

A Guide to Owning Your Career Development

You are primarily responsible for your career development, with your supervisor and organization working in partnership to this effort. There are many options and resources available to you for development of your professional career, and an Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a helpful tool to get you started.

What is an IDP?

- A written plan that outlines what career goals you want to accomplish and what steps you can take to meet those goals.
- A tool you can use to identify, organize and plan your career.
- A tool for creating a personalized plan that best reflects your career aspirations, whether you want to plan for professional development, promotional opportunities or retirement in the next few years.

Why Have an IDP?

- To focus your professional efforts and identify individual work goals.
- To use as a communication, development and/or planning tool.
- To assist in obtaining resources, (e.g., scholarships, fee assistance or training funds); some departments request an IDP as part of their professional development program.
- To serve as your career action plan for skill building, professional development and career management.

Know the Purpose of Your IDP

While some think an IDP is a check list and busy work, when used as a tool in your professional development kit it can assist you to reach your career goals. The first step in the IDP process is to have a clear picture of your career goals. This includes self-reflection and career exploration to help you identify the career path that will bring you the most job satisfaction. As you set yourself up for professional success and begin drafting your IDP, think about the following:

1. What makes my work more meaningful?
2. How am I going to leverage my strengths to accomplish these goals?
3. When am I going to do this?

Also look for development opportunities and activities like these that will enhance your talents, such as:

- Volunteering for a temporary assignment
- Cross training and training classes
- Serving on committees or project teams
- Networking with colleagues through professional organizations
- Continuing your education

Keeping it Simple

There are numerous templates and tools available to help create your IDP. A factor to achieving your career goals when using an IDP is to select and use the tool(s) which best fits your work style.

This IDP package provides you with an assortment of tools and templates from which to choose. Perhaps you have created your own method for recording and tracking your career goals? Whichever tool you use know that it is important to share your goals and your progress through check-ins with your supervisor, manager, and/or mentor at a minimum once every three months.

Environmental Scan

Since each of us is the CEO of our career, let us approach an IDP as an entrepreneur would – by scanning the environment for a successful launch of their widget. In our case the widget is our career, and the environmental scan might be through a **SWOT** analysis – **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats – to develop meaningful long and short range goals.

Your Future and SMART Goals

As you chart the path to your future career use your **SWOT** analysis to develop two to three career goals. Career goals will help bring clarity to your “to be” or future state. These goals can be short-term (less than one year/perhaps work focused) and long-term (more than one year/career focused). The difference between a goal and an activity is that you “do or complete activities” to “reach your goals.”

To create your goals, follow the **SMART** methodology. A **SMART** goal is:

- **Specific** – your “CEO mission statement” that may answer the who, what, where, when, why, which, and how questions
- **Measurable** – use metrics to determine your progress to the goal (#, %, mmyydd)
- **Achievable** – do you have the skills, tools, time, support or can you attain them to be successful?
- **Realistic/Relevant** – are you willing and able to do the work/does it align with your objectives?
- **Time-Bound** – a (realistic) target date for delivering your goal (mmyydd)

Put Your IDP into Action

Once you have developed your IDP and met with your supervisor, manager, and/or mentor to discuss and finalize your professional development and career goals, you will want to:

- Keep your IDP handy
- Work your plan
- Update/revise as necessary
- Track your progress
- Have check-ins
- Hit your target(s)
- Celebrate your milestones and new opportunities!

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is typically conducted using a four-square SWOT analysis template, but you could also make a list for each category. Use the method that makes it easiest for you to organize and understand the results. A good way to begin is brainstorm your results using bullet points. Once you have finished brainstorming create a final prioritized version of your SWOT analysis by category.

Now how do you turn your SWOT results into your goals? Look at your strengths and how you can use these to overcome your weaknesses, minimize your threats, and take advantage of your opportunities.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you do well? • What skills do other people recognize in you? • What do you do better than most people who work with you? • What do you get recognized or rewarded for? • What, about yourself, are you most proud of or satisfied with? • What experiences, resources, or connections do you have access to that others may not? 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you try to do that you just can't seem to master? • What do you do only because you have to in order to satisfy job requirements? • Are there one or two aspects of your personality that hold you back? • What do other people most often identify as a weakness for you? • Where are you vulnerable? • Where do you lack experience, resources, or connections which others may have?
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways can you maximize your strengths? • What opportunities are open to those who do these things well? • What would you love to do that you are good at? • How can you minimize your weaknesses? • If your weaknesses no longer held you back, what would you do? • What direction is your organization going? What will the organization need from its employees in the future? • Where do you see the most potential growth for yourself? Within your current organization in a different organization, a different industry, or different career all together? 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have weaknesses that need to be addressed before you can move forward? • What problems could your weaknesses cause if left unchecked? What setbacks might you face? • What obstacles have other people overcome when they're trying to get to where you want to go? • Are there new laws or regulations that are likely to affect your opportunities? • What demographic trends will impact your profession? • Are there family expectations you have to consider when making a career decision? How will these affect your ability to be successful?

SWOT Template

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STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Template

Crafting S.M.A.R.T. Goals are designed to help you identify if what you want to achieve is realistic and determine a deadline. When writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals use concise language, but include relevant information. These are designed to help you succeed, so be positive when answering the questions.

Initial Goal *(Write the goal you have in mind)*

1. Specific: *What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?*

2. Measurable: *How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?*

3. Achievable: *Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? What is the motivation for this goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?*

4. Relevant: *Why are you setting this goal now? Is it aligned with overall objectives?*

5. Time-bound: *What's the deadline and is it realistic?*

S.M.A.R.T. Goal: *Review what you have written, and craft a new goal statement based on what the answers to the questions above have revealed.*
