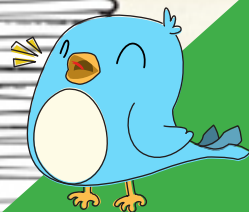


TELL YOUR COMPANY WHY THEY SHOULD INVEST IN YOU

First, prepare.
Then say, "I have
a plan. I can make
a difference, but I
need your
support."

By Ken Revenaugh



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TELL YOUR COMPANY WHY THEY SHOULD INVEST IN YOU

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After 20 years of working in both large and small companies, it seems to me that most people want to make a difference. Most know what they are good at and how they can contribute. Many also know their shortcomings and have plans to improve in those areas. But not everyone is skilled in communicating his or her capabilities to employers. As a result, companies are not aware of the full value of their staff members and frontline employees don't get the help, support and funding they need to grow and develop.

To solve this problem, you need a common language to have discussions with your company – a very clear and concise conversation roadmap.

"Your PDP supports your request for someone to invest in you."

FIRST, PREPARE A "PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN" (PDP)

To create this common language, let's leverage a tried and true method most companies are

familiar with or, at least, have heard of: It's the Personal Development Plan or PDP. Corporate America has long used PDPs as a tool to develop skills, further the company's mission and help employees achieve career goals.

Why this tool? It gives you an opportunity to explain your strengths and weaknesses, lay out a plan, show your commitment and support your request for someone to invest in you.

Before you outline the plan, think about some ways your company could invest in you. For example:

- A training class or a workshop.
- A BlackBerry that increases your efficiency.
- An ergonomic office chair that helps you get through the long hours.
- Do you need a mentor for increased coaching?
- Have you thought about a six-month exchange assignment with another department?

When you can articulate your plan and show your commitment, you'll have a better chance of getting everything you need to make a strong contribution.

“Developing a PDP can be a simple process.”

PREPARING A PDP CAN BE A SIMPLE PROCESS

There is a wealth of literature on how to prepare PDPs. Some organizations develop such detailed instructions that the documentation itself can actually have the unintended effect of deterring people from preparing PDPs at all!

Although some companies may have more involved procedures, a PDP can be written in a simple memo format.

At the end of this article, I have provided a PDP form that I've used throughout my career. It has guided me through many conversations with employers and potential employers and helped me get what I needed to be successful. The keys to writing a PDP:

- Personally assess your development needs.
- Build a plan.
- Commit to the plan.
- Request the needed support.

The process of making an effective PDP involves asking yourself the following questions:

1. In what direction is my organization going and what will it need from me in the future?
2. What are my goals over the next five years? (This question is crucial to providing a motivational focus for everything you do.)
3. What are my greatest strengths and how can I build on them more effectively?
4. Do I have any serious weaknesses that will make it difficult to do my job or prevent me from reaching my goals?

If you need some help with questions 3 and 4, I would suggest seeking a formal assessment that provides feedback you can use to articulate your strengths and weaknesses. Explore these three sites for assessments that may help:

<http://www.myersbriggs.org>

<https://www.strengthsfinder.com>

<http://www.disctests.com>

“Your final PDP should be realistic...and you must commit to follow through.”

After answering these questions, identify developmental opportunities that will help build on your strengths in such a way that you can better serve the needs of the organization and reach your goals.

Developmental opportunities can take many forms. Include a mix of training and experiential learning in your PDP.

Besides formal training in a classroom setting (the most common – and costly – option), other excellent developmental opportunities include:

- Shadowing other team members.
- Receiving formal mentoring.
- Enrolling in distance learning courses.
- Assignment to a project team, cross-training or temporary assignments in other offices or posts.
- Exposure to supervisory responsibilities.
- Involvement in outreach efforts.

MEET WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR TO DISCUSS YOUR PDP

Once you've drafted your PDP, it's time to meet with your supervisor. Your supervisor should offer additional guidance on how to best address questions 1, 3 and 4 above, as appropriate. Also, your supervisor should provide guidance on the complete range of training resources that are available, because some may be unfamiliar to you.

Your final PDP should be realistic, given the department's resources and staffing. After completion of the PDP, you need to make a commitment to follow through. A good method includes gaining a commitment from others to be a part of your PDP and, therefore, your follow-through is more public. When you have made a commitment to growth, it is very hard for your employer to turn a deaf ear and not invest in the things you need to complete the plan.

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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDP)

Name: _____

Current Position: _____

Time in Current Position: _____

Short-term career goal within next 2 years: _____

Longer-term career goal beyond 2 years: _____

Building on Strengths

Please record the strengths you have chosen for greater utilization, your specific objectives and action plans, the support you require of others or the needed investment, and your target date for completion.

STEP 1: Strengths Targeted	STEP 2: Action Plans	STEP 3: Investment or Support Needed	STEP 4: Target Dates
STRENGTH:			
STRENGTH:			
STRENGTH:			

Addressing Development Needs

Please record the development needs you have chosen for improvement, your specific objectives and action plans, the support you require of others or the needed investment, and your target date for completion.

STEP 1: Strengths Targeted	STEP 2: Action Plans	STEP 3: Investment or Support Needed	STEP 4: Target Dates
DEVELOPMENT NEED:			
DEVELOPMENT NEED:			
DEVELOPMENT NEED:			