

CREATING YOUR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Taking control of your personal development



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**If You Always Do What
You've Always Done, You'll
Always Get What You've
Always Got.**

Henry Ford

Be proactive

Do you have full ownership of your personal development? Do you have a clear idea of your strengths and development areas? Are you actively seeking opportunities to develop them?

If the answer is no, then you might be feeling unfulfilled or frustrated about your personal development. You may even feel resentful that you've not been offered the development opportunities you think you might need. But if you wait for someone else to plan your development journey for you, there's a risk that you might not ever get to where you want to be in your career.

It's easy to pass the responsibility for our personal development on to others - after all, it's your organisation's job to 'develop you' so that you can progress there - isn't it?

As Henry Ford put it, if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.

Your personal development is just that - personal. It has to be owned by you to be meaningful and it's up to **you** to take charge of it if you want to make progress.

By creating a personal development plan, you'll take the time to think about what you want to achieve and put a plan in place to get there so you can begin to take steps towards achieving your goals. In this guide, we'll help you explore a structured way of doing that.

Start with your personal vision statement

"If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else"

Yogi Berra

A great starting point for your personal development plan is to define the direction you'd like your development, and your career, to go in.

Writing a personal vision statement will help you to set out a where you want to be in the long-term (5-10 year), and will help to inform your development goals and guide your action plan.

It goes without saying that this should be personal to you - you have to care about it for it to be meaningful. It can be as specific or as broad as you like - as long as feels right to you, and is something that is going to inspire and motivate you to work towards your development goals.

You'll find some examples [here](#).

Think about:

- What do you value most in your career? (you can [take a work values test](#) to help you with this)
- What do you want to achieve?
- How would you like others to describe you / your achievements in 5-10 years' time?
- Why is this important to you?

Then,
work out
where
you are
now

Before you can work out how to reach your goals, you need to reflect on your current reality.

What are you good at?

Where do you need to improve?

What opportunities are available?

And, are there factors beyond your control that could have an impact on your goals?

A simple tool you can use to answer these questions is a **SWOT analysis**, which will give you a good understanding of where you are now so you can plan where you need to go.

STRENGTHS

- What are you really good at?
- What skills are needed to achieve your vision that you already have?
- What do people come to you for help with?
- What do you do better than most other people?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you most enjoy working on?
- What experiences have you had?
- What resources and connections do you have access to?

Remember to ask for others' input!

OPPORTUNITIES

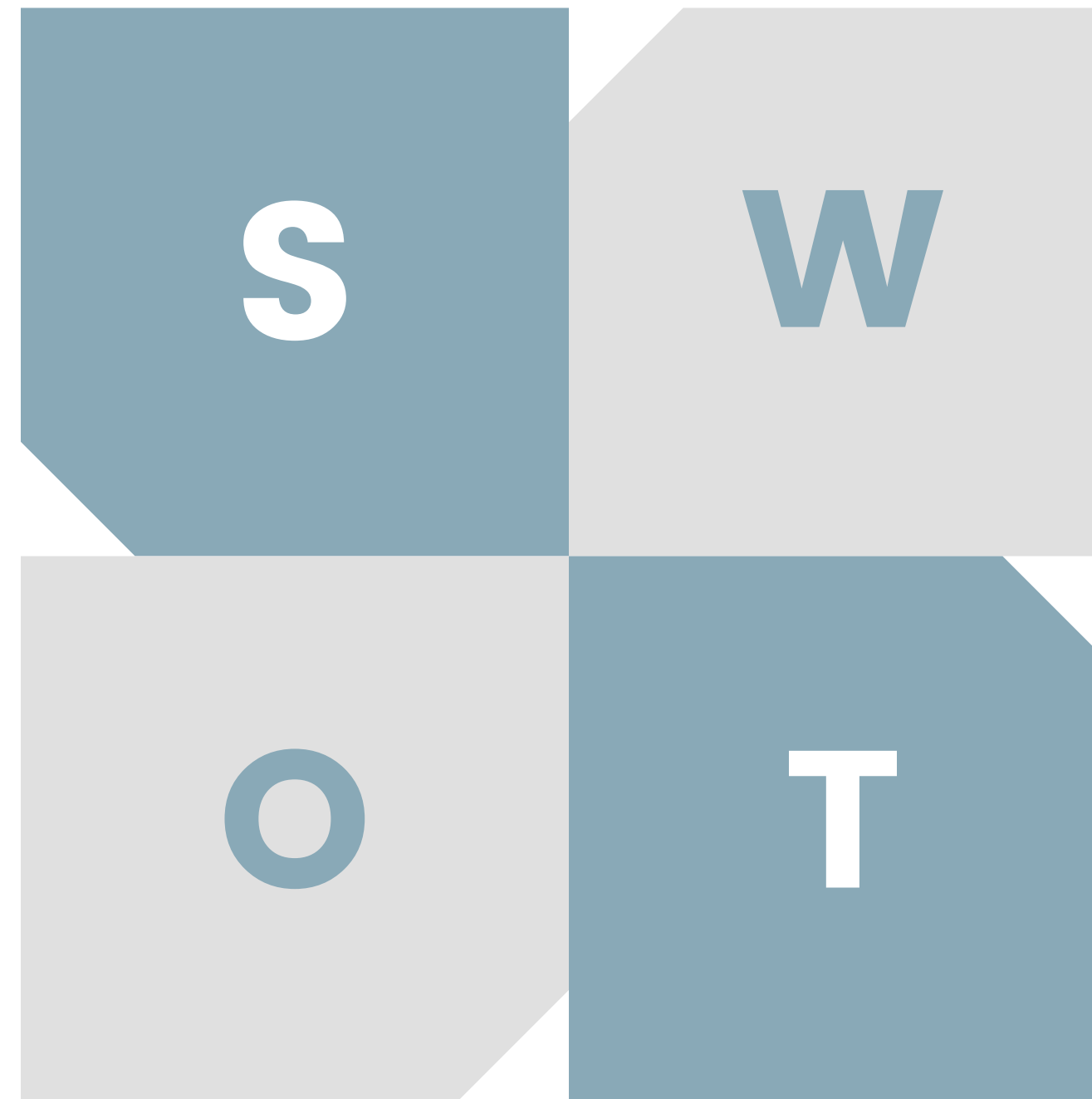
- What would you love to do more of?
- Where do you see the most potential growth for yourself?
- How could you be using your strengths more effectively?
- What does your organisation need that you are great at?
- What could you do better, if your weaknesses weren't holding you back?
- Where could you be contributing more, or having greater impact?

WEAKNESSES

- What do you least enjoy doing?
- What holds you back?
- Are there any skills or tasks you struggle with?
- What skills are needed to achieve your vision that you don't have, or need to improve?
- What would others say are your weaknesses?
- What do others do better than you?
- What experience do you need that you don't currently have?
- What resources and connections are you lacking, that others have?

THREATS

- What are the general challenges you're facing that are out of your control?
- What external issues and trends are impacting your career or industry?
- If you didn't work on your weaknesses, what problems could they cause?
- What setbacks might you face in trying to achieve your goals?
- What challenges have others faced when working towards similar goals?



Create your goals

You now have a really good understanding of where you want to be, and where you are now. The next step is to plan what you need to be aiming for in the shorter term to help you achieve that.

To do this, you'll be guided by your personal vision statement - which provides the long-term direction for what you want to achieve, to create the manageable goals to form your development plan.

These goals are the key steps involved in achieving your vision, and helping you to measure success.

For example, your personal mission statement might be that you'd like to be a senior leader in the next 5 years.

Your first step is to identify all the things you need to do to get there - this might be gaining experience in another area of the organisation or developing leadership and strategy skills.

To help come up with your first goal, ask yourself:

- Do you need to gain a qualification or become more educated in a specific area?
- Do you need to become ready for a promotion?
- Do you need to gain particular additional experience beyond your current role and responsibilities?
- Do you need to improve a particular skill?

We'd recommend that you discuss these questions with your manager where possible too. You could also research what skills and experience are needed in the role/area you'd like to ultimately work in, and speak to other individuals who can help you to identify what's needed to achieve your vision (such as someone already working at the level you'd like to be at).

Remember that your goals should be...

- **Specific** – focused on a particular outcome
- **Measurable** – how will you know you've achieved it?
- **Achievable** – don't set yourself up to fail
- **Relevant** – make sure it relates to your personal vision
- **Time bound** – set a date to accomplish it to make sure you are motivated to achieve it within a certain timeframe

Your Action Plan

For each development goal, think about the specific actions you will need to take to achieve it.

If one of your goals is to develop leadership experience, you might have identified a course that you can attend. The specific actions you'll need to take might include speaking to your line manager, writing a business case to get your organisation to agree to fund it, researching dates and providers, or speaking to others that have completed it.

Remember, development planning is about taking ownership for your development. Writing down that you want to attend a course and expecting that to result in an invitation is likely to lead back to that place of frustration. Also, try not to rely on just one solution. If you'd like to attend a course but your organisation can't support that right now, what else could you be doing?

Questions to ask yourself when developing your action plan include:

- What experience do you need to gain?
- What training / education would help you to develop specific skills?
- How will you get that training or experience? (For example through taking on additional responsibilities, observing others, working in a different part of the organisation, studying, attending a course, volunteering, mentoring others or finding a mentor / coach).
- Who do you need support from?
- How will they support you (coaching, helping you be accountable, mentoring)?
- What might get in your way? How can you overcome this?

Finally, use the templates on the next pages to set out your development plan.

What would you
be glad you did-
even if you
failed?

Brene Brown

Personal Vision Statement

Keep this in mind as you set your goals and create your action plan.

Development Goals

Goal:

Target date:

Action Plan

Development Goal

What will you do?

When?

What support will you need?

What do you want to achieve?
(Make it SMART!)

What are the **specific** actions **you** need to do to make this happen?
Consider as many options as you can and pick those that are the most realistic and impactful.

When will you do it?

Who and what do you need to help you make this happen?

Empty box for Development Goal

Empty box for What will you do?

Empty box for When?

Empty box for What support will you need?

Empty box for Development Goal

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Empty box for What support will you need?



Staying accountable

- Commit to a schedule - set time aside regularly to work on your development goals and make sure you stick to it.
- Share your progress with your line manager during 1-2-1s.
- Identify what might hold you back and think about how you'll overcome those obstacles
- Celebrate your successes!

About Atkinson HR Consulting

The purpose of our work is to help create change, build capacity and drive quality around people management and performance in values-driven organisations.

We pride ourselves on helping our clients to achieve great outcomes and are delighted to have been named CIPD's Best HR/Learning & Development Consultancy in 2019.



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