

Eight Key Tactics For Developing Employees

By Steve Olenski, Forbes.com¹

- 1. Create Individual Development Plans:** The first step in developing employees is to create a development plan. It is important to sit down with the employee and discuss individual interests and career goals. This conversation will help identify the development activities that an individual should be undertaking. After all, not everyone shares the same goals or has the same perspective about what they want to achieve in their career. Still others may be unsure about what they want to do. The development plan should provide a roadmap for the employee that includes measurable goals and a realistic timeframe for achieving each goal. Taking time to discuss and add detail to the employee development plan or blueprint will increase the likelihood for a return-on-investment for all involved.
- 2. Provide Performance Metrics:** It is essential to set specific quantitative metrics to help an employee understand where they need to be or what they can realistically achieve. Then, as these performance metrics are met, the bar can be raised so the employee feels a continued sense of accomplishment. Before running a marathon, a runner first sets shorter goals and then works their way up, running further and further and building the muscles and power needed to eventually get them to that marathon goal. A supervisor works with the employee to decide where he or she is currently in relation to achieving key performance objectives that will eventually lead them to where they want to be and need to be. Measuring progress also provides evidence of how these activities are working.
- 3. Provide Opportunities Outside of Job Function:** To truly develop an employee for a larger role in the company, the employee needs to understand how other aspects of the organization work. As supervisor, create opportunities for an employee to take on new responsibilities outside their job function. This cross-training will increase their awareness and knowledge of the organization and help them work more effectively with others because they have a new understanding of what other employees do for the company. The additional responsibility will put them in new situations, add challenges, expand skill sets, and encourage them to think on their feet, which will also improve their chances for success in any future roles they take on.
- 4. Give Constructive Feedback:** Feedback does not mean criticizing, chiding, or disapproving. Instead, it should be constructive in nature and include specific recommendations for further improvement and development. Feedback should also be delivered regularly and tied to data or examples such as the performance metrics or the individual development plan. Only using feedback for employee reviews can result in missed opportunities to guide an employee through the professional development process. Employees want to know how they are doing. If feedback is used as a tool for growth and recognition, and not a tool to knock the employee down, it will make a measurable difference.
- 5. Remove Barriers:** It's up to leadership to bridge silos, knock down walls, and design a system that encourages a fluid approach to learning and working. Today's generation of workers are used to change and enjoy open work environments that let them explore. Take the barriers away and watch people flourish.
- 6. Link to a Professional Network:** Help employees access additional contacts that can help them grow. Introduce them to other professionals that can serve as mentors or coaches, sign them up for professional industry associations, send them to training courses and workshops, and create and attend networking events. Getting them connected to a network offers a way to get additional support, advice, and information on how to grow professionally and personally.
- 7. Outlay Resources:** From day one, an employee is an investment that the organization is making and from which it expects a return. To get the most out of employees requires making further investments along the way. Although many of the tactics on this list do not necessarily require dollars to implement, resources are still being used in the form of time and focus. Other employee

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2015/07/20/8-key-tactics-for-developing-employees/#65d9d3cd6373>

development activities, including training, online learning programs, and coaching are well worth the monetary resource investment. Whatever the resource, this additional dollar investment is necessary and valuable when it is thoughtfully aligned with the organization's strategic goals and the individual development plans designed around key talent.

8. **Set the Example:** An employee will see the value of the development process when they see their current leadership continue to develop personally and professionally. By modeling this behavior, leaders build credibility and the trust necessary to encourage employees to participate in development-building activities. It shows employees that development is part of the organization's culture. It sends the message that it's important for, and expected from, everyone in the organization to be part of a continual improvement process that nurtures from within.