*.
5. *Focus on the presence rather than the absence of something*.
6. A *beginning* rather than an end.
7. *Realistic and Achievable* within the context of your life: Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger ones.
8. *Include time lines and target dates*. Time lines can provide motivation for you to continue working until the

problem is solved. They also place limits on how long you are willing to wait for an active response to your efforts.

9. *Prioritized*: When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
10. *A challenge*: they may be hard work, but are personally worth achieving. Just as it is important not to set goals unrealistically high, do not set them too low. People tend to do this where they are afraid of failure or where they are lazy! You should set goals so that they are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them.

Career Goal Setting Plan

The following table provides you with a simple outline of the factors you may want to consider and identify when setting and analyzing your goals.

Career Goal(s) (Define and write them down in order of priority)	**Benefits and Advantages of achieving this goal** (Listing these may help to motivate you)	**Key Steps I Need to Take**	**When Will I do This** (Record deadlines)	**Support and Resources** (What support and from whom do I need, what resources, e.g. time, money, contacts)	**Outcomes and Reflection** (Record whether you achieved the goal and what worked or did not work along the way)

What do I do once I've achieved my goals?

by the Beginners Guide Staff (www.beginnersguide.com)

First, enjoy the feeling of success. You've worked hard to achieve that goal, so give yourself a big pat on the back for a job well done.

Now, it's time to reflect on the steps you took to reach that goal. You may use the Goal Achievement worksheet in the appendix or write down:

- What worked well for you?
- What steps didn't work so well? Why?
- What will you do differently with your next goals?
- Was your goal too hard, or not hard enough?
- How do you feel now that you've achieved the goal? Is this what you really wanted?

Next, it's time to think about your next goals. Review the ones you already have in place, and think about those goals you've yet to set. Do the next goals:

- Need to be harder?
- Need to be easier?
- Need to be shorter?
- Need to be longer?
- Need to be changed to better fit your life plan?

Also, do you need more resources before you start your next goals? And do you need to insert a few intermediary goals to better help you get to your next goals, now that you've thought through one goal already? If you need to change your goals, that's OK. Just make sure you're changing them because you've changed as a person or because you need more realistic goals. But don't drop goals just because you don't want to put in the work or because you've decided to give up. Keep reaching for those goals, one step at a time.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Step 6: Creating an Individual Development Plan

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a learning plan, an action plan and a roadmap to reaching your developmental goals. It supports current and future needs of an organization as well as current and future needs of employees. It addresses enhancing current knowledge and skills, and developing knowledge and skills for the future.

SELF DEVELOPMENT *As a Problem Solving Process* Recycle this process continually. Always have a current development plan.	
Know What You Want to Happen ▪ Set Career Goals/Aspirations ▪ Set Performance Goals/Standards	**THE DESIRED**
Know What is Happening ▪ Get Regular Feedback	**THE ACTUAL**
Analyze Feedback ▪ Strengths/Areas for Improvement	**ACTUAL COMPARED TO DESIRED**
Need To Leverage/Improve ▪ Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes	**IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES/ GAPS**
Develop Plans to Accomplish Improvement ▪ Set Goals ▪ Develop Action Plans	**TREAT CAUSES**
Implement Plans	**REALISTIC MEASURABLE ACHIEVABLE**
Review Progress/Evaluate Results ▪ Get Feedback	**ON-GOING PROCESS**

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Supervisor-Employee Discussion

The IDP is a joint effort by the employee and the supervisor. The supervisor has insight into the current job performance and can offer suggestions on how to enhance skills in specific areas. This is also an opportunity for the supervisor to learn about employee goals and how they see themselves in the organization. The discussion should include:

- Information on where the employee's skills fit into the organization and what the organizational needs are in the future.
- Another perspective on how the employee's skills are viewed - strengths and weaknesses and where they are valued right now.
- An explanation to the employee's supervisor of their interests and goals. The supervisor may not realize everything an employee is interested in or how carefully they have gone through the self-assessment process.

Identify and Prioritize Development Needs

- Based upon the information gathered, what are your development needs (weaknesses to improve or strengths to build upon)?
- What are the gaps between where you are and where you want to be?
- Which development needs, if addressed, would provide you with the most benefit toward improving your current performance and attaining your future work goals?

Development Activities

- What development experiences will allow you to develop and demonstrate your targeted behaviors and skills?
- How will you measure the results?
- Do you have a mentor or coach to help you?
- Have you considered all the different kinds of development activities as outlined in this guide?

So now that you are more aware of some of the developmental options available to you, it's time to make a decision. It's a good idea to take a step-by-step approach – developing alternatives, evaluating those alternatives for the best fit and making a choice. Working through this process in a systematic way and using the Decision Making Worksheet in Appendix C may make it easier.

Create a Written Plan and Initiate Training/Development Requests

Write a draft plan listing your needs and development actions and be sure to include target time frames for completion. Discuss the plan with your peers, direct reports, supervisor, mentor, career counselor, etc. Revise it as needed. Initiate and process any training requests, schedule time for individual developmental projects, negotiate formal developmental activities.

A Development Planning worksheet can be found in Appendix C.

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Implementation

Refer Frequently

Review needs, goals, and scheduled development activities frequently. One suggestion is to keep your IDP in your daily planner so you can refer to it frequently.

Seek Feedback and Coaching

Seek opportunities to use what you learned back on the job.

Involve your supervisor and coworkers in the implementation phase to get feedback & coaching.

Keep a Written Report

Record your development activities in a learning journal, including training and education (keep certificates), projects, etc., for reference in future development planning and for resume data.

Back to Step One Assessment

Now that you have been through the entire process it is time to assess where you are again. Look at how you did with the actual process as you assess and determine if you need to modify it to be more effective for you.

Assess Results of Your Development Plan

- How did I do?
- What did I achieve in my prior development plan?
- What caused me to miss some targets and what helped me reach others?

Do a Process Check

- Were my expectations reasonable yet challenging?
- Did my goals and objectives add value to the organization?
- How often did I review my development plan?
- How often did I seek feedback from my supervisor and others regarding my progress?
- What types of development activities were most beneficial to me (i.e., FSI courses, college courses, projects, behavioral/habit changes, mentoring, professional literature, etc.)?

Reassess

- Do changes in my personal or professional life impact my goals?
- Have I modified my goals, objectives and plans as appropriate?

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Networking

Networking is the art of sharing ideas, know-how, experience, stories, and the discipline and values of a particular career field with others. It is a reciprocal relationship that helps those who share a "community of practice" to tap into each other's insight, experience, and accomplishments. Networking, in this particular meaning of the term, is not as much a career exploration skill as a critical life-long management habit. It is a skill that stimulates ideas, perspectives, and breakthrough actions in our work, and because of this it is a skill that is likely to be a profound influence on our success and full engagement in what we do. Networking also becomes an important source of recognition, encouragement, and new career opportunities.

Myths About Networking

Myth: *I am not outgoing enough to network effectively.*
Truth: The kind of networking that is most useful in career development and professional success is based on the fact that two or more people have experience, information, professional information, and interesting stories in common. All people, both introverted and extroverted, can learn to enjoy the kind of story sharing that occurs in networking.

Myth: *People who are good at networking are lucky that talking with strangers is easy for them.*
Truth: Networking for resources and information makes everyone who does it nervous and a little at a loss at times. Networking is not a skill you are born with; it is a learned habit picked up from others and from practice. It can become a fairly comfortable habit for anyone once they learn what is involved and how useful it is to their success and satisfaction.

Myth: *If I want others to see me as an expert and successful in my line of work, I have to achieve my success on my own. I don't want others to think I can't do my work without the input of others. I want to be a success on my own knowledge, experience, and abilities.*
Truth: Tapping the expertise and experience of others through the ongoing habit of sharing knowledge and experience has nothing to do with becoming a success on your own. No one person can know it all, and the know-how that is available in today's high technology world is far too complex for one person to master all they need to know on their own. When we tap others' experience and expertise, adding that know-how to your own experience and insights, the judgments and solutions you explore become far greater than what we might have constructed on our own.

Myth: *I really don't have time to network with others and to maintain all those contacts.*
Truth: The facts are clear on this: If you care about the kind of success that keeps your work life challenging and provides you with new opportunities, you will become an effective bridge to knowledge and experience resources beyond your own context. The fewer connections you have, the more likely your career is to stagnate and become unsatisfying. The more effective and extensive your professional network, the more likely you are to experience upward mobility and to find the development you need. A strong network also frequently eliminates the need for traditional job searches. Dynamic and well-maintained networks carry with them access to opportunities that you will not see on your own.

Keys to Networking

Clarify the expertise around which you want to build a network of shared experience and know-how.
What is your area of professional responsibility? What professional practices, skills, expertise, are involved in your line of work? What are your personal interests and commitments within your line of work? What responsibilities, commitments, or outcomes about which you would like to compare notes, share practices, experiences, and insights with other professionals?

Getting Started on the Developmental Process

Research all the fields in which the professional practice you are interested in building is used and identify anyone who appears to have some expertise in that practice.
Where am I likely to find the best practitioners of this professional skill/tool? Of the other professionals I already know, to whom would they refer me on this subject or practice? Where could I find information and articles on this subject? Where else in my profession do other professionals assume responsibility for the same or similar functions? Read everything you can find on the subject.
Research information relevant to your areas of interest and involve yourself in as many different experiences as you can where you apply what you have learned. As you read about your area of interest or commitment, make notes for yourself on who is being quoted or who is writing about the issues that you care about most. Your own knowledge and thinking about what you want to learn from others is a powerful way to demonstrate that you share values and interests with them.

Plan your communications strategy as you are building your network, so that you are not fumbling around for things to say as you talk with others in your field. Some of the most important communications skills you want to employ include: a 60-second summary of who you are, what you are interested in discussing, and why.
Plan and practice a specific brief presentation that only takes about 60 seconds to relate to others. This presentation should express your interests and commitments that might be shared by others you want to get to know in an interesting way. Outline what kind of information you are looking for. What kind of know-how would you like to benefit from? What do you want to compare notes on? What trends do you care about? What do you care to know about who's who in your particular area of interest? Practice talking with people you have never met before. When you are at conferences or meetings, make it a habit to introduce yourself and to try to find common interests with those you are meeting. If this is very difficult for you, watch someone you know who is comfortable with meeting people they don't know and establishing a connection, listen to what they say, and then try it with people who agree to help you.

Is There a Danger in Networking Related to Giving Up Sensitive Information?

Many Department of State professionals engage in research and analysis in a variety of disciplines and areas of interest to the Department. If this is so for you, you may find it useful professionally to become aware of who else shares those issues and interests and tap into as much of their experience and expertise as possible. Sharing of this kind of proprietary knowledge capital need not compromise sensitive information. While remaining sensitive to what can and cannot be shared, there are many kinds of information that can be shared, such as, approaches, points of view, positions, experiences, etc. Networking does not have to compromise sensitive information, and it is an individual's responsibility to know what that means.

Organizing a Network

Organizing a plan for effective resource networking begins with the questions, "Who has the kind of know-how and experience that would ideally relate to my own abilities and know-how?" "Who shares my particular interests and perspectives, my values and priorities?" Within an organization it is pretty easy to simply ask the people you know already who they think you would want to network with. Outside the organization you may have to get more creative about identifying the best people with whom to network. You might want to remember that having contacts and people you can use as sounding boards and information sources should come from every level of responsibility in your organization.

Resource networks that are one-dimensional are less useful to you over the long haul than a network of resource contacts that are highly diverse and with varied perspectives on the work to be accomplished. Top leaders are likely to share with you that a part of their ability to guide the organization through change and achievement was their access to information from every corner and level of the organization.

Outside the organization, you are most likely to learn about who might be a dynamic addition to your network of know-how through some of these sources:

- Reading periodicals and newspapers
- Suggestions and referrals from people you already know
- People you meet or who stand out at conferences and meetings
- People who are known to share some of your interests and commitments
- Happenstance meetings while traveling or on public transportation, etc.
- People you meet at church or at a community meeting
- Friends of friends of friends

Once you get your network established and you work at maintaining the network, it will grow automatically because you are nurturing and feeding it. As your network grows, structure your interaction with the network in some regular way – e.g., periodic group meetings, or scheduled phone or email contact – so that you and your resource contacts become familiar parts of the network memory. The idea is that when something in your network happens of particular interest, you want to be included in information about the turn of events or new information available. As well, when others in your network have a need to share or collaborate with you because of your unique location, accomplishments, or role, you want them to feel free to contact you. It is in this kind of open communication situation that you will gain the most from your resource network.

Informational Interviews

What is Informational Interviewing?

Informational interviewing involves meeting professionals in a particular field to discuss their skills, background and career path, as well as insights they may have on the state of the field. Informational interviewing is a great developmental tool for you to learn more about a field, agency, bureau, or a particular office or position. An informational interview is one that you initiate—you ask the questions. The purpose is to gather advice, information, referrals and support. It is a way for you to gain an insider's perspective on what it is like to work in the field of interest, but it never entails asking for a job!

Some people think of informational interviewing as something you do when you are looking for a new job or career. But informational interviewing can, and should be, a lifelong career management skill. It is a powerful networking tool when you use it throughout your career, whether you are in transition or not. For example, if you are new to a position or a field, it can be used as a great way to get to know your colleagues and the field better. If you are established in a field, you can use it to stay abreast of your field or to know about future alternatives for your career path. And lastly, when you are considering changing jobs or careers, you can use it to gather important information in order to make an informed career decision.

Why conduct Informational Interviews?

Informational interviews allow you to gather valuable information for career exploration and can help you clarify career goals. It also helps you uncover previously unknown areas and the 'hidden job market" of potential job leads that may not be advertised. You can use it to learn about the important issues and jargon in a field of interest. But most importantly, it will enlarge your network of contacts. What you will find is that the more informational interviews you do, the more your network will grow. And it's your network that will most likely inform you about future job opportunities.

Guidelines for Informational Interviews

- **Identify the field, agency, bureau or position that you want to learn about.**
  This involves assessing your own interests, abilities, values, skills and personality. If you need help with this, seek the advice of a career counselor in the Career Development Resource Center. If you need more information about a particular position or field, use the Internet to browse job descriptions or to identify professional associations and trade magazines.

- **Decide what type of information you want to obtain.**
  Whether you are considering entering a completely new career field or just simply trying to determine the political ways and means to navigate an organization, your first step is to determine what it is that you need to know most (i.e., career options, leadership strategies, unwritten rules of the organization, etc.)

- **Identify people to interview.**
  Ask colleagues, former supervisors, mentors, family members and friends if they know anyone who is working in your field of interest. Consider joining a professional organization like YPro or Blacks in Government, or attend a seminar, reception or conference. Consider volunteering to help plan, publicize, or run an upcoming program. If you assume a leadership role, you will make yourself stand out from the crowd.

Arranging for Informational Interviews

Successful informational interviewing requires that you present yourself professionally and follow common business courtesies. Consider the following questions to select the right way to approach someone for an informational interview:

- *How comfortable am I speaking on the phone to someone I do not know?*
- *What type of communication is the person most likely to respond to, e-mail or phone calls?*
- *What is the person's role at the organization?*
- *Would it be best to talk in person?*

Contact the individual by phone, email or letter.
Introduce yourself and explain why you want to meet with them and the type of information you want to obtain. If someone referred you, mention the referral's name.

Be direct and state clearly that you are looking for advice or information, not asking for a job.
By using words such as "research," "exploration," or "advice," you will communicate this to your contact. Acknowledge the value of the other person's time and ask for a 20-30 minute meeting.

Preparing for Informational Interviews

Your ability to make a positive first impression is influenced by how well you prepare.

- **Send your resume in advance of meeting.**
  When you send a reminder to the person about your meeting, you could forward a copy of your résumé to them. Attach a note indicating that you are sending your resume for them to get a sense of your background before the informational interview.

- **Do your research.**
  Learn as much as you can about the organization and the individual with whom you will meet. Remember you want to use the meeting to obtain information you can't get from the Internet or other sources.

- **Write or type up questions you will ask.**
  Prioritize your questions so that you know beforehand the most important information you want to obtain.

Sample Questions for an Informational Interview

- *How did you get into your current position?*
- *How did you get into this line of work?*
- *What has been your career path?*
- *What was your academic preparation?*
- *Have you made a career change? If yes, how did you make it?*
- *Would you make the same career choice again? Why or why not?*
- *What knowledge, skills or experience are necessary to qualify for your position?*
- *What skills do you need to be successful in this field?*
- *What is your typical day like? What do you find most rewarding about your work?*
- *What problems or frustrations do you encounter in your work?*
- *What do you like most/least about working in this Bureau?*
- *What challenges do the organization as a whole face? What is being done to solve these challenges?*
- *What trends do you see for this field in the next 3-5 years? What kind of future do you see for this organization or Bureau?*
- *What are the current buzzwords in this field?*
- *How is your organization structured?*
- *Who are the important "players" in this organization that I should know about? (Be sure to include informal leaders, not just higher ups.)*
- *What are the important initiatives or projects affecting this office?*
- *What are the most important issues affecting this field, office or Bureau?*
- *What are the important factors used to hire people in this field (e.g., education, past experience, personality, special skills)?*
- *Is turnover high here? Do people move throughout the Bureau?*

Developmental Tools

Job Shadowing

Learning About Careers Through Observation

There's plenty of information out there about potential careers. But impersonal descriptions can't match the realism of actually watching someone do a job for a few hours or days.

It's called shadowing, and it's an excellent way to learn about careers and make valuable professional contacts. Shadowing involves going to someone's workplace for a day or part of a day to observe the routine -- and not-so routine -- events of their jobs.

Setting It All Up

Ask friends, colleagues, people you've worked with on past jobs or internships, and anyone else if they can put you in touch with someone who does the sort of work you might like to do. Call or write to those people explaining that you are considering pursuing a career in their field and would like to visit their workplace to help you make your career decision. Politely ask if you can spend a day observing them at work. Be respectful of their time and offer to visit whenever it's convenient for them.

Be a Good Shadow

Below are some general rules to keep in mind on your visit to their office:

- **Always show up unless you have a very good reason for not doing so.** People often rearrange their schedules to accommodate you and may even plan special events for your visit. This is one of your first opportunities to project a professional identity, so you want to show that you have your act together.
- **Dress appropriately.** Your attire should be appropriate for the environment.
- **Be attentive throughout your entire time together.** Even if you realize the job would never interest you, remain positive. Don't say, 'This job seems boring. How do you do it every day?'
- **Address your host formally unless told otherwise.**
- **Turn off your cell phone.**
- **Be considerate and courteous.** Though you are there to observe, give the person you're shadowing some space from time to time throughout the day. Use your common sense and offer to excuse yourself if it sounds like the person you're shadowing could use some privacy for a phone call or meeting.
- **Introduce yourself with confidence.** You will most likely meet a number of people on your shadowing day. Always give a firm handshake, look the other person in the eyes, and state your name clearly. Also, get in the habit of asking for business cards from people you meet so you can contact them in the future.
- **Follow up with a thank-you note or email to everyone who spent any time with you.** It is helpful to take notes during the day to keep track of who discussed or did anything with you. Also, thank whoever helped you arrange the shadowing day.

Shadowing is an important reality test that should be a part of your career planning process; so try to schedule as many of these visits as you can. The more work situations you experience, the less chance you'll make a big career mistake down the line. Shadowing can give you an accurate picture of the good, the bad and the ugly sides of jobs you're considering. It can also help you develop contacts that can be great sources for future job leads.

Feedback

How To Receive Feedback With Grace and Dignity

(Susan M. Heathfield, Your Guide to Human Resources)

Interested in hearing about how others view your work? Make it easy for them to tell you. If they think you'll appreciatively consider their feedback, you'll get lots more. And, that is good, really.

Here's How:

1. Try to control your defensiveness. Fear of hurting you or having to deal with defensive or justifying behavior make people hesitant to give feedback to another person.
2. Listen to understand. Practice all the skills of an effective listener including using body language and facial expressions that encourage the other person to talk.
3. Try to suspend judgment. After all, in learning the views of the feedback provider, you learn about yourself and how your actions are interpreted in the world.
4. Summarize and reflect what you hear. Your feedback provider will appreciate that you are really hearing what they are saying. You are ascertaining that you 'are' really hearing.
5. Ask questions to clarify. Focus on questions to make sure you understand the feedback.
6. Ask for examples and stories that illustrate the feedback, so you know you share meaning with the person providing feedback.
7. Just because a person gives you feedback, doesn't mean their feedback is right. They see your actions but interpret them through their own perceptual screen and life experiences.
8. Be approachable. People avoid giving feedback to grumpies. Your openness to feedback is obvious through your body language, facial expressions, and welcoming manner.
9. Check with others to determine the reliability of the feedback. If only one person believes it about you, it may be just him or her, not you.
10. Remember, only you have the right and the ability to decide what to do with the feedback.

Tips:

1. Try to show your appreciation to the person providing the feedback. They'll feel encouraged and believe it or not, you do want to encourage feedback.
2. Even your manager or supervisor finds providing feedback scary. They never know how the person receiving feedback is going to react.
3. If you find yourself becoming defensive or hostile, practice stress management techniques such as taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly.
4. Focusing on understanding the feedback by questioning and restating usually defuses any feelings you have of hostility or anger.
5. If you really disagree, are angry or upset, and want to dissuade the other person of their opinion, wait until your emotions are under control to reopen the discussion.

How To Provide Feedback That Has an Impact

Make your feedback have the impact it deserves by the manner and approach you use to deliver feedback. Your feedback can make a difference to people if you can avoid a defensive response.

Here's How:

1. Effective feedback is specific, not general. (Say, "The report you turned in yesterday was well-written, understandable, and made your points about the budget very effectively." Don't say, "good report.")
2. Effective feedback always focuses on a specific behavior, not on a person or their intentions. (When you held competing conversations during the meeting, when Mary had the floor, you distracted the people in attendance.)
3. The best feedback is sincerely and honestly provided to help. Trust me, people will know if they are receiving it for any other reason.

4. Successful feedback describes actions or behavior that the individual can do something about.
5. Whenever possible, feedback that is requested is more powerful. Ask permission to provide feedback. Say, "I'd like to give you some feedback about the presentation, is that okay with you?"
6. Effective feedback involves the sharing of information and observations. It does not include advice unless you have permission or advice was requested.
7. Effective feedback is well timed. Whether the feedback is positive or constructive provide the information as closely tied to the event as possible.
8. Effective feedback involves what or how something was done, not why. Asking why is asking people about their motivation and that provokes defensiveness.
9. Check to make sure the other person understood what you communicated by using a feedback loop, such as asking a question or observing changed behavior.
10. Effective feedback is as consistent as possible. If the actions are great today, they're great tomorrow. If the policy violation merits discipline, it should always merit discipline.

Tips:

1. Feedback is communication to a person or a team of people regarding the effect their behavior is having on another person, the organization, the customer, or the team.
2. Positive feedback involves telling someone about good performance. Make this feedback timely, specific, and frequent.
3. Constructive feedback alerts an individual to an area in which his performance could improve. Constructive feedback is not criticism; it is descriptive and should always be directed to the action, not the person.
4. The main purpose of constructive feedback is to help people understand where they stand in relation to expected and/or productive job behavior.
5. Recognition for effective performance is a powerful motivator. Most people want to obtain more recognition, so recognition fosters more of the appreciated actions.

360 Degree Feedback

This form of feedback, also called multi-rater feedback or panoramic feedback, depends on evaluations from those all around you hence, the name 360-degree. This evaluation style doesn't just rely on a superior who judges your performance, but also draws in observations, opinions, and ratings from coworkers, subordinates, internal customers, external customers, and pretty much anyone who has contact with you regularly in a professional setting.

The benefits of 360 Degree Feedback are:

- Understanding how others perceive you will help you work on areas you need to improve. You can't improve without knowing your weaknesses. And yes, everyone has them!
- Feedback from everyone, not just your boss, gives a more rounded view of the real you. Each person you interact with sees a little part of you. Only when pieced together can a complete picture of you appear. Be grateful for the additional feedback; the good one person sees might counterbalance the negative another perceives.
- Getting feedback regularly gives you a chance to adjust and regroup, leading to a better performance in your job, and a better career overall—as long as you do something with the information other than seethe if it's less than what you expected.

Developmental Tools

Storytelling

Leaders and Stories: Growing the Next Generation, Conveying Values, and Shaping Character

*Adapted from an article by **Ray Blunt,** The Public Manager*

The Lessons of Example and Experience

First, we know through benchmarking, that in the organizations that have a track record for growing leaders of character and capability, it is senior leaders, themselves (not the training shops or human resources offices), who assume the responsibility for preparing the next generation.

Second, we know that leaders are grown not by the lessons of the "classroom" but by the lessons of experience--lessons gleaned from challenging and varied job experiences and from significant relationships built with senior leaders (both good and bad). It is through these impact experiences and significant relationships that practical leadership capability is learned and where character is observed and shaped in the crucible of reality.

We also know that senior leaders in the "best practice" organizations have beneficially employed at least one common thread that ties together these two absolutely fundamental principles: the lessons of experience and significant relationships with senior leaders.

Stories

There is no doubt about it, stories are both heart warming and memorable. But perhaps what we don't understand is why we are able to remember favorite stories so well and why they are one of the most useful tools for leaders to have in their toolkits.

I believe that we probably don't appreciate the tremendous value of stories in developing leadership, nor do we realize how many meaningful leadership stories we have that are just waiting to be told. Storytelling isn't a gift reserved for the imaginative few.

How Stories Are Used

What is being rediscovered is what cultures have known for millennia--stories are a powerful, indeed irreplaceable method used by vibrant organizations and superior leaders.

In the "best practice" organizations, senior leaders use stories to shape and to convey strategic plans (3M), to communicate their culture and core character values (Herman Miller), and to grow leaders as senior leaders teach the next generation (PepsiCo). While each of these is interrelated, let's focus on the latter, how stories can be used to help prepare the next generation of leaders.

Finding Stories

A leader's story conveys the lessons of experience--theirs and others Its power is that a story wraps the two central facets of leader learning, character and capability, into a memorable and practical package ripe for action.

In finding your own stories of where you learned to lead, you might want to take a large piece of paper and draw a timeline horizontally through the center. Begin with your earliest remembered childhood days and end with today--the larger proportion being in the working career years. Then both above and below that line, record the highs and the lows of your life and career. What were the events and situations that produced in you the greatest (or least) energy, the most satisfaction, the most disappointment, the greatest challenges, the worst mistakes, the best teamwork, a memorable person, etc.

Use these as a starting point. It is from both the so-called highs and lows of life and work that we draw lessons and form the basis for stories that pass on that learning.

An additional way to go about it is to prime the pump using story "prompts." I have provided 10 basic leader story prompts in the accompanying box, but add your own.

Leadership Story Prompts

- Can you remember a time when you worked for a really lousy boss?
- Can you tell about the first time you ever led a team, a project, or an organization and suddenly realized how much you didn't know?
- Was there ever a time that you felt you failed in a job badly, or perhaps were fired or relieved?
- Did you have a time in your career when you worked with a team that accomplished well beyond what you or anyone may have expected?
- Was there ever anyone early in your life, perhaps a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle that passed on a lesson which you continue to apply to this day?
- Did you ever go through a personal crisis that helped you realize and begin to live out important values that may have been previously obscured to you?
- Did you ever take part in an event where you felt you put your career on the line?
- Were you ever confronted with a choice to live out your values and you made the wrong choice? The right choice and paid a price?
- Was there ever a time you felt you couldn't go on or were about to give up?
- Did you ever do something that no one knew about but which gives you a great sense of accomplishment today?

Recording Your Leadership Stories

Stories have a very clear pattern to them that ensures both learning and interest. The best way to develop stories is, of course, simply to tell them to someone. There is apparently something in the telling and retelling of stories, researchers have found, that allows us deeper understanding and a better memory of the events and the lessons. Telling stories isn't natural to all of us.

A basic format for stories can be a useful means to take a key situation from the "highs and lows" or from a prompt and turn it into a story with lessons for the future. Essentially a story has five parts to it, normally in the following order.

Use this merely as an outline to jot down a few thoughts under each component. It's really not necessary to write it all out. These are connected parts, meant to be told aloud to one person or to a roomful. Try sharing these with another person, using a tape recorder, or just telling yourself the story in your head.

Growing Leaders

What you might want to do is to have several story ideas in mind that you work on from time to time and keep in a spiral notebook. The purpose here is not to form the basis for your novel or for writing your memoirs, but to begin to appreciate with deeper understanding how you as leader have been shaped by the lessons of life. Once we have a deeper understanding of how we have learned to lead, two things will happen.

First, you will begin to see that you not only have learned much, but that you have much to pass on--a leadership legacy if you will. Second, you will begin to observe events and situations that you encounter with more of a “leader’s eye,” a capacity for real insight about what is being learned and how it relates to other “stories” that form “parables” for others. This then leads to living out the role of a leader who grows the next generation: a leader who has a greater commitment and capacity to be a mentor, coach, teacher, and exemplar.

Mentor

To be a mentor is to have a significant relationship, often with a younger person, over a long period of time to help him/her to grow and mature as a person and as a leader. This is a relationship of trust that is built by single bricks of time--lunch, racquetball, walks, and hallway conversations. It is the type of relationship that senior leaders can have with a few people and can even continue beyond retirement. In fact, not being a “boss” may enhance the quality of the trust and the openness of the conversations.

To be a mentor is to be honest about one’s experiences and even failings, not to be a fount of wisdom. Many patterns of life and leadership challenges recur. You will find that the lessons of your leadership stories now can be matched with the challenges of your protégé from time to time as your relationship grows. Also, simply listening isn’t a bad thing to do either. The two basic mentoring questions are something like these: what are your priorities? How can I help you?

Coach

The essence of mentoring lies in the depth and duration of the relationship. The essence of coaching revolves around shared experience. The coach is involved in “the game” with the people s/he is coaching. The coach intentionally and even strategically challenges others to take on experiences that will cause them to grow, to develop skills that may be nascent, and to take risks tempered by coaching questions that allow the protégé to solve the problem on his/her own. A coach will also help an aspiring leader to learn by reflecting on what has happened and giving feedback--good and not so good--and encouragement.

A leader’s stories can come into play for a coach in many situations. For example, almost any planning for a project involves thinking through possible options--stories convey how similar situations played out in your own career. Or, perhaps, there has been a parable, distilled from many stories that you have drawn in leading change or in resolving conflict on a hard-charging team. What are the parables you have come to rely upon?

The reality of uncertainty, difficulty, and even failure, as well as perseverance in the face of opposition and setbacks, are the lessons of experience that can allow others to grow and not give up. Your stories can help set the stage for both realistic learning and perseverance under pressure.

Teacher

Teachers come in all sizes, but few leaders see themselves as “teachers.” Teaching, they often believe, is a role for trainers, the human resource folks, consultants, and gurus. Not leaders. Except that impression is simply dead wrong. The best leaders are not only the best teachers for the next generation. They are the ones who see that what is needed in the “classroom” is practical wisdom that embodies the best of theory. They not only see it, they act on it.

The “best practice” organizations have recognized this. Building on the principles of how adults learn (experientially, practically focused, reality based), these organizations design in-house leadership development programs that maximize this truth by engaging senior leaders as instructors, not tokens. While human resource development types are needed to provide the learning background and the administrative framework, the design of the "curriculum" content is best provided by those in the front lines of leadership. They simply understand better than most what competencies and character qualities are needed for the leaders of the future.

As a "teacher" your stories help to enlarge the understanding of participants. Stories provide an air of reality, and a sense of the nuances of leadership paradox that no text or clever consultant or trainer can provide. You will also find participants more willing to listen to practical wisdom and honest vulnerability, particularly if their learning "curriculum" is action learning: a real team project with the pressures of time and unfamiliarity.

Exemplar

Volumes have been written on leading by example. Suffice to say that when a senior leader turns his calendar around and begins to openly devote more time to the careers of others as a mentor, coach, and teacher, that bespeaks a person of character and commitment to others. One who cares about other people, one who demonstrates a belief in the importance of enhancing the gifts of people, and one whose focus is on the future—this is a leader who helps to grow the next generation.

Serving the Future

The leader who takes it upon himself or herself to invest time and energy in the lives of future leaders is living out what many have called the role of a servant leader. It is only such a leader who can be an effective and sought out mentor, wise coach, and respected teacher and one whose example others will want to follow. This leader doesn't begin by telling stories but by living them. His or her life is the best story.

As one person told me about a leader who had shaped his life: "He left his legacy in the lives of others."

Active Listening

Listen, and Improve Your Performance!

By Kellie Fowler (www.mindtools.com)

The following is a “cheat sheet” that contains an outline covering tried and true suggestions for becoming a more effective listener.

Stop Talking

We start by simply reviewing the basics, the first of which is the most common mistake made when striving to be a more effective listener. Simple as it may seem, the most important thing to remember is to stop talking.

Pay Attention to the Purpose and the Words

Once you’ve done this, commit the time and attention needed to actually hear the sender’s message. In doing this, you may find it most useful, whenever possible, to establish your purpose for listening even before the communication begins. For instance, consider what you want your listening efforts to achieve. This can help ensure the results you (and the person you are listening to) can be obtained.

Eliminate Distractions

Next, concentrate on the message by eliminating internal and external distractions. For instance, if you are listening as a member of a group, work to ensure other members do not enter the meeting last, or exit early - both of which can distract the person speaking, as well as disrupting those listening. And, if you are having a one-on-one meeting with someone, work to eliminate distractions such as phone calls or interruptions from another colleague.

Take Notes Using Shorthand or Key Words Only

While listening, it’s perfectly acceptable to take notes. However, when taking notes, make sure to pay close attention to the non-verbal messages (body language, tone changes, etc) being sent to you by the speaker. Even the best listener will find this difficult. Therefore, when taking notes, write down only key words or phrases, the things you will need to trigger the message instead of writing down complete thoughts or sentences, which can distract you from listening. (Obviously, remember to expand notes afterwards, while the meaning of these key phrases is still fresh in your mind).

Ask Questions

Questions are a vital component of effective listening. Instead of interrupting the speaker, try jotting down a word or two that will help you recall the questions that come to mind while you are listening. Again, this should not interrupt your listening; rather enhance it. This way, when the speaker has finished talking, you have what you need to ask relative, informed questions, which will help ensure you interpret the sender’s message correctly.

“Parroting” is a Must

Parroting, is one of the strongest tools you can use to ensure you are an effective listener. This includes repeating the message back to the sender. This allows the sender of the message to clarify any misunderstandings.

Follow-Up is Key

Once you are reasonably sure you have heard the message and understand the message sender’s intent, you will undoubtedly find it beneficial to follow-up with a written clarification, one that serves to highlight the most important parts of the message, such as deadlines, project goals, costs, concerns, etc. This can be done in a quick email or memo. When doing this, it is most productive to request a reply. This is just one additional step you can take to ensure you heard the message and interpreted it correctly.

Remain Flexible and Observant (before, during and after communication process)
Most importantly, when working to optimize your listening skills, remain flexible and observant. Work to understand the reason the communication is taking place (considering the objectives of the sender, and taking into account any mental, emotional, physical or even environmental or cultural factors that may influence this). Observe the sender and be flexible and open to his or her needs. This may require agreeing on a meeting place that is quiet, or perhaps even neutral (not one of your personal office spaces, but a meeting or conference room) or even on a meeting time outside of the times you normally would attend meetings. For instance, if you know the sender of the message is at his or her best in the morning, consider adjusting your schedule ever so slightly to better accommodate this individual preference.

By taking extra steps such as this, you put the message sender at ease, which will help alleviate any confusion and allow you to hear loud and clear everything the sender is working to convey.

Balance Ensures Effective Listening Success
As always, balance is the key to effective listening. The conversation between the message sender and the message receiver is a delicate dance. And even though your goal may be to simply hear the message, it requires give and take from both parties, from the beginning stages of the communication process down to the last word.

Developmental Tools

Coaching

What is a Coach?

A coach should be an influencing force behind the employee's personal and professional growth - providing on-the-job guidance, promoting participation in training and assisting in career decisions – to cultivate overall development.

At various points in the partnership, a coach may function in any number of roles, including teacher, guide, counselor, motivator, sponsor, coach, advisor, developer and role model. Effective coaches have a responsibility to:

- Provide insight and instruction pertaining to the function and operation of the organization, including pertinent organizational dynamics, goals values future trends and expectations;
- Familiarize the candidate with the resources, including contacts and training, necessary to meet his/her goals;
- Act as unbiased advisor available to discuss skill development needs and provide insights which will help the employee to further develop themselves;
- Coach the employee by providing constructive suggestions for improving work proficiency and productivity.

Practice refines the employee's skills, broadens knowledge and shapes behavior and attitudes. Through experience gained from operational assignments, the employee acquires the confidence and competence needed for increasingly complex and higher level assignments.

Characteristics of a Coach

A successful coach is characterized as supportive, patient and respected. Here are additional characteristics a successful coach should possess.

- People-Oriented
- Secure in Position
- Achiever
- Demonstrates Values and Work Ethic
- Respects Others

Characteristics of Candidates for Coaching

A successful coaching partnership not only depends on the characteristics of the coach, but also on the characteristics of the candidate:

- Eagerness to learn
- Team Player
- Patient
- Risk Taker
- Positive Attitude

Learners – What to do After Learning

Meet with supervisor to review IDP/Action Plan

A meeting with your supervisor after training or a developmental activity is one of the most effective ways to initiate support for transfer of learning. Meet with your supervisor as soon as possible after the training activity ends. Review the goals and objectives and mutual expectations for improvement that you discussed prior to training. Go over each activity in your IDP/Action Plan, the resources and support needed, target completion dates, and expected changes. Brainstorm about how your trainer/supervisor/coworkers can support the transfer of your new skills to the job. Make adjustments to your action plan and establish times for regular progress reviews with your supervisor.

Apply new skills and implement action plan

After discussing your action plan with your supervisor, share it with your coworkers, especially those you have identified to help implement action plan activities. Explain to them that you will be practicing new skills and carrying out special activities as your action plan is implemented. Orient them to any new procedures you will be using and share any materials that might interest them. Explain the activities that will involve your coworkers and ask them to provide the feedback that you need. It is best to have your supervisor present during debriefing sessions with your coworkers to reinforce and show support for your activities.

Post your action plan on the wall or other prominent place and check off activities when you complete them. Be sure to set aside time to review the training content and practice new skills using any job aids provided during training (e.g., flow charts and checklists).

Meet regularly with your supervisor to discuss progress and any constraints to transferring your learning. Work with your supervisor to identify any additional support and resources needed to implement the new skills. Many steps are often necessary to ensure transfer of learning occurs—carefully identify these actions and then follow each one. Implementing your action plan and applying your new skills is a team effort that can only succeed with the cooperation and support of everyone in your organization.

Network with other learners and trainers for support

A support network of learners or a learning buddy can increase the likelihood of transferring learning after training—if there is a commitment to maintaining these relationships. Find ways to continue your contact with other learners through regular meetings, telephone conversations, and visits. You can share experiences in implementing action plans, discuss problems encountered and lessons learned, celebrate successes, and help each other set new goals or revise action plans.

Monitor your own performance

Conduct regular progress checks to help ensure continued transfer of learning. You can monitor your own performance by setting aside time to review your action plan and the feedback or observation data from your supervisor, trainer, and other learners and coworkers. Create a learning journal to keep track of your experiences, the questions you have and barriers you face in applying knowledge and performing skills. Share these notes on a regular basis with your supervisor and seek help in reviewing and updating your action plan.

Supervisors- What to do After Learning

Monitor progress of action plans with learners and revise as needed

Supervisors and learners have invested time and energy in creating IDPs/Action Plans. Now is the time for those efforts to pay off. Meet with the learners to review together the current IDP/Action Plan and make sure that you are in agreement regarding expectations and how and when they will be met. Supervisors and learners can use IDP/Action Plans as a monitoring tool to gauge progress, identify problems, and work on solutions. Routine supervisory meetings are a great time to provide constructive feedback and check learners' progress toward mastering and using their new skills, as well as to ask what more you can do as their supervisor to support the transfer of learning. When necessary, action plans should be revised to correspond with changing needs at the workplace.

Conduct post-training debriefing with learners and coworkers

Supervisors and learners should involve other staff in the workplace in the transfer of learning process by briefing them shortly after the training. This is a good time for you to identify your expectations regarding implementation of action plans and for learners to share what they have learned with their coworkers. Supervisors and learners should set clear objectives for debriefing meetings to make sure that the discussion stays focused. Consider using these meetings for the following purposes:

- **Sharing** with coworkers the key concepts learned during the training.
- **Providing** an opportunity for coworkers to ask the learners questions about the training.
- **Reviewing** the needs assessment findings and discussing how newly acquired knowledge and skills can address current needs in the workplace and be of value to everyone.
- **Brainstorming** on how to integrate newly acquired knowledge and skills into present services.
- **Reviewing** key activities from the learners' action plans and assigning resources to facilitate implementation.

Conducting a post-training debriefing provides an excellent opportunity to update all staff and discuss how the transfer of learning will improve service delivery in the workplace. It is critical that your staff understands the reasons for any new interventions, services, or changes in procedures and knows how to implement them. This is an appropriate time for you to voice your support for the change process and the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Be a coach and role model—provide encouragement and feedback

Encourage and, when possible, coach learners as they incorporate new knowledge and skills into their work. A coach must be able to demonstrate the skill, observe and give feedback, and evaluate learner performance against a standard. If you cannot coach the learners, identify someone with appropriate expertise to provide coaching. Even though you may not be able to coach learners in a particular skill, you can still provide encouragement to help them build their self-confidence and realize their full potential as they master new skills. Encouragement and coaching are very important to the transfer of learning. Below are some specific approaches to consider:

- **Give frequent reinforcement and immediate constructive feedback to learners as they try out new skills.** Voice your support as you observe learners properly implementing newly acquired knowledge and skills by giving immediate positive feedback.
- **Use mistakes as learning opportunities.** When learners make errors while practicing a skill, call the mistakes to their attention in a tactful and appropriate manner. Your comments should describe the specific behavior that you observed; include steps that the learner performed correctly and those that need improvement.
- **Coach learners as they try new skills.** When learners begin practicing skills that are difficult or involve many steps, their skill levels will likely vary—some learners may still be novices while others may be closer to mastery. Offer to assist individual learners in a manner that is appropriate to the degree of progress they have made toward mastering the particular skill. When providing guidance, remember to always point out something that the learner is doing well before you offer suggestions for improvements or ask what the learner perceives he or she is doing well. Very often learners can make appropriate suggestions for self-improvement when given the opportunity to reflect on their performance.
- **Model new skills or behaviors in your work.** To show that you support the changes that learners are implementing, adopt new behaviors along with the learners and their coworkers. Don't expect your staff to make changes if you don't model changes as well.

Evaluation

Evaluate learners' performance

Supervisors can have a significant impact on the transfer of learning by evaluating performance and providing feedback. Discuss with learners the reasons why evaluation is important, emphasizing that the goal is to provide them with feedback so they know how they are doing. Assure learners that you will provide ongoing guidance as well as formal periodic evaluations. It may be appropriate to include these periodic evaluations on the learners' action plan. If you cannot evaluate the learners' performance because you lack the technical expertise, identify someone who can.

When you evaluate learners, review with them the standard for the desired performance that is included in their job description or outlined in procedural guidelines or a skill checklist. Discuss how the standard compares to their present performance—are they failing to meet the standard, meeting the standard, or exceeding the standard? Involving learners in a self-assessment is one way to stimulate this discussion. Remember that evaluations should always include feedback on what learners are doing right.

Evaluating a Developmental Activity/Training

Evaluation is often looked at from four different levels (the "Kirkpatrick levels") listed below:

1) Reaction - What does the learner feel about the training?
2) Learning - What facts, knowledge, etc., did the learner gain?
3) Behaviors - What skills did the learner develop, that is, what new information is the learner using on the job?
4) Results or effectiveness - What results occurred, that is, did the learner apply the new skills to the necessary tasks in the organization and, if so, what results were achieved?

Although level 4, evaluating results and effectiveness, is the most desired result from training, it's usually the most difficult to accomplish. Evaluating effectiveness often involves the use of key performance measures -- measures you can see, e.g., faster and more reliable output from the machine after the operator has been trained, higher ratings on employees' job satisfaction questionnaires from the trained supervisor, etc. This is where following sound principles of performance management are of great benefit.

Suggestions for Evaluating Training

Training and development activities can be evaluated before, during and after the activities. Consider the following basic suggestions:

Before the Implementation Phase

1. Will the selected training and development methods really result in the employee's learning the knowledge and skills needed to perform the task or carry out the role? Have other employee's used the methods and been successful?
2. Consider applying the methods to a highly skilled employee. Ask the employee of their impressions of the methods.
3. Do the methods conform to the employee's preferences and learning styles? Have the employee briefly review the methods, e.g., documentation, overheads, etc. Does the employee experience any difficulties understanding the methods?

During Implementation of Training

1. Ask the employee how they're doing. Do they understand what's being said?
2. Periodically conduct a short test, e.g., have the employee explain the main points of what was just described to him, e.g., in the lecture.
3. Is the employee enthusiastically taking part in the activities? Is he or she coming late and leaving early. It's surprising how often learners will leave a course or workshop and immediately complain that it was a complete waste of their time. Ask the employee to rate the activities from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest rating. If the employee gives a rating of anything less than 5, have the employee describe what could be done to get a 5.

Learning Transfer

After Completion of the Training

1. Give him or her a test before and after the training and development, and compare the results.
2. Interview him or her before and after, and compare results.
3. Watch him or her perform the task or conduct the role.
4. Assign an expert evaluator from inside or outside the organization to evaluate the learner's knowledge and skills.

There are a few tools you can use to assist in assessing the quality of the training experience. One is a Learning Contract and the other is a Training Evaluation & Feedback form.

Learning Contract

A learning contract will help you focus on what you want to get out of formal training. The great thing about this contract is that it will ensure that both the employee and the supervisor have similar expectations of what the employee will gain from the training.

Training Evaluation & Feedback Form

This form is based on Kirkpatrick's learning evaluation model and is a useful tool is assessing the effectiveness of training.

Both these forms are available in Appendix C.

Ten Tips to Make Training and Development Work

From Susan M. Heathfield, Your Guide to Human Resources.

You can create a training and development support process that will ensure that the training you do works. You can make training and development more effective within your organization. The ten suggestions and approaches described in this article will make your training more effective and transferable; their application will result in measurable differences to your bottom line performance.

Creating Training Stickiness Before the Training Sessions

You can do the following in advance of the training session to increase the likelihood that the training you do will actually make a difference.

1. Make sure the need is a training and development opportunity. Do thorough needs and skills analysis to determine the real need for training and development. Make sure the opportunity you are pursuing or the problem you are solving is a training issue.

If the employee is failing in some aspect of her job, determine whether you have provided the employee with the time and tools needed to perform the job. Does the employee clearly understand what is expected from her on the job? Ask yourself whether the employee has the temperament and talent necessary for her current position; is the job a good skill, ability, and interest fit?

2. Create a context for the training and development.
Provide information for the employee about why the new skills, skill enhancement, or information is necessary. Make certain the employee understands the link between the training and his job. You can enhance the impact of the training even further if the employee sees the link between the training and his ability to contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's business plan and goals.

It's also important to provide rewards and recognition as a result of successful completion and application of the training. (People like completion certificates, for instance. One company I know lists employee names and completed training sessions in the company newsletter.) This contextual information will help create an attitude of motivation as the employee attends the training. It will assist the employee to want to look for relevant information to apply after the session.

3. Provide training and development that is really relevant to the skill you want the employee to attain or the information he needs to expand his work horizons. You may need to design a session internally if nothing from training providers exactly meets your needs. Or, seek out providers who are willing to customize their offerings to match your specific needs.

It is ineffective to ask an employee to attend a session on general communication when his immediate need is to learn how to provide feedback in a way that minimizes defensive behavior. The employee will regard the session as mostly a waste of time or too basic; his complaints will invalidate potential learning. Whenever possible, connect the training to the employee's job and work objectives. If you work in an organization that invests in a self-development component in the appraisal process, make sure the connection to the plan is clear.

4. Favor training and development that has measurable objectives and specified outcomes that will transfer back to the job. Design or obtain training that has clearly stated objectives with measurable outcomes. Ascertain that the content leads the employee to attaining the skill or information promised in the objectives. With this information in hand, the employee knows exactly what he can expect from the training session and is less likely to be disappointed. He will also have ways to apply the training to the accomplishment of real workplace objectives.

5. Provide information for the employee about exactly what the training session will involve, prior to the training. Explain what is expected of the employee at the training session. This will help reduce the person's normal anxiety about trying something new. If she knows what to expect, she can focus on the learning and training transfer rather than her potential discomfort with the unknown. (When I offer a team building session, as an example, people invariably ask me if they will have to touch each other or "do group hugs". They don't, but this really drives home the point for me about letting people know what to expect prior to attending the session.)

6. Make clear to the employee that the training is her responsibility and she needs to take the training seriously. She is expected to apply herself to the training and development process before, during, and after the session. This includes completing pre-training assignments, actively participating in the session, and applying new ideas and skills upon returning to work.

Make sure that internal or external training providers **supply pre-training assignments**. Reading or thought-provoking exercises in advance of the session promote thoughtful consideration of the training content. Exercises or self-assessments, provided and scored in advance of the session, save precious training time for interaction and new information. These ideas will engage the employee in thinking about the subject of the session prior to the training day. This supplies important paybacks in terms of his interest, commitment, and involvement.

7. Train supervisors and managers either first or simultaneously so they know and understand the skills and information provided in the training session. This will allow the supervisor to: model the appropriate behavior and learning, provide an environment in which the employee can apply the training, and create the clear expectation that she expects to see different behavior or thinking as a result of the training. An executive, who has participated in the same training as the rest of the organization, is a powerful role model when he is observed applying the training.

8. Train managers and supervisors in their role in the training process. The average supervisor has rarely experienced effective training during his career. Even more rare is the supervisor who has worked in an environment that maximized transfer of training to the actual workplace. Thus it is a mistake to believe that supervisors automatically know what must happen for effective training to take place.

9**. You can coach supervisors about their role.** Provide a handy tip sheet that explains in detail the organization's expectations of the supervisor in support of effective training.

10. Ask supervisors to meet with employees prior to the training session to accomplish all I have recommended in this article. Discuss with the individual what he hopes to learn in the session. Discuss any concerns he may have about applying the training in the work environment. Determine if key learning points are important for the organization in return for the investment of his time in the training. Identify any obstacles the employee may expect to experience as he transfers the training to the workplace.

Building Your Personal Learning Network

Daniel R. Tobin

While many companies promise that every employee will receive one or two weeks of training per year, learning should take place every day on the job. Learning doesn't take place just in training programs, but should be part of every employee's everyday activities. You learn every time you read a book or article, every time you observe how someone else is doing work similar to your own, every time you ask a question. An important part of learning is to build your own personal learning network -- a group of people who can guide your learning, point you to learning opportunities, answer your questions, and give you the benefit of their own knowledge and experience.

Learning Transfer

I often use the following four-stage learning model to describe how we learn.

The Four Stages of Learning
Stage 1: Data
Stage 2: Information
Stage 3: Knowledge
Stage 4: Wisdom

In today's business world, we are all inundated with data (Stage 1) -- all those manuals, brochures, memos, letters, reports, and other printed material that cross our field of vision every day, not to mention all that we receive electronically.

Management expert Peter Drucker has said that when you take data and give it relevance and purpose, you create information. Information (Stage 2) is the minimum we should be seeking for all of our learning activities. We need to find ways of sorting through all of the data that crosses our path and finding that part of the data that is relevant to our work and for which we have a purpose (to do our jobs more effectively or efficiently).

Even when we have information, we must use that information by applying it to our work before we can say we "know it." Until we use it, it remains information. Knowledge (Stage 3) comes from applying information to our work. This is the stage at which most company training programs fail -- too often the content of company training programs never gets applied to the employee's work. To me, this means that the investment in that training is totally wasted.

Wisdom (Stage 4), that most precious possession, comes from adding intuition and experience to knowledge. For example, in a paper mill, an operator may know that the mixture of chemicals in a processing vat is correct by the way the static electricity from that vat affects his hair as he walks by. This learning can come only from experience -- it cannot be taught in a classroom or explained in a textbook, but must be personally demonstrated if it is to be transmitted from one person to another.

Using this model, we can identify the challenges we face when we want to learn something new. First, we must sort through all of the available data to find only that information that is relevant to our learning needs and for which we have a purpose. Once we have gathered and learned the needed information, we need to apply it to our work in order to transform it into our personal knowledge.

One of the problems inherent in learning something new is that while we are learning it (in a classroom, from reading a book, taking a computer-based training course, and so forth) is that we often don't know what questions to ask. If this is a new area of learning that we have never experienced, we may think we understand the information, but we won't really know if we have mastered it until we try to apply it to our jobs. But by the time we get back to our jobs and try out what we have learned, the learning resource (a trainer or the author of the book) is no longer available to us to answer the questions that will inevitably arise.

Unless our manager has been through the training, or has otherwise mastered the skill or knowledge himself, he cannot answer our questions. So, too often, when we face a problem with the new methods, we revert back to the old ways -- they may not be as effective or as efficient, but we know that they work and we know how to use them. This is why having a personal learning network is so important -- to provide us not only with pointers to sources of information, but to answer questions, to coach us, to reinforce our learning when we try to apply it to our work.

Who should be in your personal learning network? The members of your network do not need to be people with whom you work directly. In fact, you do not even need to know the people personally. The members of your network should be people, both inside and outside of your work group and your company, who have the knowledge that you are trying to master and who are willing to share their knowledge and experience with you. Are you trying to master a new manufacturing technique? You may find someone in another part of your factory or in another one of your company's factories who has mastered the technique and will be willing to answer questions as they arise. Or, through the local society of manufacturing engineers, you may find someone from another company who would be willing to coach you. Another method of finding a learning resource would be to search the Internet to find a discussion forum on the topic and, through that forum, find people who have experience with the technique you are trying to master.

To establish a learning network, you can ask other people in your group, or with whom you have gone through a training program, to participate in periodic discussions as you all try to implement a new way of working, to support each other and share experiences with each other. Most people are happy to help -- people generally like to talk about their own work and are honored to be asked to share their knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge is a unique type of economic good. With most economic goods, if you give them away, you no longer have them. With knowledge, you can give it away and keep it. In fact, the value of knowledge increases when you share it with others.

How can your learning network help you?

- By helping you to sift through all the data to identify the information that will be most useful to you.
- By helping you to identify learning resources and opportunities.
- By coaching you and answering your questions as you try to apply your learning to your work.
- By sharing their wisdom with you through dialogue.

Building a personal learning network requires that you not only seek to learn from others, but also that you also help others in the network learn. Even when you are a novice in a field of learning, you can still make contributions. Did you read an article that might be of interest to others? Then distribute it to others in your network with a short note that you thought they might find it interesting. Did you hear of a conference on the subject? Let others know about the program and speakers and, if you attend, circulate your notes and papers you collect to other network members.

A personal learning network can be your most powerful learning tool no matter what the subject.

Leadership Competency Framework

Supervisors

FIRST-LEVEL COMPETENCIES:

- Leveraging Diversity
- Resilience
- Conflict Management
- Team Building
- Influencing/Negotiating
- Human Resources Mgmt
- Accountability
- Integrity/Honesty

Managers

MID-LEVEL COMPETENCIES:

- Creativity/Innovation
- Financial Management
- Technology Management
- Entrepreneurship
- Service Motivation
- Partnering

FIRST-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

Executives

HIGHER-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

- Strategic Thinking
- Vision
- External Awareness

MID-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

FIRST-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

BASIC COMPETENCIES (NON SUPERVISORY)

- Oral Communication
- Written Communication
- Problem Solving
- Customer Service
- Interpersonal Skills?
- Continual Learning?
- Flexibility
- Decisiveness
- Political Savvy
- Technical Credibility

Competency Development

This section provides information on the importance and meaning of each OPM competency. Included are ideas for developmental activities. In addition, be sure to consult with the Career Development Resource Center (CDRC) for suggested readings and other activities that can assist you in developing each competency.

Basic Competencies (Non-Supervisory)

1. Oral Communication

Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.

What does this mean?

- Prepares and delivers clear, smooth presentations.
- Carries self well in front of a group.
- Speaks clearly and concisely.
- Thinks quickly and well on the spot.
- Presents ideas and information that are accurate, well organized and at an appropriate level for the audience.
- Is effective in a variety of presentation settings (one-on-one, small and large groups, with coworkers, etc.)
- Is an active listener (attentive).
- Checks for understanding when listening and listens without interrupting.
- Seeks input from and encourages interaction among team members and coworkers.
- Is open to new ideas and different perspectives by seeking others opinions and views.

Why is it important?

- Need to communicate ideas well and convey them clearly.
- Demonstrates knowledge of subject-matter.
- Effective listening ensures understanding and conveys that you value the other person’s point-of-view.
- Results in better decisions and conclusions.
- Builds strong relationships.
- Shows you are willing to listen and learn.
- Shows respect and interest in others’ views.

How can you develop it?

- Join Toastmasters to practice public speaking.
- Volunteer to give a presentation the next time the opportunity arises.
- When possible, represent your supervisor at meetings.
- Facilitate a meeting.
- Prepare for your next briefing thoroughly. Craft a compelling opening, defend your point with clear outcomes and conclude with highlights of points you want your audience to remember. Ask at least two people who were in the audience to summarize your key points.
- Use paraphrasing to check your understanding.
- Diagnose the reasons why you are not being a good listener.
- Invite feedback on your listening skills.
- Give your undivided attention. Do not answer phones or emails while “listening” to someone.
- Use open-ended questions to probe for another person’s point-of-view.
- Try to understand a point-of-view, which is different from your own.
- Lead a cross functional team. Ask for feedback on your effectiveness in fostering open communication and candid discussion. Act on these suggestions.

FSI COURSES:

- MQ-111 Making Presentations: Design to Delivery
- PK-240 Effective Speaking And Listening

- PK-226 Better Office English: Oral
- PT-113 Effective Public Speaking
- PT-217 Running Effective Meetings Workshop
- PY-102 Speechwriting and Presentation Skills

2. Written Communications

Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner.

What does this mean?
- Writes in a clear, concise manner.
- Conveys information clearly and effectively through both formal and informal documents.
- Reviews and edits written work constructively.

Why is it important?
- Need to present and communicate information well.
- Need to convey ideas clearly.
- Demonstrates knowledge of subject matter.

How can you develop it?
- Volunteer to draft a report for your office.
- Develop written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for your office.
- Start with your email: ensure it is well drafted, clear and to the point. Use spell check.
- Ask someone you trust to review your written work before submitting it.

FSI COURSES:
- PK-225 Better Office English: Written
- PK-241 Writing Effective Letters and Memos

3. Problem Solving

Identifies and analyzes problems; distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions; provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.

What does this mean?
- Defines issues clearly and diagnoses problems efficiently.
- Asks good questions and probes appropriate sources for answers.
- Looks beyond the obvious to uncover critical issues.
- Sees underlying or hidden patterns in problems.
- Uses well-thought-out approaches to solve problems.
- Effectively contributes to group problem solving.
- Solutions are supported by facts and reliable information.

Why is it important?
- Identifies root causes of problems.
- Identifies challenges and opportunities.
- Doesn't waste time on unnecessary information and facilitates decision making by getting to the crux of the matter quickly.
- Improves organizational effectiveness.
- Develops an analytical process.

How can you develop it?

- Work with your manager or team members to conduct a problem prevention analysis. Review potential problems; analyze their cause and the benefits of each potential course of action.
- Lead a team meeting designed to solve a difficult problem and seek feedback on your contribution to the group's problem-solving.
- Spend time identifying the problem completely before creating a solution. Avoid the temptation to adopt the first idea or solution that comes to mind.
- Know your own biases. Beware of prejudging problems and imposing your favorite solutions.
- Break big problems into smaller pieces whenever possible.
- Get out of your comfort zone. Try approaches that you have not used before. Gather information from others.
- Learn to use problem-solving tools such as decision trees, fishbone diagrams, force field analysis and mind-maps.
- Isolate at least one recurring problem. Take a broad view by looking at several alternative solutions. Explore the pluses and minuses and adopt a new approach.
- Spend time brainstorming a problem to generate a number of ideas or solutions. Quickly eliminate those that are unnecessary and focus on those that seem promising.
- Build on past experience to avoid reinventing the wheel.
- Make a list of *only* the important information you need to know to resolve the problem.
- Select an issue you are concerned about but is not yet a problem. Work with others who are involved to analyze the situation and determine what steps are needed to keep the situation from becoming a problem.
- Identify a situation or a process which, if redesigned, would increase your office's effectiveness.
- Solicit specific feedback and perceptions on your ability to solve problems in your work approaches.
- Remove distractions when you need to apply your intellectual capabilities. Focus on the issue, information or task. Allow time to digest, think and analyze the information.
- Prepare for meetings and decision-making situations by engaging in "what if" thinking. Think through all the possible ramifications.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-212 Creative Problem Solving
- PT-121 Managing People Problems

4. Customer Service

Balancing interests of a variety of clients; readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands. Anticipates and meets the need of clients; achieves quality end products; is committed to continuous improvement of services.

What does this mean?

- Knowing your internal and external customers and fully understanding, anticipating and responding to their current and future needs, requirements and specifications.
- Meeting and exceeding customer expectations.
- Constantly improving the processes, products and/or services.

Why is it important?

- To be able to respond quickly and effectively.
- Keeps your customers coming back.
- Your organization will develop a reputation for excellent customer service and quality products and services.
- Builds strong relationships.
- Provides a productive and motivated work environment.

How can you develop it?

- Address client needs in a responsive manner. Inform them of the actions you will take and the timeframe. Keep them informed.
- Volunteer to work with difficult customers.
- Learn how your work affects your customers. Talk to colleagues to understand the flow of work from them to you or from you to them and to your customers. Use this knowledge to understand customer needs more fully.
- Compare and contrast successful and difficult customer interactions. Discuss these with your manager or colleague to understand how they differed and what different approach you might have used in the difficult situation.
- Look at things from your customer's viewpoint. BE your customer.
- List all the different groups of customers you have (both internal and external). Determine their expectations and define how you will meet those expectations.
- Think of something extra you can do for your customer, and do it!
- Develop and implement a customer service feedback tool. Use surveys, interviews or focus groups. Pay attention to complaints and explore possible causes. Prioritize those items that you have control over and create a plan to improve customer service in that area.
- Meet with people in other offices/divisions that have a reputation for focusing on customers. Ask them what makes their efforts so successful.
- Develop standards for your product or service that meet or surpass your customer's requirements.
- Seek customer input. Listen to them. Take action.
- Construct a plan of action to deliver a new and better service to your customers. Reality-test the plan and the outcome you want with your manager or a colleague.
- Take action to change/modify some procedure in your office that your customers have complained about.
- Streamline and automate routine processes and procedures.
- Benchmark your organization against other units or organizations that perform work similar to yours.

FSI COURSES:

- PA-143 Customer Service Training
- PA-123 Managing Customer Service

5. Interpersonal Skills

Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.

What does this mean?

- Is sensitive to what others are likely to say or do across a variety of situations.
- Relates well with all kinds of people, building effective interpersonal relationships.
- Treats others with courtesy and respect.
- Is truthful in interactions with others.
- Provides constructive feedback.

Why is it important?

- Sets a strong foundation for teamwork.
- Facilitates positive change.
- Builds personal credibility with others.
- Fosters an environment of openness and trust.
- Improves your working relationship with coworkers and team members.

How can you develop it?

- Observe the different behavioral styles of your coworkers and the way they interact. Be attuned to ways that are most effective in dealing with each one.
- Find a role model that models the behavior you wish to emulate.
- Get to know your staff and coworkers.
- Lead a large project. Ask for feedback on how people react to you and why. Think about the feedback and your effectiveness in building good and productive alliances and networks within and across your group. Identify ways to be more effective in building and maintaining relationships. Seek feedback from others in subsequent projects.
- When dealing with people, try out different strategies depending upon the situation and the people involved.
- Monitor the way you speak about and to people. Check yourself to ensure that you speak positively about the strengths and capabilities of others and refrain, whenever possible from criticizing others in your conversations.
- Confront issues, not people.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt.
- Mentor an intern or new-hire. Orient them to the workplace. Ask them for feedback on the way you interact with them (i.e. respect, courtesy, tolerance, etc.)
- If you are not sure what other people are feeling - ask them.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-121 Managing People Problems
- PT-252 Managing Up: Working Effectively With Your Manager
- PT-216 Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

6. Continual Learning

Grasps the essence of new information; masters new technical and business knowledge; recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development; seeks feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

What does this mean?

- Learns quickly when facing new problems/issues.
- Quickly understands the nature of the problem, issue or information.
- Proficiency in technical and functional work areas and skills.
- Is aware of specific competencies and areas that need improvement.
- Values and welcomes feedback. Accepts criticism well and views it as constructive.
- Seeks opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- Seeks information about strategies most appropriate for self-improvement.
- Sets goals to stay focused on the objectives.
- Welcomes learning experiences and turns hardships into opportunities for learning.

Why is it important?

- Expands your knowledge base.
- Develops new skills.
- Helps identify areas for further development.
- Establishes where your current work values and skill sets are and where they need to be.
- Career success requires continual learning and development.
- Increases self-confidence and challenges you.
- Makes you a more valued employee.

How can you develop it?

- Spend one hour each day for a month developing a new knowledge or skill.
- Shadow those who have the expertise you wish to develop.
- Develop one or more specialty areas where you would be considered the expert in your organization.
- Participate in a formal self-assessment. The Career Development Resource Center can assist you with this.
- Pay attention to your emotions. Analyze how you react to different situations and why. Are there areas in need of improvement? Ways to handle things differently?
- Broaden and improve your strengths by finding new ways to use these skills. Teach them to others.
- Diversify: Get involved in a variety of experiences to maximize your development.
- Visualize yourself reaching your goals.
- Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to assist in developing the skills and competencies you wish to improve.
- Find a role model or mentor.
- Confront problems instead of avoiding them. Learn from your areas of discomfort to improve your skills and knowledge.
- Volunteer for new assignments.
- Attend briefings and seminars.
- Take more risks.
- Find something you can learn from each person with whom you work.
- Learn from your mistakes.
- Pursue assignments that stretch and expand your skills.
- After each successful and not so successful endeavor, identify what you did well and why, as well as what you didn't do well and why.
- Approach every situation by asking yourself, "What can I learn?"
- Break out of your normal routine. Challenge yourself. Push yourself to take on an assignment for which you know you lack some of the necessary skills, in order to improve those skills.
- Offer to be the back-up for someone in your office.
- Promote a "continuous learning" environment. When mistakes are made, bring a small group together to discuss any possible lessons learned. Ensure that the information that is shared in the forum is openly discussed without fear or retribution.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-216 Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

7. Flexibility

Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.

What does this mean?

- Enjoys the challenge of unfamiliar tasks.
- Listens to others' opinions and views.
- Is willing to adapt to changing situations.
- Is willing to act regardless of limited information.
- Can deal with ambiguity.
- Can "think on your feet."
- Can evaluate the seriousness of a situation before taking appropriate action.
- Copes effectively with rapid or unexpected change.
- Shifts gears comfortably and quickly.

Why is it important?

- Organizations are not stagnant. They are constantly evolving to meet the challenges of new technology, customer demands, employee needs, changes in business practices and markets, etc.
- Demonstrates the ability to work effectively without knowing the total picture or having all the facts in hand.
- In this fast-paced ever-changing environment, it is important to anticipate changes and new directions and be proactive in addressing situations rather than reacting to them.

How can you develop it?

- Go with the flow. Don’t resist and do expect that things will turn out well.
- Develop your sense of humor. Learn not to take yourself too seriously.
- Participate in assignments or projects in which you will be working with others who have strong opinions, styles that are different from yours, or who have more expertise in the project area than you have. Use these opportunities to practice being more flexible.
- Practice reaching a compromise. Have a discussion with another person with the explicit goal of finding a satisfactory compromise.
- Be aware of times when you are holding on to a solution or procedure because “that’s the way it has always been done” instead of giving consideration to other viable alternatives.
- Have your manager put you in ambiguous situations and coach you on how to cope with them.
- Volunteer for projects and assignments that involve topics that are new and different from your normal workload or represent “ground-breaking” areas for your office, where existing practices do not apply. Take advantage of this opportunity to experiment with doing things a new way.
- View ambiguity as an opportunity for creative solutions.
- When you find yourself faced with many competing demands, be sure you understand the priorities and the implications of any actions you might take. Work with a coworker or your manager to help determine this.
- Become action-oriented. Know when to act.
- Seize opportunities as they arise and act to capitalize on those opportunities.
- Display drive, energy and initiative.
- When a new change effort is being launched, investigate why the change is occurring and what skills will be necessary for you to adapt to the new changes. Create an action plan for aligning yourself wit the new skills.
- Look for opportunities to show flexibility in meeting customer’s needs. Document every time your customer has changed his or her expectations and carefully notice how you react. Identify what you did to demonstrate flexibility and how you could improve in the future.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-206 Managing Change

8. Decisiveness

Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

What does this mean?

- Makes sound and timely decisions based upon a mixture of analysis, “business smarts,” experience and judgment.
- Tries to understand the people and data before judging and acting.
- Involves others appropriately in decision-making.
- Makes tough decisions in a timely manner, sometimes with incomplete information and under tight deadlines and pressure.
- Sticks with decisions as appropriate.
- Seizes opportunities as they arise and acts to take advantage of them.

Why is it important?

- Sound judgment maximizes the positive outcomes and minimizes the negative ones.
- Reflects a solid understanding of the organization and its priorities and factors both hard data and respect for “people concerns” into the analysis and decision-making process.
- The situation may call for quick action and a rapid response. Every decision involves a certain amount of risk. Calculated risk taking implies that a decision is made with a thorough understanding of the potential risks and benefits involved.
- Anticipates problems and roadblocks and plans and acts accordingly.
- Recognizes and takes corrective action when work processes are escalating toward undesirable outcomes.

How can you develop it?

- Determine whether immediate action is required before making a hasty decision.
- Instead of choosing the first solution that presents itself, consider alternative solutions to the problem.
- Go to your manager with your analysis and a recommended solution, rather than with the problem.
- Ask for feedback from your manager regarding inappropriate snap decisions you may have made in the past.
- Talk to colleagues about their approaches to difficult decisions. See what you can learn from them.
- Weigh consequences of alternative solutions before making a decision.
- Look for practical, workable solutions that will be easy to implement.
- Force yourself to move from details to the “big picture” to gain a broader perspective.
- Involve your staff in the decisions that affect them.
- Be willing to accept risk in decision areas where you can’t possibly improve your information analysis.
- Put each issue and decision in the context of how it will affect everyone involved.
- Look at each issue from several angles to get a better perspective and improve your judgment.
- Ask yourself, “What is the worst that could happen as a result of this decision?” How much impact could this ‘worst thing’ have on me personally, on the organization or on the work? Determine what you could do if the worst-case scenario occurred.
- Identify strategies to remove obstacles that get in the way of your team accomplishing more, more quickly. Discuss your ideas with your manager. Learn from the discussion and apply the ideas to other projects.
- Learn from past mistakes.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-219 Essentials of Decision Making

9. Political Savvy

Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

What does this mean?

- Is sensitive to how people and organizations function.
- Knows how to get things done both through formal and informal channels.
- Understands the interrelationships and the role each function plays in the success of the organization.
- Maneuvers through complex political situations effectively.
- Realizes the impact that decisions and actions may have on your organization and other departments.

Why is it important?

- Enables you to accomplish your goals and objectives within the framework of the organizational culture.
- Ensures the success of your programs and projects.
- By considering others before making a decision or acting, you can perform in a way that is beneficial to everyone involved.

Competency Development

How can you develop it?

- Get to know people in other departments/organizations and gain an understanding about what each one does. Talk to them about how your actions and decisions might affect them.
- Use the organizational chart to help you build a picture of the areas that surround your own work group. Identify the various functions and familiarize yourself with their business needs and the competencies required for these roles. Take action to learn more about the parts of the organization that are unfamiliar to you.
- Know what is going on in and around the government, the Department and your organization. Identify information sources (i.e. newsletters, reports, etc.) and take advantage of informal opportunities to communicate with people throughout the organization.
- Make a list of where key players stand on particular issues for future reference.
- Cultivate relationships with the staff of important/key people. Get to know staff aides and secretaries on a first-name basis.
- Create a list of “go-to” people in your personal and professional network. List names, phone numbers, email addresses, etc. Keep this list updated.
- Understand the agendas and perspectives of others to establish mutually beneficial objectives.
- Develop effective give-and-take relationships with key individuals in the organization, both vertically and laterally.
- Make sure that you routinely get out into other areas within the Department, the government and your organization on an informal basis. Get acquainted with people and develop an understanding of the informal influence network. Until this becomes second nature, you may want to set aside regular times each month to get out and talk to people.
- Consider appropriate “timing” when proposing or implementing new ideas. Look at the external and internal factors at play in the government, the Department, etc. Frame your ideas in reference to these factors.
- Demonstrate your commitment to the organization in tangible ways: by your willingness to “go the extra mile” when necessary and by supporting the organization’s values, goals and mission.
- Make a conscious effort to create win-win results and to not just think of yourself and your possible gain when taking action.
- Keep key players informed of your project/program’s status.
- Recognize that peers can be valuable resources.
- Make a list of the resources you can offer to others; then, when someone asks you for help, you will know which resources you have available.
- Find effective ways to say “no” to a request for assistance from another without jeopardizing his or her future support.
- Think about your audience’s needs, concerns, and perspectives. Consider how people are likely to react to your message and whenever possible, position your message in a way that appeals to them and avoids a strong negative reaction.
- Learn the “unwritten” rules of the organization by interviewing at least three senior managers.
- Assess your organizational savvy over the past year. How well have you navigated the unwritten rules? When have you “stepped in it” politically? What were the political ramifications?
- Join a professional association such as BIG or YPRO.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-252 Managing Up: Working Effectively With Your Manager
- PT-203 Washington Tradecraft
- PT-220 Strategies of Persuasion
- PT-224 Influence by Design

10. Technical Credibility

Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to specialized expertise; is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs; understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.

What does this mean?

- Has knowledge of, implements and adheres to any regulations, procedures and policies that govern the work of the office/department.
- Recruits and assembles a talented staff by hiring the best people available.
- Ensures that staff is well trained.
- Allocates resources effectively.
- Understands the "big picture" and how your organization fits into it.
- Understands how your organization supports the Department's goals and mission.

Why is it important?

- Adhering to regulations and policies is an effective and efficient way to protect yourself, your constituents, customers, resources, employees and your organization.
- To manage limited resources (both human and capital) effectively, to ensure maximum productivity and benefit.
- To enable planning and funding of resources and staff necessary to assist in accomplishing the mission's goals.

How can you develop it?

- Ensure that all employees know and understand the rules and regulations that govern their work. Discuss regularly at staff meetings. Read the FAM!
- Stay-up-to-date on new regulations and policies or any changes to existing polices.
- Ensure you have internal controls in place that will monitor compliance.
- Ensure all employees have an individual development plan.
- Baseline the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the positions in your office.
- Implement effective processes and procedures for accomplishing work.
- Ensure there are adequate resources to do the job.
- Ensure employees are trained to do their jobs.
- Ensure that your organization's goals and objectives are in line with the overall Department goals.
- Support your administrative staff and ensure they know the importance of their work and that their contribution is appreciated and valued.

FSI COURSES:

- Any FSI course related to your work function.

Competency Development

First-Level Competencies (Supervisory)
Includes all of the Basic competencies plus:
11. Leveraging Diversity

Recruits, develops, and retains a diverse high quality workforce in an equitable manner. Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results. Respects, understands, values and seeks out individual differences to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Develops and uses measures and rewards to hold self and others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.

What does this mean?

- Evaluates and selects people fairly without regard to background, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.
- Accurately and fairly evaluates an individual's strengths, limitations and ability to work well in the Department.
- Views differences as assets rather than liabilities, seeing stereotypes for what they are and gets beyond prejudices to appreciate differences.
- Utilizing those differences in the workplace to accomplish organizational goals, finding the balance between developing shared organizational values and valuing diversity and challenging assumptions that limit opportunities.
- Establishes high standards of conduct and ensures self and others adhere to them.
- Seeks solutions that embrace diversity.

Why is it important?

- People with varied cultures and opinions bring new and different ideas to the workplace. Recruiting, developing and retaining people with diverse backgrounds can foster new and better solutions; more effective procedures, and opens communications.
- Creates an environment of acceptance.
- Actively welcomes and involves people.
- Strengthens the organization.
- The work environment is constantly changing – escalating challenges, changing markets, diverse customer base, etc. There is a need for different approaches that a diversified workforce can achieve.
- Fosters an environment of respect and trust.
- Motivates for positive results.

How can you develop it?

- Get to know the people in your workplace. Ask about their backgrounds and experiences.
- Confront people when you hear stereotypical comments or see prejudiced behavior.
- Interact with a wide variety of people at work and in your personal life.
- Continually examine your automatic thoughts and language for unexamined assumptions and stereotypical responses.
- Actively solicit input from a wide variety of people and functions.
- Design solutions based on complementary skills and backgrounds.
- Find ways to use your employees' strengths.
- Become a mentor to an individual whose background and experiences are different than yours.
- Educate yourself about your own cultural values and background.
- Make sure your team gets the training and information they need to effectively work with diverse groups of people.
- Use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to learn a new way of understanding some of the many differences among people.
- Involve diverse groups in solving problems and developing opportunities.
- When asking someone to explain a point-of-view different from your own, be sure to say that your intention is to understand that person's viewpoint, not to have him or her justify it.
- When working with issues of shared values versus diversity, talk about them openly, respect all points of

view and work cooperatively to solve problems and create understanding.
- Help people see how their lack of "buy-in" to shared values has a negative impact on the work, the group and the success you achieve.
- Model the behavior you are seeking.
- Brainstorm ways to demonstrate personal responsibility with your peers.
- Work with your team to develop office values and norms. Post these in the office.
- Encourage people to speak up and value what they say.
- Create a list of people in your network. Explore his/her background, generation, race, education, career path, gender. Do you tend to network with people who are similar or different than you? If similar, commit to expanding your network to include more diversity.

FSI COURSES:
- PT-107 EEO/Diversity Awareness for Managers and Supervisors
- PT-218 Leading A Diverse Workforce
- PT-225 Valuing Diversity

12. Resilience

Deals effectively with pressure; maintains focus and intensity and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks. Effectively balances personal life and work.

What does this mean?
- Is calm and focused under pressure.
- Stays focused on the problem when things get emotional.
- Maintains a constructive approach under pressure and under trying circumstances.
- Handles bad news and situations well.
- Provides a settling influence in crisis situations.
- Maintains composure.
- Is able to "bounce back" from delays and hindrances to work progression and move forward quickly, getting back on track.
- Quickly adjusts strategies, plans and direction in response to changes in priorities and situations.
- Understands the importance of balancing work and home life so that you are effective and happy in both.

Why is it important?
- Sets the tone and an example for others around you.
- Stays focused on the problem, systematically working towards a solution, in spite of the circumstances.
- Setbacks are inevitable. The quicker one can recover and move forward will lessen impact on the product or service.
- Inspires innovation.
- If there is an imbalance between work and home life, one will suffer. Eventually the lesser quality of one will harmfully affect the other. If you learn to balance work and home life you will be able to keep commitments that you have made and use your time wisely and effectively.

How can you develop it?
- Be cognizant of your own responses. Do you get frustrated and stressed under pressure? Can you stay focused on the problem? Note your own response and work to change it.
- Observe coworkers who handle tough and emotional situations very well. Take note of their actions when faced with a crisis. Ask them how they did it.
- Ask a peer to role play a potentially tough and demanding customer. Walk through the entire interaction in a realistic way. Ask your peer for feedback on how well you maintained your composure.
- Work closely with your manager to solve a crisis in your workplace. Seek his/her feedback on the composure you displayed throughout the crisis.

- Deliver bad news to your manager about something for which you are responsible. Later, ask for feedback on how well you handled the situation.
- Talk to your peers about how they deal with adversity and what helps them stay positive. Apply those that relate to you.
- Manage a new project that has a high likelihood of creating conflict. Seek feedback from coworkers throughout the project on the level of composure you display in tough or emotional situations.
- Evaluate the seriousness of the situation before making a decision or taking action. Give the situation a crisis rating from 1 (can wait) to 10 (urgent, immediate attention required).
- Make it a practice to discuss the situation with your manager, a peer or affected employees before making a decision or taking action.
- Do not make commitments before understanding how much time and resources will be needed.
- Create an action plan to go over job expectations with your manager so that you can plan to do what is expected of you.
- Learn the signs and consequences of an unbalanced life.
- Track your commitments and their level of priority.
- Ask someone who has achieved a good balance between work and home life to coach you.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-251 Productively Managing Stress
- PT-216 Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

13. Conflict Management

Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.

What does this mean?

- Recognizing beforehand the potential for conflict in any given situation and instituting measures to prevent it from escalating.
- Steps up to conflicts, seeing them as opportunities for improvement.
- Negotiates skillfully in tough situations, winning concessions without damaging relationships.
- Diffuses even high-tension situations comfortably.
- Quickly understands others' points of view.
- Picks battles wisely.
- Positions resolutions to ensure understanding and acceptance by all parties.

Why is it important?

- Conflict arises because of limited resources; differing goals, responsibilities and priorities; and differing ideas or interpretations. Knowing what to look and plan for will help to minimize conflict.
- Conflict is part of any dynamic organization. It arises because people care and want to do their jobs well. Conflict is beneficial when the focus is on finding the best solution. It becomes destructive when the focus is on people and "winning."

How can you develop it?

- Be aware of causes and areas of conflict. Be proactive in minimizing the effects to prevent it from getting worse.
- Analyze the situation from various perspectives.
- Actively listen.
- Have your office develop a written set of workplace norms.
- Ask a coworker to observe you during a meeting in which you know there will be conflict. After the meeting, discuss what you did and its effect on others. Think about how to use the feedback to improve your style of negotiating and dealing with conflict.
- Put yourself in the other person's situation and imagine how you would feel and react. Look at the other

side before defending your own.
- Attack problems, not people.
- Be willing to confront others when you feel they have made an error.
- When a conflict situation arises, discuss it with your manager. When you have handled it, seek feedback from him or her about how successful you were.
- Lead an interdepartmental project team that involves negotiating an agreement, acquisition, etc. Identify common goals as well as areas of conflict or dispute. Use the common goals and values to motivate brainstorming on how to overcome the disagreements. Create a win-win solution. Discuss what did and did not go well. Ask for feedback on your behavior.

FSI COURSES:
- PT-214 Managing Conflict Productively
- PT-121 Managing People Problems
- PT-253 Negotiation Skills for Managers

14. Team Building

Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with customer groups; fosters commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

What does this mean?
- Fosters optimistic, positive attitudes about people and their work to meet the goals of the organization.
- Creates a feeling of belonging in the team and pulls the team together to accomplish goals.
- Encourages team members to help and respect each other.
- Makes each person feel that his or her work is important.
- Communicates belief that success is due to team effort.
- Ensures that the team works cohesively to accomplish its goals.
- Actively seeks out and includes stakeholders, internal and external customers, etc in issues, problems and solutions that affect them.
- Shows by example how to be both an effective team leader and team member.
- Shares wins and successes, ownership and visibility with team members.
- Effectively develops employees’ potential and skills.
- Lets people know that you believe in and support their ability to successfully increase their skills.

Why is it important?
- For the continued growth and development of employees.
- The synergy that comes from putting employees together to form teams to solve problems, make decisions and take action is power that organizations can harness for greater success.
- Building a team attitude means managing employees in a way that fosters teamwork instead of individual gain.
- To flourish, people in organizations must collaborate. This enables the sharing and combining of knowledge, creativity and experience. This fosters mutual respect, open communications and superior service and products.
- Allows the team to be more effective.
- Encourages cooperation rather than competition.
- Instills ownership and accountability.
- Increases motivation, confidence, loyalty and commitment.
- Fosters innovation, creativity and productivity.

How can you develop it?
- Convey the attitude that everyone’s work is important.

Competency Development

- Convey trust in people's competence to do their jobs.
- Model excellence and enthusiasm in what you do.
- Create an enjoyable and supportive work environment.
- Enrich jobs to increase motivation.
- Reward people for superior performance.
- Make a list of the key strengths and limitations of each person on the team. Look for opportunities to utilize the strengths of the team. Encourage team members to "stretch."
- Spontaneously offer to help someone, even if you are busy. Pay extra attention to assisting new team members.
- Help team members improve their understanding and collaboration with one another. Share information about work being done. Discuss work histories, specific skills, successes and talents. Help team members to understand, appreciate and use differences among themselves to arrive at better solutions and to do better work.
- Use your team to develop your group's vision, mission and goals.
- Give work teams the authority to act upon their team decisions.
- Provide structure conducive to teamwork. Too much hierarchy, whether formal or informal, can impede teamwork.
- Provide necessary resources for team success.
- Ask team members to evaluate the effectiveness of the team. Ensure that they identify both strengths and weaknesses. Evaluation criteria may include the following: clarity of purpose; problem solving; decision making; change; customer focus; quality of work; conflict resolution; work processes; and feedback. Involve team members in creating a plan to address areas of weakness.
- When you first learn that you must make a decision, determine who has the information you need to make a good decision, who you need to involve to get buy-in, and who you think should be involved.
- You can involve others in any phase of the process: defining the problem or opportunity, identifying other ways of looking at the problem, generating optional approaches, selecting criteria for making a final decision, making the final call, or planning implementation. You may involve everyone in every phase or engage different people in each, depending on the decisions and input needed.
- Use active listening skills to draw out the ideas and creativity of others.
- Use brainstorming techniques to generate alternate solutions.
- Avoid taking control of the agenda or being the first within the group to make suggestions. Instead try playing different roles within the group. Listen during team meetings. Don't answer your own questions. Practice remaining silent for at least 10 seconds after you ask a question.
- Observe managers and peers who are good at building team spirit. Interview them about their methods, experiences and lessons. Reflect on how you can use those strategies.
- Lead a postmortem meeting for your team. Review successes and give credit to the appropriate team members. Discuss ways to survive the difficulties of a project while enhancing good will and esprit de corps. Reflect on the ideas and how to use them on a daily basis. Ask for feedback on your role in enhancing team spirit.
- Take specific steps to keep all team members focused on achieving the ultimate goals and objectives. Ensure that each person understands how his or her role contributes to the overall success of the project and of the group.
- Look for opportunities to visibly celebrate individual and team successes. Show your appreciation in direct reports or to individual team members through personal memos or face-to-face communication.
- To empower your team, allow team members to work out responsibilities and roles among themselves and report their recommendations to you.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-129 Teambuilding
- PT-215 Team Leadership Workshop
- PT-130 Bureau/Office Offsite

15. Influencing/Negotiating

Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates “win-win” situations.

What does this mean?

- Gaining support and acceptance from others.
- Negotiating skillfully, winning concessions without damaging relationships.
- Seeking the necessary collaboration and support from others in order to meet work goals and objectives.
- Successfully negotiating an outcome acceptable to all involved.

Why is it important?

- The ability to command the attention of others is necessary for accomplishing goals.
- Balanced and supportive interrelationships are an important aspect of success in an organization.
- Facilitates the necessary support to accomplish tasks.
- Fosters an environment of cooperation and improves relationships.

How can you develop it?

- Adapt your persuasive style to suit your audience. Some people are impressed by a strong, logical argument, while others are swayed by a forceful, impassioned explanation.
- When delivering your ideas pay attention to the reaction of your audience. Look for signs that they are interested in what you are saying and want to know more.
- Prepare beforehand. Write down three important points you wish to make.
- Test out ideas ahead of time. Consider an upcoming project or proposal that you would like to initiate. Discuss your project plans with key influencers and request that they support or champion your idea within their sphere of influence.
- Develop your speaking style to better persuade others. Record yourself the next time you make a presentation to a group. Ensure that you were precise and used specific evidence to support your ideas. If you didn’t, reflect on what alternative methods could have been used.
- Observe other people who you feel are skilled at influencing others. Identify the activities or techniques they use in encouraging people to follow a course of action. Ask for their guidance on how you might improve your influencing abilities.
- Use a variety of techniques to influence others. View influencing as a problem to be solved. Brainstorm as many ways as possible to influence a particular person.
- Influence by listening. Understand the other party’s perspective fully before you attempt to make your case.
- Persuade through rapport. Consciously and genuinely seek to build relationships with the people who are important to you.
- Prepare ahead of time by thinking about the other person’s position and needs. What is important to them? What are their goals? What can you do for them?
- Talk with others who have dealt with the people you will be negotiating with. Find out what has and hasn’t worked.
- Know what you want from three perspectives: 1) What is absolutely necessary; 2) What is ideal; 3) What you would be willing to give up.
- Identify the issue or problem in terms of needs, not solutions.
- Clarify and communicate your vision. The more clear and compelling your vision, the easier it is for others to understand and endorse it.
- Show your enthusiasm. The more excited and energetic you are about meeting your goals, the more committed others are likely to be in supporting you.
- State positive expectations. Conveying positive expectations about what others can achieve can lead to better performance than when negative expectations are communicated.
- Reflect on the outcome of your attempts to convince others and influence situations after a project or assignment that didn’t go the way you had hoped. List the key events where you would have liked things to have gone differently. Think of what you said and did to influence each event and the resulting effect

that it had. Reflect on what you might do differently in a similar situation in the future. Gather input from your peers on your proposed approach. Reflect on the particular areas of weakness that your peers might highlight.

- Seek common ground. Finding areas of agreement is often the critical first step in achieving "win-win" outcomes.
- Adopt a "can-do" attitude and approach challenges from a problem-solving perspective. Look for alternative solutions, rather than focusing on why things can't be done.
- Go in with the perspective that the other side is your ally rather than your enemy. Thinking about dealing with an ally can help you look for solutions that benefit both of you.
- Listen carefully to discern the needs of the other party. If you successfully identify their needs, you can better generate a number of alternatives from which you both benefit.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-224 Influence by Design
- PT-220 Strategies of Persuasion
- PT-253 Negotiation Skills for Managers
- PP-501 International Negotiation: Art and Skills
- PP-515 Advanced International Negotiation

16. Human Resources Management

Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Using merit principles, ensures staff are appropriately selected, developed, utilized, appraised, and rewarded; takes corrective action.

What does this mean?

- By understanding the organizational goals and mission, effective decisions can be made regarding staffing needs and structure, within budgetary constraints.
- Evaluates and selects people fairly without regard to background, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.
- Encourages and helps people develop their skills.
- Effectively plans and distributes workload.
- Objectively evaluates performance and provides constructive feedback on areas in need of improvement.
- Rewards those employees who really are deserving.
- Acts quickly and fairly when corrective action needs to be taken.

Why is it important?

- The staffing and structure will affect productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, employee morale and budget. Proper planning will enable you to be responsive to changes and shifts in priorities.
- Fosters an environment of fairness, competence, loyalty and respect.
- Holds people accountable for their actions and subsequent results.
- Motivates to ensure positive results.

How can you develop it?

- Keep abreast of changes in other parts of the organization that may affect the way your office should be structured.
- Draw your organization chart using several different possible structures and decide which one would work best.
- Analyze how your organization structure will need to be different one, two and five years from now.
- Develop job descriptions highlighting the knowledge, skills and abilities required for each of the positions in your organization. This is the basis for recruiting.
- View recruiting competent people as your responsibility, not that of the human resources department.
- Sit in on an interview conducted by a good interviewer. Assess the candidate and afterwards share your

- opinion with the interviewer. Then have the interviewer give you his/her opinion. Discuss what led you to your conclusions.
- Aim for a 80/20 applicant/interviewer talk ratio during an interview.
- Be willing to invest the training time in someone who has potential.
- Give people challenging assignments and responsibilities.
- Clearly assign responsibility and accountability for tasks and decisions.
- Understand the performance rating system. Hold regular sessions to review performance and provide constructive feedback.
- Set clear goals and measurable objectives.
- Discover each employee's values and motivations and reward accordingly.
- DO reward employees for superior achievements, not for doing their job.
- Understand your options for taking corrective action; talk to others who have had similar situations to find out how they handled it; role play with a coworker to rehearse what you want to say and how you will say it.

FSI COURSES:
- PT-107 EEO/Diversity Awareness for Managers and Supervisors
- PK-246 Employee Relations Seminar
- PT-205 Performance Management Seminar
- PT-211 Coaching: A Tool for Leading People

17. Accountability

Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities. Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans; focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

What does this mean?
- Internal controls (checks and balances) are systematically applied and reviewed to ensure that any weaknesses or vulnerabilities are addressed promptly.
- Takes responsibility for actions, decisions and compliance to regulations.
- Ensures that projects are carefully planned and executed to meet deadlines and within funding limitations.
- Reviews and measures plans for effectiveness.
- Examines the conclusion, consequences and effect of achievements to determine whether they met the goal.

Why is it important?
- Ensures the integrity of the systems and processes.
- Every organization has a framework of rules, regulations, laws, policies, etc. that are required to be adhered to. Failure to do so could have serious consequences.
- Missed deadlines mean customers must wait for the promised product or service.
- Success is measured in terms of results achieved.

How can you develop it?
- Evaluate processes and systems to assess vulnerability and to institute or strengthen internal controls.
- Have someone else "test" your internal controls.
- Ensure all employees know and understand the rules and regulations.
- Address noncompliance immediately.
- Model integrity.
- Set realistic timeframes and deadlines to accomplish projects.
- Plan for the unexpected. Anticipate problems. Develop contingency plans.
- Ensure plans are comprehensive, realistic and effective in meeting goals.

- Identify the three to five critical success factors that you and your group must accomplish to achieve your goals. Then develop plans to achieve them.
- To balance attention to detail with broader planning, ask for feedback to ensure that you are not stressing one area over the other.
- Break large projects into several smaller steps, with deadlines for each step. Ask for feedback regarding the adequacy of your project plan.
- Establish systems to measure and monitor the productivity of various resources. This will enable you to more accurately estimate your resource needs in the future.
- Set milestones for project plans and reevaluate at each milestone to ensure you are still on track.
- After developing a plan, have a peer play devil's advocate by confronting you with all of the possible things that could go wrong. Make changes to address any problems you may have overlooked.
- Be sure to evaluate how one plan affects all of the others.
- Invite the various people or groups affected by the plan to contribute to its construction. When the plan is complete, ask each person to review it one last time to evaluate how realistic it is.
- Interview internal and external customers about your team's effectiveness in getting results. Present the information to your team manager and discuss ways to improve outcomes and team effectiveness.
- Develop an agreed-upon method of measuring your team's progress toward a goal. Record/post the team's accomplishment in a public format. Celebrate/recognize the attainment of milestones so progress is observable.
- Own a project - be accountable for the end deliverable. Be sure that each member understands and owns their accountability for the project. Get feedback from your coworkers on your effectiveness in getting results. Act on the suggestion.
- Map projects backwards from the desired result. Examine ways to streamline the path to the result.

FSI COURSES:
- PA-137 Management Controls Workshop
- PA-164 Management Controls Workbook
- PD-529 Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement
- PT-208 Managing State Projects

18. Integrity/Honesty

Instills mutual trust and confidence; creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics; behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others, and demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.

What does this mean?
- Maintains confidentiality of information.
- Acts in a manner that makes team members, coworkers and managers believe in and depend on you.
- Staunchly adheres to strongly-held sense of core values through both good times and bad.
- Is honest and maintains personal integrity in all aspects of work.
- Acts in a manner that is above reproach by not making any inappropriate remarks or committing any improper acts.
- Understands and takes the proper and ethical action at all times regardless of the circumstances.
- Avoids even the appearance of impropriety.
- Is impartial and fair in dealing with others.
- Does not misrepresent information or mislead others for own protection or personal gain.
- Is able to represent, stand up for and talk about the State Department in a precise and positive manner and to correct impressions that are negative or wrong.
- Is loyal and committed to public service.

Competency Development

Why is it important?

- Trust is the foundation on which effective organizations are built. If the people that make up the organization do not trust each other, the products and services rendered will not be high-quality.
- Fosters an environment of trust and respect.
- Internal and external customers will trust and respect you if you treat them fairly.
- Builds personal credibility.
- As an employee of the Department of State, you represent the organization and therefore it is important that your actions, remarks and deliverables make good impressions.
- Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.

How can you develop it?

- Do not make promises you can't keep. Honor your commitments.
- Don't promise confidentiality if you are not certain that you can keep the information private.
- Ask your coworkers if they trust you. Don't react defensively if they don't. Instead, work with them to change their perceptions.
- Behave in a way that is consistent with what you say- "walk your talk."
- Take responsibility for your mistakes. Avoid blaming others.
- Conduct an organizational climate survey to assess trust in your work unit.
- Put agreements in writing.
- Model your behavior after someone whose integrity you respect.
- Take a stand on a small issue and practice stating your case to others.
- Observe others who stand up for their beliefs without alienating others.
- Read, understand and apply the ethics regulations judiciously.
- Understand and adhere to Department policies on sexual harassment, workplace violence and discriminatory harassment.
- Seek feedback on others' perceptions of your honesty and ethics.
- Stand up for others, especially your people, when they need your support.
- Deliver high-quality services and products. This demonstrates commitment.
- Understand and be able to explain the Departments mission, goals and values.
- Participate in one of the Department's volunteer service programs. Volunteer to be a mentor or to work in DC public schools.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-216 Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Mid-Level Competencies (Managerial)
Includes all of the Basic and First-level competencies, plus:
19. Creativity & Innovation

Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

What does this mean?

- Entertains wide-ranging possibilities to come up with new solutions and approaches.
- Thinks outside given parameters to see if there's a better way.
- Motivates others to find new ways of doing things and new approaches to problems.
- Adjusts strategies, plans and direction in response to changing priorities.
- Recognizes that certain problems are not amenable to standard answers and thus require unique approaches.

Why is it important?

- Applies new ideas and fresh perspectives to methods and outlooks that may be out-dated, ineffective or inefficient.
- Challenges standard processes, procedures and opinions (business as usual).
- Encourages and challenges employees and promotes efficiency.
- Promotes an atmosphere of continual learning.

How can you develop it?

- Research best practices in other organizations. Brainstorm the reasons these practices would and would not work in your organization. Modify the practices to fit the circumstances of your work.
- Use mind-mapping approach to solve a difficult problem. Look for relationships and come up with alternatives.
- Challenge the "this is the way we have always done things" approach.
- Mentor a creative employee.
- Find alternative ways to do your work. Discuss your ideas with your manager. Ask for his/her feedback.
- Brainstorm with your team about different solutions for a situation/problem you are facing. Come up with as many ideas as you can.
- Identify some people who are known for coming up with good, even great ideas. Talk to them about what their ideas were, how they come up with them and the process/thinking involved in getting to the final version.
- Talk to peers and managers from other offices. Find out what new things they are doing and how they are improving their practices and processes.
- Network with people accomplished in using new technology, methods and ideas.
- Discuss new ways of doing things with people that might be affected.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-212 Creative Problem Solving Workshop

20. Financial Management

Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels. Prepares, justifies, and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies. Identifies cost-effective approaches. Manages procurement and contracting.

What does this mean?

- Demonstrates an understanding of the financial process in the federal government overall and specifically the Department of State (appropriations, apportionment, allotments, function codes, etc.)
- Manages the budgetary process for a program area to ensure sufficient funding.
- Establishes realistic budgets and operates within that budget.
- Uses financial and quantitative information effectively.
- Is responsible for the procurement planning and acquisition of goods and services in support of organizational goals and objectives and within budgetary constraints.

Why is it important?

- To accurately project, plan and account for priorities, spending, funding levels and resources.
- To effectively execute and support program priorities to meet organizational goals and objectives, within budgetary constraints.

How can you develop it?

- Understand your bureau and office's goals and objectives (priorities) and how they relate to funding.
- Work with your budget office to review funding levels for your office's programs and projects. Discuss

the information you most need to understand to do your job better.
- Review historical financial data to determine trends, issues and other relevant information.
- Participate in or manage the entire budget for a specific program or project.
- Ask for special assignments or additional duties that will require more financial and quantitative knowledge.
- Obtain coaching from someone who understands the financial process.
- Develop your analytical skills.
- Conduct a quarterly review of expenditures.
- Review processes and procedures to identify cost-saving measures.
- Develop a procurement plan at the beginning of the fiscal year.
- Investigate various procurement options to ensure the "best value" for the money.
- Take distance-learning courses in federal acquisitions and contracting.
- Ensure you can justify every procurement action.

FSI COURSES:
- PA-215 Principles of Appropriation Law
- PA-174 Contracting Officer Representative (Pre-Award)
- PA-175 Contracting Officer Representative (Post-Award)

21. Technology Management

Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision-making. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.

What does this mean?
- Understands the importance of technology in the workplace and identifies areas where technology can save time, money and streamline operations.
- Utilizes decision support systems to facilitate decision-making and problem-solving.
- Is able to assess impact, implication and resistance to technological changes in the workplace.

Why is it important?
- Allow you to remain competitive and to better serve the customers.
- Increases productivity.
- The use of a computerized information system that helps compile information from raw data, documents, personal knowledge, business models, etc., helps identify and solve problems and facilitate decision making.
- Facilitates and leads change and process improvement.
- Enables you to anticipate areas of concern and to alleviate those concerns should they arise.

How can you develop it?
- Identify processes that lend themselves to technological innovation.
- Identify problems caused by inefficient processes and see if the use of technology can improve them.
- Ask someone who is technologically savvy to mentor you.
- Volunteer to take on a technically challenging project.
- Stay abreast of technological developments.
- Aim to take on one project each year that will challenge you to search out new ideas and information.
- Learn all of the functions of your everyday workplace applications: Word, Excel, Outlook, Internet Explorer and everything else you use on a regular basis. Know how these applications can support your work.

- Become knowledgeable on the various support systems available (knowledge-based, data management systems, intranets, etc.) that could possibly assist you.
- Utilize existing decision support systems.
- Be sure to look at the "big-picture" when implementing changes. Is there an impact on other departments or your customers? Will they have to do things differently? How will you educate them?
- Always involve the people who will be affected by change in the planning and implementation.
- Develop transition plans and expect resistance to change; develop strategies to deal with it.

FSI COURSES:

- PY-202 Accessing Information Resources on Foreign Policy
- PS-318 Internet for Power Users
- PS-216 SIPRNet/Intelink
- PT-206 Managing Change

22. Entrepreneurship

Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization. Is willing to take risks; initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.

What does this mean?

- To continually look for chances to streamline processes and drive strategies with the application of groundbreaking ideas, new information and effective courses of action.
- To be willing to take risks to improve your organization, products and services.
- Takes calculated risk to leverage desired outcome.

Why is it important?

- Seizing opportunities to improve people's attitudes and work habits and the organization's processes, services and products can help your organization be cost-effective and customer-focused.
- Positive change cannot happen without risk. If you are willing to take risks you can find new ways to exceed customers' expectations, to eliminate outdated processes and procedures and to encourage an atmosphere of innovation and creativity.
- Improves products or services.

How can you develop it?

- Take a course of action that offers suggestions for overcoming obstacles.
- Test new ideas that you have read about or learned from some other source to see if they could apply to your work group.
- Take one activity you do regularly and examine it for efficiency.
- Look at your work unit/department from a different perspective and examine your business objectives, processes, people capabilities and technology in light of this new perspective. Share your findings with others and incorporate any new information or feedback into an action plan for improvement.
- Be forward thinking when setting goals.
- Track new ideas. Brainstorm ways to implement them.
- Ask your team what obstacles prevent them from doing their best.
- Ask someone who is a successful risk taker to give you some tips.
- Don't be afraid to fail. Learn from your mistakes.
- Recognize that quality, as defined by customers, is a moving target.
- Review all policies, procedures and practices. If they do not support improvement, find a way to change them.
- Take calculated risks. Ask yourself, "What is the worst that could happen?" and then decide if proceeding

is worth the risk.
- Believe that you have the power to make a difference and accept the responsibility of trying.

FSI COURSES:
- PT-130 Bureau/Office Offsite

23. Service Motivation

Creates and sustains an organizational culture which encourages others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well. Shows a commitment to public service. Influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.

What does this mean?
- Provides a supportive environment for growth, innovation and continual improvement.
- Removes obstacles and roadblocks to effective performance.
- Provides the resources necessary to get the job done.
- Is engaged and enthusiastic in serving the public.
- Has a sense of ownership in what you do.
- Motivates others and creates a sense of purpose.

Why is it important?
- Fosters creativity, ownership, and pride and creates an atmosphere of cooperation and dedication.
- Increases productivity and motivation.
- Improves efficiency and saves time
- Without a sense of ownership there is no commitment to quality and excellence that is essential for public service.
- Provides a shared vision.

How can you develop it?
- Frequently ask internal and external customers and other departments to evaluate your services and products.
- Offer incentives for good ideas about streamlining processes.
- Encourage employees to share their expertise with others.
- Set clear, measurable service standards.
- Look for ways to improve the quality of your work. Identify three to five important quality measures for your own work. Use these measures to identify the area of your work which is in greatest need of improvement. Develop an action plan to improve the quality of this area over the next three months.
- Continual improvement consists of fixing problems immediately, preventing problems and improving your quality.
- Question the routine. Established routines are often taken for granted and chances for new and improved ways are often missed.
- Continually assess processes to determine whether or not they add value to your product or service.
- Stand behind your people and back their decisions.
- Show the courage to let your people learn from their mistakes.
- Work to eliminate the need to seek unnecessary permission or approval.
- Refrain from saying “it can’t be done” and focus on how you can make it happen.
- Don’t be discouraged by objections or obstacles. Look at them as opportunities to solve problems.
- Show your enthusiasm for the organization through your commitments and actions.
- See the work you do through the eyes of the public.
- Be positive in all situations.

- Look for opportunities for change or growth.
- Ask your employees to identify what makes their job difficult to do. Identify any "dissatisfiers," such as lack of recognition, perceptions of inequity or unfairness or dissatisfaction with physical working conditions. Then promptly address these issues.
- Set clear objectives, ensuring that employees know their responsibilities and clarify expectations.
- Provide employees feedback on and reinforcement of their performance.
- Don't ask your people to do things that you aren't willing to do yourself.
- Identify behaviors that you feel are critical to success in your organization and then lead by example.

FSI COURSES:
- PA-143 Customer Service Training
- PA-123 Managing Customer Service
- PT-222 Driving Organizational Performance

24. Partnering

Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities; collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

What does this mean?
- Understands the importance and role of other offices, divisions, bureaus, etc.
- Effectively shares information, resources, skills, knowledge across and within departments.
- Strives for results that are mutually beneficial to all concerned and involved.
- Knows how to get things done both through formal channels and the informal network.
- Knows who to influence and when.

Why is it important?
- Develops a better understanding of what other offices do and how it affects your work environment.
- Need to rely on others to achieve and support your goals.
- Balanced and supportive interrelationships are an important aspect of success. When managers and teams work toward outcomes that benefit all departments and not just their own, the Department as a whole becomes stronger and more focused.
- Shared successes build relationships.
- Furthers your ability to get your job done successfully, timely and effectively.

How can you develop it?
- Expand your current contacts. Get to know people in the offices that help support your work. Ask someone you know to identify and introduce you to other influential people within his or her organization.
- Networking: Identify key resource contacts that are diverse and have varied perspectives on the work to be accomplished.
- Volunteer for task forces, cross-functional working groups and/or projects.
- Join professional associations, employee organizations, etc.
- Be visible, accessible and stay in contact with your stakeholders. Find ways to keep in regular contact with your stakeholders or their contacts, even when you are not directly servicing them.
- Look for opportunities to work on projects where cooperative efforts are likely to result in win-win outcomes, which benefit everyone involved.
- Develop your ability for small talk. Use "free information" when talking with others (info that is volunteered about their interests, personal values, preferences, personal life, etc.) Actively listen to conversations and identify information that could be used as an entrée to "small talk."

- Improve your relationship with one or two coworkers. Focus on learning more about the person, not their job.
- Identify a mentor that has more experience than you and is respected for his or her ability to function cross-functionally and across levels.
- When dealing with people, try out different strategies depending upon the situation and the people involved.
- Communicate frequently with people in different departments and with internal and external customers to understand their needs.

FSI COURSES:

- PT-213 Seminar for Program Directors

High-Level Competencies (Executive)
Includes all of the Basic, First-level, Mid-Level, plus:
25. Strategic Thinking

Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.

What does this mean?

- Creates goals, objectives and plans for your organization in support of the Department’s overall strategic plan.
- Assesses policy issues and formulates strategic plans with a view to long-term impact and implementation.
- Creates a clear, strategic, purposeful vision.
- Considers and prepares for potential changes (positive or negative).

Why is it important?

- Aligns with the Department’s strategic plan for meeting objectives and achieving results.
- Ability to see the “big picture” impact and deal with issues from a broad long-term perspective rather than a narrow short-term one.
- A clear strategy and objectives aligned with organizational goals helps team members know and execute what is expected of them.
- To adapt/react quickly to obstacles and opportunities as they arise.

How can you develop it?

- Know and understand the Department and Bureau strategic plans and how they affect your work.
- Participate in developing the organization’s performance plan or a goal paper.
- Set aside time for planning.
- Select a key task or function within your organization that would significantly improve results if it were to be done differently. Investigate and develop different approaches for performing the function. Develop a business case that supports a change including such things as strategic repositioning and leverage, resource utilization, cost/benefit and impact analysis, etc. Present your ideas and case to the appropriate groups.
- Examine trends, impact and outcomes, external influences, etc of policy issues with a view towards the long-term.
- Ensure that all team members have clear goals, with deadlines and allocated accountability for the completion of objectives and that they understand how their work supports the organization’s strategic plan.

- Understand and be able to articulate how your team's objectives support the overall goals. Assess your organization's contribution.
- Examine how people in your group are spending their time. Ask team members what their priorities are. Compare how time is spent with stated priorities as well as with the stated goals/mission of the organization. If discrepancies exist, discuss with team members. Use the situation to communicate and focus team effort on organizational goals.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis of your organization. List the internal *strengths* and *weaknesses* and the external *opportunities* and *threats* to the organization. Develop suggestions for new strategic directions.
- Know the organizational competencies/strengths (what do you do well?) of your organization. When a strategic opportunity arises, consider how these strengths can play a role in turning that opportunity into a win for your organization.
- Keep up-to-date on current economical, social, political and technological trends in the external environment. Think of the potential impact these factors may have on the future of your department. Use this information to determine any adjustments your area will have to make to keep on track with accomplishing its objectives.
- Conduct a scenario review and planning session with your team. Lead team members through the process of identifying what could happen in the next six months that could interfere with projects or planned actions. Describe the possible scenarios and their potential impact on resources, both positive and negative. Develop a resource management plan to handle these situations if they should arise.

FSI COURSES:

- PD-529 Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement

26. Vision

Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change; builds a shared vision with others. Influences others to translate vision into action.

What does this mean?

- Analyzing and understanding the necessity for, to seek, to prepare for, to implement and to effectively manage change.
- To build an exciting vision of the future that drives people's effectiveness, commitment and energy at work toward achieving organizational goals.
- Motivates others to find new ways of accomplishing goals and objectives. Engages others to become excited about change, organizational effectiveness and problem-solving.

Why is it important?

- Change offers an opportunity to grow, to see things in a new and better way, to increase one's skills and to streamline process and procedures. If you anticipate and act as a catalyst for change, you will be prepared to deal with the consequences of change, which can include resistance from people and disruptions in daily schedules.
- If people understand and are excited about the overall goals and the way in which those goals affect them personally, they will be productive, forward-thinking and enthusiastic in helping achieve those goals.
- Need to get others to endorse and support your initiatives to translate vision into action.

Competency Development

How can you develop it?

- Develop a plan to implement needed change.
- Discuss people’s reactions to change. Brainstorm ways to make change easier to accept.
- Ask your team what resources and information they need to implement change.
- Map the steps involved in change. Note who the change will affect. Consider the possible results.
- Hold frequent staff meetings where you articulate and ask for input on vision and values.
- Make sure that your organization’s policies, procedures and operations match the Department’s vision and values.
- Brainstorm with your peers and managers for innovative ways to articulate the Department’s vision, values and goals.
- Find ways to shape change instead of reacting to it.
- Conceptualize and articulate your vision of a change initiative. Create a written and verbal presentation of your vision. Deliver a presentation to colleagues for feedback on your presentation style. Put together a communication plan to ensure the vision is visible to all staff. Look for opportunities in your everyday work to express your commitment to the vision.
- Instill into others your passion for an initiative and encourage others to develop commitment. Identify opportunities with your team and emphasize how the current work effort is related to the initiative. Involve staff and stakeholders from the beginning (i.e. solicit input and insight, communicate the vision, involve them in the development of the plan). When goal setting with your team, ensure that they are referencing the initiative as one of the goals to which their specific efforts will deliver.
- Establish “buy-in” and commitment to the organization’s goals. Explore ideas on how to improve group results. Discuss issues that could help or hinder the ability of the group to reach their targets. Keep an open mind about all the issues and positively reinforce members of the team who take risks in suggesting new ways of approaching tasks.
- Spend time developing and living up to a personal vision. Over the next several months, develop a personal vision of what you believe a leader should be. Test if the vision is realistic by practicing it in your daily work. As you develop confidence in your vision, communicate it to the team.
- Create discussion forums to share information and promote organizational vision and values.

FSI COURSES:

- PD-529 Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement
- PT-130 Bureau/Mission Offsite
- PT-206 Managing Change

27. External Awareness

Identifies and keeps up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.

What does this mean?

- Understands and maintains awareness of current issues and events that impact the Department of State and your organization.
- Thinks ahead, identifies trends and devises strategies to take advantage of opportunities.
- Understands the range of issues and variables that impact the organization's success and applies these to decision making.
- Recognizes vulnerabilities and possible threats.

Why is it important?

- The ability to recognize and address the implications of global trends and events will better prepare you to minimize the negative impacts and capitalize on the positive ones.
- To systematically and rigorously use information about past, present and possible future trends to make decisions and to understand and interpret complex cause and effect relationships.

How can you develop it?

- Set performance objectives or goals related to improving your global perspective.
- Stay abreast of world events by reading newspapers and magazines daily.
- Develop a habit of asking yourself how specific international or national events affect your organization.
- Brainstorm about long-term implications and come up with ideas for being prepared to act on the possible results.
- Attend orientations and briefings that affect your organization.
- Develop concrete action plans to accomplish strategic goals.

FSI COURSES:

- PG-501 The Senior Seminar
- PG-140 Political/Economic Tradecraft
- *Any FSI advanced area studies course*

Guide to Training at FSI

All employees are encouraged to take advantage of the training opportunities available internally and externally to enhance their support of bureau goals and their own professional development.

- **Internal Training**
- **Completing the DS-755**
- **External Training**
- **Early Morning Language Classes**
- **FasTrac**
- **Distance Learning**
- **Contractor Training**
- **No Show Policy at FSI**

Please visit http://fsiweb.fsi.state.gov/ intranet site for information about course offerings and schedules.

Internal Training

Application Process for Direct-Hire State Department Employees:

All requests for internal training offered through the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (FSI) **must** be submitted on form DS-755, approved by your supervisor and your Bureau Training Officer.

Note: Supervisor and Training Officer authorization is **required** for all training requests except the *FasTrac Program* (supervisor approval only).

Many FSI courses allow you to apply online:

1. Choose your course and section schedule through the online FSI Course Catalog.

2. Click the "Apply Now" button.

3. Complete the online DS-755 Request for Training form.

4. Your application will be routed electronically to your supervisor and training officer for approval.

Note: It is vital that all e-mail addresses are entered correctly. If they are not, your application will be delayed. You will receive enrollment confirmation e-mails throughout the approval process and when your application has been fully approved and processed by the FSI Office of the Registrar.

General Instructions for Completing the DS-755 Training Form

This form is to be used by Department of State employees and family members only.

1. The employee's full name must be used.

2. Employee category is needed for reporting purposes.

3. Office address may be needed for mailing materials or sending a confirmation notice.

4. E-mail address is needed to send confirmation notice or other information.

5. The correct course code, title, and section are found in this catalog.

6., 7. and 8. The beginning date, ending date, and length of the course are found in this catalog, the online course catalog, and Department Notices.

9. A phone number is needed for contact purposes.

10. Indicate highest security clearance level. Some courses have security clearance requirements.

11. Check the course delivery mechanism you want to use. Some courses have multiple methods of delivery.

12. State employee's parent agency. Should be State. This form is to be used by the Department of State employees and family members only.

13. The social security number provides access to the student enrollment system. Failure to provide this information may result in delaying the applicant's enrollment and, in some cases, the opportunity to take a course if the course fills prior to information being obtained.

14. Sex (gender) is needed for identification purposes.

15. Pay plan (e.g., FS, GS, FSN) is needed to determine eligibility and for reporting purposes.

16. Pay grade is needed to determine eligibility and for reporting purposes.

17. Date of birth is required for identification purposes.

18. Present and proposed assignment is important for FS employees.

19., 20., 21. and 22. Supervisor's typed name, signature and contact information required for approval and confirmation purposes.

23., 24., 25. and 26. Training Officer's type name, signature and contact information required for approval and confirmation purposes.

27. Provide any information that will assist in your enrollment, such as information pertaining to ADA accommodation requirements. Please forward an e-mail to the school sponsoring your training outlining accommodation requirements.

External Training

FSI's Office of the Registrar manages the External Training Program (training given outside of the State Department, at other government agencies or through private vendors) for Department of State employees, whether bureau funded or funded by FSI. This office is required by regulation to maintain all external training records.

Application procedures:

To request external training, a completed SF-182 "Request, Authorization, Agreement, and Certification of Training" form and a signed DS-3070, "Training Agreement", form should be sent to the bureau Training Officer. If the training exceeds 80 hours, the Section G "Continued Service Agreement" of the SF-182 must be signed and included with the request. A copy of the course description, showing the tuition cost, should be attached. For after-hours or college/university courses, please complete and include the DS-4025, "Application for Sponsorship of After-Hours Study", or a justification memorandum. After review and approval by the bureau Training Officer, these forms are forwarded to the Office of the Registrar, FSI, External Training Coordinator for final review and approval.

The Office of the Registrar reviews training requests using the following criteria:

- A course of the same or similar content is not available at FSI. In those cases where there are questions regarding duplication, the training request will be sent to the appropriate School.
- The training is job- or career-related.
- There are no outstanding training evaluations from prior courses funded by the Department.
- Language training, conferences, seminars and FSN training may not be funded through FSI's External Training funds, but may be funded by bureaus/posts.

Please contact your bureau Training Officer or the External Training Coordinator for information on FSI External Training funding limits. Tuition costs may not be split. FSI External Training funding is limited to one course per employee per fiscal quarter.

Additional Information Regarding External Training

Tuition for training does not include the costs for books, registration fees, travel or per diem. Bureaus, however, may decide to fund these costs separately out of their own budgets. Fees for extension of time in correspondence courses are the responsibility of the employee.

All training MUST be approved and funded *prior* to enrollment. No reimbursement will be made for training costs after training has begun or been completed.

Students who withdraw from an external training program for other than officially-approved reasons, who fail to complete training satisfactorily, or who voluntarily terminate their employment before completing training, may be required to pay the cost of the training.

Funding of conferences and seminars is the responsibility of the bureau, however employees must submit an SF-182 training request package for FSI approval in advance of the event.

In general, FSI enrolls the student in the class upon their approval, *however*, some institutions may require you to pre-register. It is the employee's responsibility to ascertain space availability in a class and pre-register if necessary, before submitting the SF-182 for approval.

Once FSI has approved the external training and has sent the paperwork to the vendor, you will receive a confirmation notice of enrollment via email**. It is the employee's responsibility to follow up with the institution to ensure they are enrolled in the class.** Do not wait until the eve of the class to do this. Paperwork does go awry so it is in your best interest to contact the learning institution directly and early in the process.

The External Training Coordinator at FSI can be reached at 703-302-7145 or 7143.

Reminder: *ALL* external training *must* be approved by FSI regardless if it is Bureau-funded or FSI-funded.

Early Morning Language Classes

Purpose:
The FSI Early Morning Language Program is for Federal employees with a job-related need for proficiency in a foreign language. Early Morning training should not be viewed as a substitute for intensive language study, but rather as "headstart," "maintenance," or "refresher" training.

When:
Classes meet Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. Training is offered in several languages during two 17-week semesters.

Where:
Classes are held at FSI, Main State, and SA-44.

Languages Offered:
Early Morning training is offered in twelve languages. The number of Early Morning classes in some languages is limited as follows:
ONE class each in Dari, Farsi, German, Italian, Japanese, Pashto, and Portuguese. Classes are also offered in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish.

Admissions Policy:
Classes are generally limited to six students. In all cases, there must be at least three qualified applicants at approximately the same proficiency level and for the same venue to justify starting a class. FSI may need to contact some applicants by telephone before making final admission decisions. If more requests are received than can be accommodated, preference will be given to those applicants whose need for the language is most immediate and directly job-related.

Students are required to attend at least 80% of class hours to remain enrolled or receive credit for the training. Bureaus are assessed a penalty when employees fail to complete the program.

Registration:
Prospective Early Morning Language students must complete two application forms:
(1.) Training Request Form DS-755, and
(2.) Application Form DS-3043. (Pre-Registration Early Morning Language Class)

FasTrac

FasTrac is a government-wide distance-learning program comprised of thousands of courses in business, information technology, leadership and management, among others. Funded through FSI, the program is available on the Internet via the FSILearnCenter, allowing access at anytime, anywhere -- from home, work or wherever is convenient. A single password provides access to the entire course library on an annual basis, and is renewable, provided the user completes a minimum of one course per year. Certain minimum system requirements are necessary. The courses are self-paced and usually take between two and eight hours to complete. Employees should discuss with, and must obtain the approval of, their supervisor regardless of whether they use the program during work hours or from home. An agreed-upon amount of time during duty hours should be allocated for this distance learning effort.

Audience:
Department of State employees who are on a fixed schedule appointment that is over one year in duration. This includes Foreign Service, Civil Service, Foreign Service Nationals, and Personal Services Contractors. Eligible Family Members of Foreign Service employees may also enroll.

Schedule:
As arranged between employee and supervisor.

Enrollment Procedures:
To enroll, complete the online DS-755. Contact the FSI Distance Learning Coordinator.

Tuition:
The Foreign Service Institute has funded access to the entire FasTrac distance learning program for Department of State employees and Eligible Family Members.

Distance Learning

FSI is committed to making learning accessible. Therefore, a variety of distance learning options are available:

Text-Based
Instruction provided by mail, through the exchange of lessons and examinations between the department and the student. All materials are text-based; however, communication with a department contact is available via e-mail.

Online
Instruction provided via the Department of State's OpenNet or Internet, usually through the FSI LearnCenter. All communication between instructor and student is electronic, as is the submission of assignments and examinations.

CD-ROM
Instruction provided on a compact disc, with read-only-memory, designed to store computer data in the form of text and graphics. The format may be interactive through the use of a variety of technologies; however the exchange of information is not. Communication with a department contact may be available as directed in the specific course description.

Blended
Any possible combination of educational delivery methods (i.e., classroom with online, online with text-based, classroom with CD-Rom, etc.) that maximizes the student's learning experience.

In some courses, you can set your own pace; in others, you will be mentored, or guided by an instructor. Distance learning is a convenient and highly personalized way to learn.

Distance learning courses are available in Administrative Management, Economic and Commercial Affairs, certain languages, and technology.

For a full listing visit: http://fsi.state.gov/admin/reg/default.asp?Cat=Distance%20Learning&special=1

Contractor Training at FSI

The Department's policy has been to select contractors for their knowledge and expertise in a specific subject area. Firms under contract to the Department to furnish services generally win their contracts based in part upon the education, experience and training of the personnel they propose. For the Department to provide training and related services after contract award to a contractor's staff could relieve the contractor of a management responsibility the Government expected from the contractor when the contract was awarded. For instance, in some IT service solicitations, the evaluation of each contractor's proposal may have included an evaluation of their training plan. Additionally, to give training to contractor's employees at the taxpayer's expense (out of program monies) is to relieve the contractor of those expenses and thus provide the contractor with unearned profit.

In 1998, Congress authorized FSI to initiate a pilot program to provide training to employees of Department contractors at FSI on a space available and reimbursable basis. The contractor may fund the training, and Bureaus are permitted to pay for the training when appropriate. The FY 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act made this program permanent. FSI schools determine which courses may be open to contractors, and any requirements such as security clearances. Check with the FSI Office of the Registrar to determine course eligibility.

FSI may admit Department contractors to a very small number of "State-specific" courses on a no-fee basis. These courses provide training in areas that are needed for job performance that are specific to the Department of State, such that the employee would not have been able to acquire the training prior to beginning work on a contract, such as CableXpress training. State-specific courses are determined in consultation with the Office of the Legal Adviser, the Office of the Procurement Executive, and the Resource Management Bureau.

A/OPE and FSI are establishing policy under this Department Notice on providing training to employees of Department contractors. The policy is as stated above and includes the following responsibilities. It does not apply to personal services contractors.

Requiring Office Responsibilities

Offices that have determined it appropriate to provide training to employees of Department contractors shall prepare a memorandum to the Contracting Officer through the Contracting Officer's Representative. The memorandum must indicate the training classes recommended and the reasons why it is appropriate to provide the training. Any training provided to contractor employees must be in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract, whether the training is provided on a reimbursable basis or not. The memorandum shall include places for the Contracting Officer to indicate his/her approval or disapproval of the request. The Contracting Officer's Representative is responsible for notifying the contractor of the Contracting Officer's decision.

Contracting Officer's Representative Responsibilities

- Review the terms and conditions of the contract to determine if the training is authorized.
- If the training is authorized, prepare the memorandum requesting the training, citing the section of the contract that authorizes the training. If the contract is silent on whether such training is authorized (e.g., at the time the contract was awarded, the need for such training was not established or contemplated), then the memorandum must describe the need for the training.
- Notify the contractor of the Contracting Officer's decision. If the training is approved, advise the contractor that their employee may attend the training on a space available and reimbursable or no-fee basis.
- Prepare the training request for submission to FSI (SF-182 for reimbursable training; DS-755 for no-fee training). Attach a copy of the memorandum indicating the Contracting Officer's approval. The Contracting Officer is **not** required to sign the SF-182 or the DS-755.

Contractor Training at FSI

Contracting Officer Responsibilities
Upon receipt of the memorandum requesting training for an employee of a Department contractor, the Contracting Officer shall:

- Review the terms and conditions of the contract.
- If the training is not authorized under the terms and conditions of the contract, sign the “Disapproved” line, identify the section of the contract that applies, and return the request to the Contracting Officer’s Representative. If the contract is silent on whether such training is authorized, determine if the need is consistent with the contract requirements.
- If the training is authorized under the contract, sign the “Approved” line, and return the request to the Contracting Officer’s Representative.

Questions regarding this Department Notice may be addressed to Gladys Gines, Policy Division, Office of the Procurement Executive (A/OPE); office phone: 703-516-1691; fax: 703-875-6155; or e-mail at ginesgg@state.gov. Questions may also be addressed to the FSI Office of the Registrar; office phone: 703-302-7143/44.

Enrollment procedures for Third-party Contractors taking courses other than Department-specific courses:

- **SF-182 for registration**. The Bureau Training Officer and Authorizing Officer must sign the SF-182 when the Bureau is funding the course.
- The Bureau Training Officer must sign the SF-182 even if the Corporation is paying for the course.
- Contractor memorandum signed by the Contracting Officer that there is a job-related need.

Third-party Contractors taking Department-specific courses:

- DS-755 Training request
- Contractor Memorandum

Employees Detailed to State:

- SF-182 for registration signed by both the Training Officer and Authorizing Officer and a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Contractor Training at FSI

Sample Memorandum for Contractor Training

[Date]

MEMORANDUM

TO: [*Contracting Officer's name and office designation*]

FROM: [*Contracting Officer's Representative's name and office designation*]

SUBJECT: Contractor Training Request

In accordance with contract number [*insert contract number*], I hereby request that you approve this training request for the following contractor employees:

Contractor Employee Name(s)	**FSI Training Course**
[*List name(s) of employee(s)*]	[*List FSI course by course number and name*]

The course: ☐ is ☐ is not designated as State-specific [*Check one*]

Contract Authorization

[*Use one of the following paragraphs, depending on whether the training is authorized in the contract.*]

This training is authorized in accordance with section [*insert section or paragraph citation*] of the above-referenced contract.

OR

The contract does not specifically authorize this training. However, the contractor employees need to take this training [*explain why the training is needed, including why the contractor cannot obtain this training from an outside source. Cite specific contract requirements that cannot be met unless the training is obtained.*]

Contracting Officer Decision

Approved:______________________________ Date:____________

[*Contracting Officer Signature*]

Disapproved: ____________________________ Date:____________

[*Contracting Officer Signature*]

No Show Policy at FSI

No Show and Incomplete Policy for State Department Employees Enrolled in Training at the Foreign Service Institute

Since 1995, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has implemented a policy of charging Department bureaus for penalties incurred when employees fail to attend or complete FSI classes. The purpose of this Notice is to remind Department employees of the policy and provide information about how it works.

For FSI regularly scheduled courses, "no shows" are students who register for a class but fail to attend. "Incompletes" are students who attend less than 80% of a course (90% for courses held at the Warrenton Training Center). At the discretion of FSI, a waiver may be granted in cases of illness or family emergency.

Employees are responsible for confirming their status in courses for which they enroll. Employees should be aware of their training schedule, and cancel a course enrollment if they will not be able to fulfill their obligation to attend a class. Course cancellation procedures are outlined in the *FSI Schedule of Courses* and on the FSI web page (http://fsi.state.gov) on the Department's OpenNet. Due to the high demand for training, cancellations must be received in writing by the Office of the Registrar 703-302-7137/7144 (not the training division) at least five (5) working days before the course begins. For non-State personnel paying by credit card, cancellations must be received at least ten (10) working days before the course begins. A qualified substitute may replace the original enrollee to avoid the penalty when there is insufficient time to cancel.

The training divisions report attendance data to the FSI Office of the Registrar. On a quarterly basis, the Registrar's Office provides the FSI Budget and Management Office with a report of No Shows and Incompletes by bureau. The Budget and Management Office bills Department bureaus for the penalties. The penalty for a no-show is equal to the tuition cost of the course. The penalty for an incomplete is one-half the tuition cost. Bureaus may provide information sufficient to excuse or waive a penalty. The bill is adjusted accordingly.

FSI submits a consolidated report to the Bureau of Resource Management (RM/BP) and requests that funds be transferred from the responsible bureau to FSI. Our goal is to maximize training resources, and **not** to augment FSI funds at the expense of other bureaus. Our preference is for employees to show up for training!

Cross-Training Record Sheet

Date Training Program is established:_____________

For the purposes of cross-training, the following will act as:
Instructor:____________________________________
Student:______________________________________

The procedure(s) to be taught/learned:
Important Factors that must be conveyed are:
____
____
____
____

Training Sessions (if applicable) will be held: (It is best to schedule the training at regular intervals.)
____
____
____
____

Training is to be completed by:____

Periodic assessment of progress. This should be based on a time-frame for completion of training. For example, during a two-month training course, there might be four progress reports:

Date(s):____

Student's Final Assessment: ____
____
____
____

Instructor's Final Assessment: ____
____
____
____

Supervisor's Comments: ____
____
____
____

Learning Journals

A Learning Journal is a collection of reflective comments concerning educational and practice activities or events. It could contain an entry for each developmental activity, meeting, discussion, training class or workshop that you participate in and regard as relevant to your learning plan.

Choose from one of the three sample formats that follow (each has a slightly different emphasis) or make up one of your own or incorporate all three.

Learning Journal

Date:____________ **Learning Activity** ______________________

1. What were the goals and objectives?

2. What did I review?

3. What did I learn that was new?

4. What did I find that was most useful?

5. What did I not find useful?

6. How can I apply what I learned in practice?

7. Any additional thoughts…..

Learning Journal

Date: ____________ **Learning Activity:** ____________

1. What did I learn today?

2. What did I find interesting?

3. What did I find puzzling?

4. What learning highs did I experience?

5. What learning lows did I experience?

6. What do I feel about the way I am approaching the issue, subject or topic?

7. How can I improve my learning techniques?

8. What do I need to know more about?

Learning Journal

Businessballs.com Alan Chapman

Date:_____________ **Learning Activity:** ____________________

1. What happened or what did I do? (the event, action, facts)

2. How did/do I feel about it? Whom do I feel like blaming? (express it if necessary and move on)

3. What is my honest objective assessment of what happened and the causes?

4. What can I take from this? (analysis, learning, lessons, opportunities for change/improvement)

5. What improvement do I want to make or assist? (better capability or prevention of recurrence)

6. What do I need to do or learn to achieve this? (actions and aims, justification, approval, help, etc.)

7. How will I measure and know that I've succeeded in this? (SMART- specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound)

8. What aspect of my job or development does this relate to? (job description, training plan, etc.)

Self-Assessment Worksheet

What do you like to do?

What can you do well?

What makes work meaningful to you?

What skills do you already have?

What level of education do you have (or would be willing to get)?

What work experience do you have?

What kind of training do you have (or would be willing to get)?

What motivates you on the job?

What are your expectations from work?

What type of lifestyle do you want?

Your Interests

Which types of activities do you enjoy?
Add as many of your interests as you can think of. Then decide which are your strongest interests and circle them.

Solving problems	Being physically active
Working with facts and figures	Using your imagination
Building or fixing things	Helping people
Convincing others	Creating things

Your Abilities

Which of the following activities do you do well?
List all of your abilities. Then decide which are your strongest ones and circle them.

Noticing differences in detail and recognizing errors.

Learning scientific and technical principles and gathering information systematically.

Planning and developing projects, coordinating and handling details.

Listening, expressing feelings and getting along well with others.

Working with numbers.

Creating things and using your imagination.

Imagining in three dimensions (e.g. blueprints).

Using and understanding words and ideas.

Performing physical tasks.

Understanding how things work and putting them together.

____

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Your Skills

Your skills are abilities you have learned to apply.
List as many of your skills as you can. Then circle ones you want to use or develop further in the future.

Self-management skills *include personality traits like being dependable, responsible and having a positive attitude. What words would you use to describe your best characteristics?*

Transferable skills *such as social skills, communication skills, leadership and problem solving skills can be applied in many different situations. What transferable skills do you have?*

Technical skills *are the skills you need for a particular job (e.g. mechanics need specific auto repair skills).*

Your Values

Which of the following values motivate you? *Add your own.*

- helping society
- dealing with the public
- competition
- variety
- independence
- prestige
- personal satisfaction
- security
- being in a position to make important decisions
- getting respect from others
- having time to pursue other activities
- having the opportunity to learn new things
- protecting the environment
- ______________________ ______________________
- ______________________ ______________________
- ______________________ ______________________
- ______________________ ______________________
- ______________________ ______________________
- ______________________ ______________________
- ______________________ ______________________

Other Considerations

Think about your past work experiences. What would you like to be the same, and what would you want to be different in your future jobs?

____

____

____

____

What were your best subjects at school? Would you be willing to go back to school? If so, for how long?

____

____

____

____

What kind of environment do you like to work in (*outdoors, near home, in the city, with a small group of people*)?

____

____

____

____

Job Competency Profile

Competency	Core Competency?	Importance		
		Low	Med	High
Written Communication				
Oral Communication				
Problem Solving				
Customer Service				
Interpersonal Skills				
Self-Direction				
Accountability				
Integrity/Honesty				
Technical Credibility				
Decisiveness				
Team Building				
Flexibility				
Conflict Management				

Department/Job Competencies

Competency	Low	Med	High

The competencies listed in this Job Competency Profile are merely examples. You need to insert the competencies relating to your job and work environment.

Example Competency Self-assessment

Problem Solving	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies and analyzes problems.	X		I have trouble isolating the issue. I will spend more time identifying the problem.
B. Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions.		X	
C. Provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.	X		I need to speak up when I have ideas and solutions that will benefit the organization.

Customer Service	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Balancing interests of a variety of clients, readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands.	X		I have trouble establishing priorities and tend to be reactive rather than proactive. I will learn more about the work process and how this impacts my service to my customers.
B. Anticipates and meets the need of clients.	X		I will get to know the needs of my customers better through the use of a survey.
C. Achieves quality end-products.		X	
D. Is committed to continuous improvement of services.		X	I will demonstrate this commitment by continually monitoring output and seeking customer input.

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Oral Communication	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals and groups.			
B. Listens effectively and clarifies information as needed.			
C. Facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters and atmosphere of open communication.			

Written Communication	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner.			

Problem Solving	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies and analyzes problems.			
B. Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions.			
C. Provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.			

Customer Service	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Balancing interests of a variety of clients, readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands.			
B. Anticipates and meets the need of clients.			
C. Achieves quality end-products.			
D. Is committed to continuous improvement of services.			

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Interpersonal Skills	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings and capabilities of different people in different situations.			
B. Is tactful, compassionate and sensitive and teats others with respect.			

Continual Learning	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Grasps the essence of new information.			
B. Masters new technical and business knowledge.			
C. Recognizes own strengths and weaknesses.			
D. Pursues self-development.			
E. Seeks feedback from others and seeks opportunities to master new knowledge.			

Flexibility	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Is open to change and new information.			
B. Adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions or unexpected obstacles.			
C. Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.			

Decisiveness	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions.			
B. Perceives the impact and implications of decisions.			
C. Makes effective and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences.			
D. Is proactive and achievement oriented.			

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Political Savvy	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization.			
B. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality.			
C. Recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.			

Technical Credibility	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to specialized expertise.			
B. Is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs.			
C. Understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.			

Leveraging Diversity	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Recruits, develops and retains a diverse, high-quality workforce in an equitable manner.			
B. leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results.			
C. Respects, understands, values and seeks out individual differences to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.			
D. Develops and uses measures and rewards to hold self and others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.			

Resilience	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Deals effectively with pressure.			
B. Maintains focus and intensity and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity.			
C. Recovers quickly from setbacks.			
D. Effectively balances personal life and work.			

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Conflict Management	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations.			
B. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.			

Team Building	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Inspires, motivates and guides others toward goal accomplishment.			
B. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships.			
C. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with customer groups.			
D. Fosters commitment, team spirit, pride and trust.			
E. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding and guiding employees.			

Influencing/Negotiating	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Persuades others.			
B. Builds consensus through give and take.			
C. Gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.			
D. Facilitates “win-win” situations.			

Human Resources Management	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities.			
B. Using merit principles ensures staff are appropriately selected, developed, utilized and rewarded.			
C. Takes corrective action.			

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Accountability	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Assures effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization.			
B. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities.			
C. Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget.			
D. Monitors and evaluates plans.			
E. Focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.			

Integrity/Honesty	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Instills mutual trust and confidence.			
B. Creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics.			
C. Behaves in a fair and ethical manner towards others.			
D. Demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.			

Creativity & Innovation	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements.			
B. Creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation.			
C. Designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.			

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Financial Management	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels.			
B. Prepares, justifies and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies; identifies cost-effective approaches.			
C. Manages procurement and contracting.			

Technology Management	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness.			
B. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision-making.			
C. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.			

Entrepreneurship	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization.			
B. Is wiling to take risks.			
C. Initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.			

Service Motivation	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Creates and sustains an organizational culture which encourages others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance.			
B. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well.			
C. Shows a commitment to public service.			
D. Influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.			

Competency Self-assessment Worksheet

Partnering	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities.			
B. Collaborates across boundaries and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders.			
C. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.			

Strategic Thinking	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy.			
B. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective.			
C. Determines objectives and sets priorities.			
D. Anticipates potential threats or opportunities .			

Vision	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change.			
B. Builds a shared vision with others.			
C. Influences others to translate vision into action.			

External Awareness	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs
A. Identifies and keeps up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political and social trends that affect the organization.			
B. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.			

Role Specific Competencies

Competency	Below Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Comments on Strengths/ Developmental Needs

Feedback Form

Please give your opinion…
Would you please take a few moments to respond to the following statements.
Your candid feedback will help me do a better job in the future.

Feedback Giver (optional) ____________________ **Date:**__________

Feedback Requested On:____________________________

Please check the appropriate box:

1- Strongly Agree
2- Agree
3- Disagree
4- Strongly Disagree

	1	2	3	4
Contributed toward achieving the desired result.				
Was cooperative and supportive of others during the work.				
Communicated clearly and accurately, and listened to others.				
Demonstrated commitment and dedication to work.				
Appropriately represented customers throughout the duration of the work.				
Demonstrated learning over the duration of the work.				

Please use the space below to let me know what I am doing well and how I can do it even better. What other areas could I strengthen?

____

____

____

Please return to: ____________________ Thank you for your comments.

Decision-Making Worksheet

State the decision you need to make. Be as specific as possible.

Use this chart to evaluate your options. List each option and for each one, list all the advantages relating to it. List one, two or three checkmarks to indicate how strong an advantage it is. Next list all the disadvantages for each option. Use X, XX, or XXX to indicate how strong a disadvantage it is. When you have completed the chart, review the checks and X's for each option, weighing each carefully to make your decision.

		Advantages		**Disadvantages**
Option #1				
Option #2				
Option #3				

State the **FINAL DECISION** you have made:

ONE FINAL CHECK: Does the decision "feel" right? If not, review your chart- perhaps you missed noting some advantages and disadvantages.

Development Plan

Name:	Title:	Office:

Learning and Development Goal:

What action will I take to achieve this goal? *(Consider both on-the-job and formal learning initiatives)*	**Timelines**	**How will I know I've been successful?**	**Who will I get feedback from?**

Learning and Development Goal:

What action will I take to achieve this goal? *(Consider both on-the-job and formal learning initiatives)*	**Timelines**	**How will I know I've been successful?**	**Who will I get feedback from?**

Individual's Commitment	Signature:	Date:
Supervisor's Support	Signature:	Date:

Training Evaluation & Feedback

www.businessballs.com

Name: ____________________

Course Title & Date: ______________________________________

	a lot	some	a little	none	Specific highlights and/or suggested improvements?
Enjoyment: Did I enjoy the course?					
New Knowledge and ideas: Did I learn what I needed to and did I get some new ideas?					
Applying the learning: Will I use the information and ideas?					
Effect on results: Do I think that the ideas and information will improve my effectiveness and my results?					
Any other comments?					

Learning Contract

Pre & Post Training

Submit with SF 182, Training Request

Name:
Office/Bureau:
Date(s) of Training:

Employee **(Pre-training review – In advance of course registration)**

Please attach a copy of course description or brochure which describes course content, learning objectives and precepts/competencies addressed by the training session to this form.

- Identify the learning goals and your purpose for enrollment in this training. *"This is what I plan to learn"*

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- Identify activities, projects, and new assignments for skills application upon return from training. *"This is how I will go about applying what I learn"*

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<u>**Supervisor & Employee**</u> Discuss and agree on the following:

- How will you measure the results of the training? (Expected outcome) "*This is how I will demonstrate or prove that I have achieved my learning objectives"*

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Supervisory Approval for expected outcome: ______________________________

<u>**Post-Activity Review**</u> (60 – 90 Days following completion of Training)
Verification of expected outcome:______________________________
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Student: **Date:**

Supervisor: **Date:**

Development Self-Study Activity

The following is a Self-study activity to apply new concepts and skills to practical, everyday work situations. It is designed to help you transfer the concepts to your everyday work tasks and to develop your coaching skills. Each activity follows a 3-step model:

Prepare: Think about what you want to accomplish during the activity. What are your goals?

Apply: The activity might be a task you want to complete or a skill you practice. There are guidelines to help you carry out each activity.

Review: Think about how you did. What observations do you have? How might you improve in the future?

These activities will be more valuable if you do them under the guidance of a mentor. Before you apply new concepts or skills on the job, you can discuss what you want to accomplish with your mentor. After you complete the on-the-job task, you can discuss the outcome with your mentor. If you don't have a formal mentor, consider asking a colleague whose coaching/mentoring skills you admire to help you with the activities.

Career Work Activity 1: Observing

Task: Choose a situation that requires you to observe behavior to better understand a problem.

1. Prepare: **What are your goals for the activity?**

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2. Apply: **Confirm when, where, and with whom you will apply these skills.**

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Guidelines:

1. As you observe others, separate observations from judgments. Refrain from making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.
2. Be careful not to apply different standards of objectivity to different people. Guard against any biases.
3. Observe how a person's behavior affects others in the group. Observe how a person's behavior impacts his or her individual goals or group goals.
4. As you begin to form any theories about the situation you observe, consider how you might be contributing to the problem.

3. Review: **Write your thoughts about the activity.**

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4. What single change could make the biggest difference in how you observe others?

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Coaching Tips: Are You Part of the Problem?

Take a close look at your own behavior when you are coaching someone you think is a problem performer:

- Be careful not to use your own past performance as a yardstick to measure others.
- Consider whether it is hard for you to identify with the person having the problem.
- Consider whether you are frustrated that you must deal with a problem along with other work and whether that frustration is interfering with your ability to coach well.
- Ask yourself if you have passed up chances to listen to the person.
- Ask yourself if you remember to give positive feedback as well as negative.
- Ask yourself if you are acting as a good role model.
- If necessary, a reality check with a trusted colleague might be useful.

Work Activity 2: Questioning & Listening

Task: Choose a situation that requires an extended conversation to better understand an issue. Practice your questioning and listening skills.

1. Prepare: **What are your goals for the activity?**

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2. Apply: **Confirm when, where, and with whom you will apply these skills.**

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Guidelines:

1. Try asking different types of questions: closed, open and probing. Observe the different types of responses and where they lead.
2. Try to concentrate on what the other person is saying, and refrain from thinking about other things, such as your reply. If possible, monitor what you think about while you are listening.
3. Make sure you don't respond to distractions, such as your telephone or computer. If possible, monitor what you do, physically, while you are listening.
4. Observe how much you talk, if you interrupt, and whether you tend to lead the conversation.

3. Review: **Write your thoughts about the activity.**

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4. What single change could make the biggest difference in how you observe others?

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Work Activity 2: Questioning & Listening

Coaching Tips: Techniques for Active Listening

Verbal techniques:

- Paraphrase, in your own words, to clarify what you have heard.
- Check for understanding. Ask the other person to paraphrase what they have heard.
- Use casual phrases, such as “I see,” to indicate that you understand and to encourage the speaker to continue.
- Speak in a friendly and relaxed tone of voice that encourages openness.

Non-Verbal techniques:

- Avoid distractions. Put your work aside. Don’t answer the phone.
- Smile and be open. Nod to indicate you understand.
- Don’t interrupt. Focus your attention on the speaker. Wait to speak.
- Be relaxed, yet attentive.
- Look for non-verbal cues from the speaker.

Coaching Tips: Examples of Open and Closed Questions

Open questions invite a person to elaborate:

- How’s the project going?
- What are the most important issues?
- What would happen if….?
- How do you feel about….?

Closed questions invite a “yes or no” response:

- Is the project on schedule?
- So the critical issue is lack of resources?

Work Activity 3: Giving Feedback

Task: Choose a situation in which you need to give negative and positive feedback.

1. Prepare: **What are your goals for the activity?**

2. Apply: **Confirm when, where, and with whom you will apply these skills.**

Guidelines:

1. Give feedback that is specific and descriptive. Base your feedback on observable behavior.
2. Tie the feedback to its impact on other people, or to the impact on the goals of the individual or the group.
3. Give the negative feedback. Observe how it feels to give negative feedback when it is tied to observable behavior and its impact on others. Observe how the feedback is received.
4. Give the positive feedback. Make it more specific than the typical "good job." Observe how the feedback is received.

3. Review: **Write your thoughts about the activity.**

4. What single change could make the biggest difference in how you observe others?

Work Activity 3: Giving Feedback

Coaching Tips: Effective Feedback

Effective Feedback is:

- Timely (but wait for any emotions to cool down.)
- Descriptive and paints a vivid picture.
- Specific- not vague and general.
- Focused on behavior and its impact on others or on goals.
- Clear and simple.
- Motivated by a sincere desire to help.

Coaching Tips: Giving Feedback to Uncommunicative People

- Rehearse how you will respond if there is no reaction. Practice speaking slowly and taking long pauses so the other person has a chance to speak.
- Make it clear that you expect a reply and are willing to wait for one.
- Ask open ended questions that help the person come up with a plan.

Coaching Tips: Giving Feedback in a Volatile Situation

- Rehearse how you will respond to excited outbursts. Practice how you will refocus the other person.
- Write down your points, so you can refer to them when things get rough.
- Speak slowly and calmly.
- Focus on just the work-related facts.
- Avoid comments that could be misconstrued as judgmental.
- Work on building small agreements about the basic details, what happened and when.
- Keep the feedback simple- limit yourself to one or two issues per session.

Work Activity 4: Gaining Agreement

Task: Choose a problem for which there is a range of opinions and possible solutions.

1. Prepare: **What are your goals for the activity?**

2. Apply: **Confirm when, where, and with whom you will apply these skills.**

Guidelines:

1. Go into the conversation with an open mind. Don't offer a solution. Instead, invite the other person to explore a variety of possible solutions. Be open to alternatives.
2. Don't judge the merits of different options at this point. Keep exploring. See if you can discover any options that you did not previously think about.
3. Together, examine the merits of the options. Narrow the options until you agree on a solution. If appropriate, express the solution in terms of specific changes in behavior.
4. Observe whether remaining open, rather than suggesting the solution, is new difficult for you. Observe whether the other person responds in any new or unexpected ways.

3. Review: **Write your thoughts about the activity.**

4. What single change could make the biggest difference in how you observe others?

Work Activity 4: Gaining Agreement

Coaching Tips: Establishing the Right Tone

- When you begin a coaching discussion, offer the other person coffee, tea or a soft drink and perhaps a snack. Never underestimate the value of "breaking bread" to establish a more relaxed mood.
- Don't overlook the importance of small talk at the beginning- sincere small talk helps make the other person feel more comfortable and communicative.
- Small talk helps you get to know the other person better. Take your cues from what the small talk reveals about the other person.

Coaching Tips: Getting Off to a Good Start

- In your opening remarks, express sincere respect for the other person's experience and expertise.
- Frame the task positively, as a joint endeavor. Emphasize your openness to the other person's interests and concerns.
- Make sure both parties have a common understanding of the issues to be discussed.

Coaching Tips: Different Approaches for Different Situations

- Indirect: Discuss relevant issues and move gradually to your point. This can be helpful for those who tend to hear feedback as criticism.
- Direct: Get right to the point. This can be necessary for those who haven't responded to feedback or do not appear to care about changing their behavior.

Work Activity 5: Putting It All Together

Task: Choose a relatively easy coaching situation so you can attend to all the skills involved.

1. Prepare: **What are your goals for the activity?**

2. Apply: **Confirm when, where, and with whom you will apply these skills.**

Guidelines:

1. Take the time to carefully observe the person, analyze the problem and thoughtfully prepare for a coaching session.
2. During the discussion, ask open questions and listen attentively. Try to uncover new information.
3. Give specific, descriptive feedback about observed behavior. Tie the behavior to its impact on others or on objectives.
4. Involve the other person. Explore a range of possible options and agree on a solution together. Express the desired outcome in terms of specific changes in behavior.
5. Agree on an action plan. Ask for commitment. Schedule a follow-up meeting. Express confidence in the other person.

3. Review: **Write your thoughts about the activity.**

4. What single change could make the biggest difference in how you observe others?

Work Activity 5: Putting It All Together

Coaching Tips: Developing Coaching Skills

- Ask a lot of open questions. Most managers ask too few.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Act as a good role model. Your direct reports may be mimicking your behavior.
- Don't share confidential information. If you do, your direct reports may lose trust in you.
- Try not to solve other people's problems. They won't learn how to make quality decisions. Guide them instead.
- Don't play psychologist. It's not appropriate and you are probably not qualified.
- Don't pry into an individual's personal life.
- Don't use your own performance as a yardstick to measure others. Assuming that your direct reports have the same motivations or strengths as you do is unrealistic and unfair.

Coaching Tips: Effective Coaching

- Keep the coaching focused to one or two topics.
- Keep the setting comfortable. Make sure you will not be interrupted.
- Set ground rules up front. (For example, what you say is confidential).
- Establish preferred work styles and method of feedback up front. (For example, you like a direct approach so you know where you stand.)
- Set mini milestones to build confidence and maintain motivation.

Work Activity Wrap Up

Think back on the activities and answer each of the following questions. You may want to look back at the Review section of each activity to remember your thoughts and observations.

1. Think about the Work Activities which you completed. For each activity, what change on your part could lead to the most improvement:

Observing:

Questioning & Listening:

Giving Feedback:

Gaining Agreement:

Putting It All Together:

2. Think back on the current challenges you considered for the Work Activities. What is the most important challenge you face?

Work Activity Wrap Up

3. When you carried out the Work Activities, what did you do well?

4. As a result of the Work Activities, are there any areas where you have already noticed improvement:

5. During the Work Activities, what was most difficult for you?

6. Overall, what was the most relevant new idea or skill that you learned?

7. Overall, what is the most critical change that you personally need to make to be successful in your job?

Career Management Through The Life Cycle of Your Work

OPM Competencies

N = Non-Supervisory Competency
S = Supervisory Level Competency
M= Managerial Level Competency
E = Executive Level Competency

FSI Courses / OPM Competencies	Leading Change									Leading People				Business Acumen			Building Coalitions Communications						Results Driven					
	Continual Learning (N)	Creativity & Innovation (M)	Cultural Awareness	External Awareness (E)	Flexibility (N)	Resilience (S)	Service Motivation (M)	Strategic Thinking (E)	Vision (E)	Conflict Management (S)	Leveraging Diversity (S)	Integrity/Honesty(S)	Team Building (S)	Financial Management (M)	Human Resource Management (S)	Technology Management (M)	Influencing/Negotiating (S)	Interpersonal Skills (N)	Oral Communication (N)	Partnering (M)	Political Savvy (N)	Written Communication (N)	Accountability (S)	Customer Service (N)	Decisiveness (N)	Entrepreneurship (M)	Problem Solving (N)	Technical Credibility (N)
Non-Supervisory Courses – Basic Level																												
PN-105 Orientation for Civil Service Employees												✓												✓				✓
PG-101 Orientation for Foreign Service Officers																												
PN-106 Orientation for Foreign Service Specialists																												
PG-140 Political/Economic Tradecraft				✓				✓											✓			✓					✓	
PK-241 Writing Effective Letters and Memos																						✓						
PA-143 Customer Service Training							✓			✓								✓						✓				
PK-240 Effective Speaking and Listening Skills																			✓									
PK-225 Better Office English: Written																						✓						
PK-226 Better Office English: Oral																			✓									
PK-206 Civil Service Office Support Professionals Program	✓												✓					✓	✓			✓		✓				✓
PD-513 Basic Facilitation and Delivery Skills	✓	✓																	✓									✓
PD-512 Training Design Workshop	✓	✓																										
PK-302 Professional Development Seminar for Foreign Service Office Management Specialists																												
Non-Supervisory Courses – Mid Level																												
PT-203 Washington Tradecraft								✓									✓		✓		✓	✓						
PA-137 Management Controls Workshop												✓											✓				✓	
PT-129 Teambuilding													✓					✓									✓	
PT-206 Managing Change					✓				✓				✓															
PP-501 Negotiation Art and Skills								✓			✓		✓				✓		✓								✓	
PP-515 Advanced Negotiation: Solving Negotiation Problems								✓			✓		✓				✓		✓								✓	
PT-212 Creative Problem Solving Workshop		✓				✓		✓		✓	✓									✓								
PT-216 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	✓	✓			✓	✓						✓						✓										
PT-251 Stress Management: Productively Managing Stress	✓				✓	✓																						
PT-252 Managing Up: Working Effectively With Your Manager												✓					✓	✓			✓							
PT-107 EEO/Diversity Awareness for Managers and Supervisors											✓		✓		✓			✓										
PT-227 Managing Your Time Effectively	✓				✓	✓																						
PT-224 Influence By Design													✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	
PD-537 Putting Adult Learning Into Practice	✓	✓																										✓
PT-225 Valuing Diversity in the Workplace			✓										✓					✓										

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FSI Courses / OPM Competencies	Continual Learning (N)	Creativity & Innovation (M)	Cultural Awareness	External Awareness (E)	Flexibility (N)	Resilience (S)	Service Motivation (M)	Strategic Thinking (E)	Vision (E)	Conflict Management (S)	Leveraging Diversity (S)	Integrity/Honesty(S)	Team Building (S)	Financial Management (M)	Human Resource Management (S)	Technology Management (M)	Influencing/Negotiating (S)	Interpersonal Skills (N)	Oral Communication (N)	Partnering (M)	Political Savvy (S)	Written Communication (N)	Accountability (S)	Customer Service (N)	Decisiveness (N)	Entrepreneurship (M)	Problem Solving (N)	Technical Credibility (N)
Supervisory and Managerial Courses																												
PK-245 Basic Leadership Skills					✓						✓	✓	✓					✓	✓								✓	
PT-207 Intermediate Leadership Skills					✓						✓	✓	✓					✓	✓								✓	
PT-107 EEO/Diversity Awareness for Managers and Supervisors											✓		✓		✓			✓										
PK-246 Employee Relations Seminar										✓					✓			✓							✓		✓	✓
PA-224 Basic Administrative Management					✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
PA-221 General Services Operations	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PA-211 Financial Management Officer's Course	✓						✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
PA-231 Human Resources Management Course					✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓			✓					✓	✓				✓
PT-216 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	✓	✓			✓	✓						✓						✓										
PA-160 Domestic Administrative Officer Seminar	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PC-530 Consular Course, Basic							✓												✓				✓	✓				✓
PC-532 Consular Course, Advanced		✓								✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓					✓	✓				
PC-540 Consular Review and Automation Update																✓							✓					
PT-253 Negotiation Skills for Managers					✓					✓		✓					✓		✓						✓		✓	
Supervisory and Managerial Courses																												
PT-208 Managing State Projects													✓							✓							✓	✓
PT-205 Performance Management Seminar													✓		✓			✓	✓									
PT-121 Managing People Problems		✓			✓								✓		✓		✓	✓									✓	
PT-210 Advanced Leadership Skills												✓					✓	✓					✓					
PT-211 Coaching: A Tool for Leading People													✓				✓										✓	
PD-529 Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement								✓																				✓
PD-531 Performance Measurement: Collecting and Managing Data																												✓
PD-532 Performance Measurement: Analyzing and Interpreting Data																											✓	✓
PA-243 Overseas Administrative Management		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PA-245 ICASS Executive Seminar							✓							✓														✓
PT-214 Managing Conflict Productively		✓				✓		✓		✓	✓									✓								
PT-215 Team Leadership													✓				✓	✓									✓	
PT-217 Running Effective Meetings Workshop										✓									✓								✓	
PT-218 Leading In a Diverse Workforce											✓		✓		✓			✓										
PT-206 Managing Change					✓				✓				✓															
PA-234 Advanced Human Resource Management Workshop					✓		✓			✓			✓		✓			✓										✓

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FSI Courses	Leading Change									Leading People				Business Acumen			Building Coalitions Communications						Results Driven					
OPM Competencies	Continual Learning (N)	Creativity & Innovation (M)	Cultural Awareness	External Awareness (E)	Flexibility (N)	Resilience (S)	Service Motivation (M)	Strategic Thinking (E)	Vision (E)	Conflict Management (S)	Leveraging Diversity (S)	Integrity/Honesty(S)	Team Building (S)	Financial Management (M)	Human Resource Management (S)	Technology Management (M)	Influencing/Negotiating (S)	Interpersonal Skills (N)	Oral Communication (N)	Partnering (M)	Political Savvy (S)	Written Communication (N)	Accountability (S)	Customer Service (N)	Decisiveness (N)	Entrepreneurship (M)	Problem Solving (N)	Technical Credibility (N)
Supervisory and Managerial Courses (cont.)																												
PT-135 Manage to Motivate					✓				✓				✓															
PT-134 Managerial Problem Solving and Decision Making																									✓		✓	
PT-221 Four Roles of Leadership									✓						✓					✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
PT-226 Coaching: Part II													✓					✓									✓	
PE-300 Political/Economic Counselors Course																												
Senior Courses																												
PT-209 Executive Overview to Managing State Projects								✓					✓															
PT-218 Leading In a Diverse Workforce											✓		✓		✓			✓										
PT-102 Deputy Chiefs of Mission/Principal Officers Seminar		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	
PT-120 Ambassadorial Seminar																												
PT-213 Starting Right: Seminar for Program Directors								✓	✓				✓							✓	✓							
PT-133 Senior Executive Threshold Seminar		✓						✓			✓	✓	✓				✓		✓						✓		✓	
PT-224 Influence by Design													✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	
Senior Policy Seminars																												
PT-300 Leader as Facilitator: Getting Team Results													✓				✓	✓										
PT-301 Presenting Effectively to the Media																		✓	✓		✓							
PT-302 Testifying Before Congress																		✓	✓		✓							
PT-303 Crisis Leadership								✓	✓				✓							✓					✓		✓	
PT-304 Deputy Assistant Secretary as Leader		✓						✓		✓			✓				✓				✓							
PT-305 Executive as Coach													✓					✓									✓	

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