



5 Actions for Leaders: Development Plans 101

Break through the work clutter and help your team advance. Here are some key points to help facilitate development conversations with your team members, regardless of where they are on their journey.

01. Clarify

While some people have an innate knack for seeing both the big picture and the finer details, many need a bit of extra help. They may have vague ideas of what would be good for both themselves and the team but are unable to translate those thoughts into actionable goals.

To help with this, ask leading questions: What areas of the company or team are of most interest to you? What core skills do you think you need to do your job more effectively? Are there particular roles you've had your eye on?

Hint:

we have a talent development template [<link>](#) you can use for this conversation.

02. Discover their motivations

Help them tie their ideas to both the organizational mission and their own personal career desires. Feeling like they're working toward a specific purpose can help individuals stay on track even when things get tough.

03. Discover their motivations

Once the person is able to articulate a vision for the future and identify why they want to pursue it, help them turn those dreams into a set of SMART goals:

- **Specific.** Clearly define each goal and cover only one topic.
- **Measurable.** There should be a clear method for measuring success.
- **Achievable.** The team member must have the ability to complete the goal.
- **Relevant.** The goal should support the overall vision.
- **Time-Bound.** There must be a deadline that is attainable.

SMART goals are stepping stones toward achieving the overall vision. Taken together, they create a roadmap to where they ultimately want to go. They are small and relatively easy to achieve. Accomplishing each one provides a feeling of success, as well as reassurance that they are heading in the right direction.

04. Make a plan

With a series of small SMART goals in mind, help your team member create a realistic long-term plan. Have them put their goals on a calendar to create milestones--and check in. Then develop a list of specific activities they can perform to meet each goal. For example, if one goal is to skill up in project management, specific activities might include looking into your organization's education assistance program, finding a university that offers a project management certificate, enrolling, completing courses and then sharing their learnings with you and your team.

05. Encourage flexibility and adaptation

One of the biggest lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic was that outside forces can upend even the best-laid plans. Things will happen both externally and internally that can throw off anyone's professional development goals.

Check in regularly to see how things are going, and encourage flexibility when needed. Help your people find the lesson in each situation, and teach them that adaptability is a powerful skill.

As a leader at your organization how are you advancing your team?

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