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# CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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TOOL 1: UNDERSTANDING CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT

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# TOOL 1: UNDERSTANDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## Who is this for

High priority

- Direct Line managers

Practical Information

- DEI and HR Professionals

## What guidance does it provide?

- How to build on current career development practices to ensure all employees are planned and managed for their future goals

## Take-home points

- Career development should be considered from the perspective of both the organization and the worker
  - Organization: what skills and knowledge do we require to achieve our business goals?
  - Worker: what are the skills and knowledge I think are critical to my current and future career plans?
- Career development strategies bring employers and employees together to explore how the interests and potential of employees aligns with the needs and strategy of the business. Career development conversations can convey your interest in your worker and their future, help your worker see their future direction more clearly and help you, as an employer, get the “right” person in the right seat at the table
- Managers should never assume that a worker with a disability has reached the limit of potential at work

# WHAT IS CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

## What is Career Development?

Career development is a process that empowers workers to drive their careers forward. It involves long-term planning, focused on learning and skill improvement, so that workers may not only perform their jobs better, but progress further in their career path. Direct line managers should talk to every worker, including those with disabilities, about their career trajectory and help them identify the skill-building and professional development opportunities. [1]

## Changing Perspectives Over Time

In recent decades, there has been shift in how career development is viewed. Historically, an organization held the responsibility to ensure that its workers had the skills to meet the company's long-term goals. Nowadays, workers can exercise more control over their career advancement and identify their need for professional development opportunities.

**As such, career development is viewed as a partnership with employees.**

Note: Career development is also a key component of a company's attraction and retention strategy. Many potential candidates with disabilities will not consider employment with an organization unless it offers career development as a basic component of its culture.

Exceptional managers recognize the value of career development. Although career development is often thought of as a worker-directed process, managers play a critical role in facilitating growth and skill advancement among all employees. Broaden your understanding of performance management processes to include career development planning. [2]



# CAREER DEVELOPMENT AS A SHARED INVESTMENT

The beauty behind career development lies in its duality. Career development should be considered from the perspective of both the organization and the worker: [2]



## Organization

What skills and knowledge do we require to achieve our business goals?



## Worker

What are the skills & knowledge I think are critical to my current & future career plans?

Above all, the goal of career development is to harness the full potential of each worker to enhance the person's quality of work life and maximize the growth and success of the business. Keeping this in mind, career development strategies bring employers and employees together to explore how the interests and potential of employees aligns with the needs and strategy of the business. Career development conversations can:

- Convey your interest in your worker and their future
- Help your worker see their future direction more clearly
- Help you, as an employer, get the “right” person in the right seat at the table

A unionized environment likely already has a mechanism in place concerned with promotion, equitable pay, and career development, designed to ensure fairness and representation. The union, prioritizing accessibility, will be a collaborator in revising any existing processes to not disadvantage persons with disabilities.

## Career Development Considerations for Workers with Disabilities

Managers must be careful when it comes to assessing career potential among workers – they should not make assumptions about the capacity of any worker to learn, develop, and grow. If you are unsure of whether a worker with a disability wants experience additional challenge in their role, or has interest in changing their position, simply ask!



## CAREER DEVELOPMENT AS A SHARED INVESTMENT

In a similar vein, managers should never assume that a worker with a disability has reached the limit of potential at work. If the worker expresses the desire to improve, identify or create novel opportunities for them to trial new roles that may be higher in pay, or take on more responsibility within the organization. The choice to actively support career development, instead of letting opportunities pass a worker by, can be the vital difference between successful and unsuccessful retention of workers with disabilities. [3] Here are some additional best practices to guide you: [3]

- Always consider accessibility needs of workers with disabilities, as well as any agreed upon accommodation plans, when speaking about career development
- Do not assume that workers with disabilities are content with simply being employees – all individuals have aspirations and goals
- Recognize that with the right adjustments, whether it be in the work environment, workplace culture, or with workplace accommodations, all employees can develop their talents and better contribute to the company's success
- Place a greater emphasis on a worker's performance and career potential, rather than their current skill level, when communicating feedback and carrying out discussions of growth

# BUILDING DISABILITY CONFIDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

## Building Disability Confident Career Development Practices

Leading organizations find out how to help their workers thrive on the job. They help workers hone their existing skills and identify areas where career advancement opportunities will enhance the worker's competencies. Take a look at this framework for career development: [4], [5]

### 1 Step 1: Learn About Your Workers

- ✓ Clarify and understand your organization's interests, skills, and values and how those can be translated to all workers
- ✓ Encourage your workers to engage in self-assessment to develop a greater understanding of their current skills, unique abilities, and aspirations
- ✓ Ask yourself: "How can I make my workers more satisfied in their work life?"

### 2 Step 2: Explore Opportunities Together

- ✓ Expose workers to a variety of roles and job-related responsibilities to help them further define, and refine, their career goals
- ✓ Actively promote career enhancement and leadership development opportunities for workers, and ensure these opportunities are fully accessible
- ✓ Focus on understanding what career aspirations each worker has and how you can help them develop the skills and qualities that will enable them to succeed

### 3 Step 3: Plan the Next Steps

- ✓ Review workplace conditions to ensure that no barriers exist for workers with disabilities
- ✓ Set goals and help workers develop knowledge and skills to enhance their performance or advance their career - for more information, please see the Performance Management tool on Goal Setting: Performance Management - Tool 2: Preparing for Performance Management



# BUILDING DISABILITY CONFIDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

## 4 Step 4: Take Action

- ✓ Create a workplace culture that supports the career development among workers, where they can make most of opportunities to grow their skills and abilities
- ✓ Approach promotions equitably - promote workers with disabilities internally, or even create a policy that views disability among positive selection factors for promotion, before seeking candidates externally
- ✓ Provide training, mentorship, support, and resources in an accessible manner, so that each worker has access to the best chance for success!

## 5 Step 5: Evaluate Workers' Progress

- ✓ Assess and reflect on your, as well as the worker's, experiences throughout the career development process
- ✓ Understand that career development isn't necessarily a destination – it is an ongoing journey - cycle through this model in an iterative fashion to ensure that all workers continue to grow
- ✓ Revise your career development process periodically, as workers, their needs, and your ability to facilitate career development will evolve over time



# HOW DOES CAREER DEVELOPMENT BENEFIT YOUR COMPANY?

## How Does Career Development Benefit Your Company? [1]

All organizations will benefit immensely from retaining a workforce that is motivated to continually learn, diversify their skills, and contribute to the overall success of the company. [6]

- 1. It is an investment in your future workforce:** Mentoring individuals with disabilities builds human capital. Mentoring experiences prepare individuals for advancement by strengthening their skills and providing them with confidence. This will enable workers to excel in their current and future positions. In today's labor market, this is an advantageous strategy.
- 2. It sends workers the message that you care:** Career development represents a commitment of time and energy, devoted directly to your staff. It demonstrates that a value is placed on professional development and growth. Mentoring people with disabilities sends a message to all staff that the company really does care about their people.
- 3. It creates positive attitude changes in your workplace culture:** Supporting workers with career development can often be an eye-opening experience for employers. In some cases, employers may not be sure about how to support the advancement of a worker with a disability. When managers invest the time and effort to help all workers succeed, there is a ripple effect that can be felt across the organization.

**TD reports that long-standing employees with disabilities are very valuable resources for training and mentoring new employees” – Gibbard et al., 2018 [7]**



# HOW DOES CAREER DEVELOPMENT BENEFIT YOUR COMPANY?

The outcomes below show what you can gain from using accessible and inclusive career development strategies in your business. [8] Which of these are important for your business right now?

## Immediate Outcomes

- Reduced absences
- Reduced staff turnover
- Improved person-to-job match
- Increased productivity
- A value reward strategy
- Ability to do more in-house

## Workplace Outcomes

- Positive work environment
- Intelligent use of skills/talents
- Retain knowledge of business
- Higher skilled team
- More flexible workforce
- Smoother job succession
- Larger talent bank for special tasks
- More innovative environment
- Improved communication
- Attract good people

## Business Outcomes

- Better company image and reputation
- Better customer relationship and experience
- Greater potential to adapt, change, and develop

# INTERSECTIONALITY VIGNETTE

## Intersectionality Vignette

### Dante

Soon after I was hired out of university, I helped the company train employees on how the internet on their new computers. Things have changed a lot since my onboarding. We have new information and logistics coming in every single day.

In fact, a new way my company went was to offer training online so that employees would be able to learn at their own pace and according to their schedules. I appreciated it very much when my superior announced that there was a new training program for managers like me. He asked me if I was comfortable with using computers. He doesn't know that I was hired for my computer expertise, and I've kept up with the changes in technology by participating in workshops to expand my expertise during my personal time.

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