

The PDP

Your 10,000 mile career tune up!

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For every person at ACME, there is an annual event that has a direct affect on their professional development. The PDP, or Personal Development Plan, is a tool used to asses your performance and develop your career. For many people, however, the PDP has developed a reputation as a time to find out what they have been doing wrong—an obligation that must be met. While PDPs are required, if used as an opportunity, the PDP is a great way to visualize and vocalize your career plans and goals.

The PDP is an excellent career development tool, because it allows you to look closely at your professional growth. Do you know what the advancement path is for someone in your role? Or are you happy in your current role, but want to learn more about it?

ACME looks for ways to help employees succeed in their current role, and uses the PDP as a way to identify the next step for each person—it answers the question, “how can this person continue to be a value add?” The formula for answering this question uses several factors, including:

- What competencies (characteristics) does a successful ACME employee need or have?
- What are this person’s competencies?
- What are ACME’s business objectives?
- How does this person’s strengths and goals work with ACME’s goals?

With all of these factors in consideration, the PDP can be used to help plan a path for you and clarify your role with the company.

How can the PDP work for you? Here are some questions many ACME team members have asked about PDPs:

What is the PDP?

The PDP is a goal setting process built on a foundation called “performance management.” This is the company’s way of identifying strategic goals and matching individual goals to drive the business. This is why it is important to align your goals and strengths; so that your talent can be used most effectively.

What should I expect at a good review?

It’s important to first understand what a “good” review is. In order for you to really get what you need from the PDP, a “good” review is a thorough one. A thorough review includes a discussion of the things you do well, the things you don’t, and how/why those things are working or not. Ask questions about how you can improve, so that you can

walk away with your own set of objectives. A “good” review is one where you are pleased, and you also have things you want to work on.

How do I prepare?

Throughout the PDP process, take note of what you do and how you do it. What do your daily performance statistics look like? When you receive a thank you or kudos from a customer or co-worker, do you save them? If you are observing and responding to what you see in yourself, you will not walk into your meeting empty handed. Take your notes, positive emails, and your own questions with you.

What questions should I ask?

Your questions should have substance in order to be helpful to you; this means you will have to have a real idea of what you want to accomplish in order to formulate them. Ask questions based on three main topics: how can you improve on what you are not doing well; how can you take what you do well and leverage it, and how do you get to where you want to be, professionally? Apply these topics to your role and performance, to find out what specific questions you can come up with?

How do I communicate my goals?

The most important thing you can do for yourself in and out of the PDP meeting is to write your goals down. It is easier to focus on something you can see; by writing down your professional goals, you can start to add to that list the things you need to do and the people you need to talk to as you work toward that accomplishment. You will leave your meeting with milestones that you can attach a timeline to.

Once my review is done, how do I put it into action?

The PDP only works if you really work on it. Start taking action immediately. Don't wait to make positive changes. As you begin to change things, write them down. This is your preparation for the next meeting, where you will be able to demonstrate and communicate the specific things you have done. Remember that the PDP process is ongoing; you should be proactive in meeting with your manager to discuss your progress throughout the year.

Here are a few tips to help you bring your PDP to life:

- Post your goals on your wall to remind yourself daily
- Write down at least 5 questions to ask during your PDP meeting
- Write down actions you have taken to address things that needed improvement
- Create a file where you keep any thank you or congratulation email from customers or team members
- Identify ways you can improve so that you can make suggestions about your role
- Ask for regular meetings during the year to periodically review your progress

- Learn more about ACME's business goals (use the website, read the newsletters, ask questions), in order to better see how your role fits in
- Review last year's PDP to determine how far you have come
- Use ACME U. This e-learning feature is an online learning resource that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week; hundreds of courses are offered for your professional development.
- Create your own development plan and put it into action.