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# **THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: A TOOL TO HELP MANAGERS SUPPORT EMPLOYEE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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One of our strategic priorities is to make a company's job easier by delivering a comprehensive collection of up-to-date guides, reports, templates and more to support effective human resources management and recruitment and retention efforts.

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To help fleet employers understand what they can do to update their skills and align themselves to today's modern management practices and approaches, Trucking HR Canada created *Successful Management in the Changing World of Work: A Guide for Today's Manager*. In this online resource guide, learn about:

- How and why management practices are evolving
- How managers can align their skillsets with changing management practices
- On-going challenges leaders face, and suggestions for managing them
- Best practices for providing employees with feedback and conducting coaching conversations

To view this resource visit [truckinghr.com](http://truckinghr.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

Increased investment in individualized development plans can lead to targeted skills development, increased employee engagement and higher retention rates. Not to mention, qualified and capable bench strength to help you quickly address succession and talent gaps.

To be effective, the learning and development process needs to be simple and structured. They also have to be continuous.

Managers play a key role in the development of their individual team members and the information within provides guidance on how to effectively engage with employees to identify and enhance their skills and contributions to the company.

This tool contains:

- Information on what an Individual Development Plan (IDP) is and what it is not.
- Suggestions on how IDPs can be structured in your company.
- A simple, easy to implement plan to prepare for IDP meetings.
- Useful questions managers can use to help guide career development conversations.
- A list of learning and development options to consider for the IDP.
- Key success factors.
- A sample IDP template.

# THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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## WHAT ARE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS?

An individual development plan (IDP) is a tool or form used to assist employees in their career and personal development. It is a simple way to capture the aspirations and goals of team members and to identify gaps between current skills and capabilities against those required for a desired role or development goal. Its primary purpose is to help employees reach short and long-term career goals and improve current job performance.

These plans should be viewed as a partnership between the employee and the supervisor. They are working documents that involve preparation and continuous feedback to help ensure on-going growth and development.

## HOW TO STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENT IDPS IN YOUR COMPANY

As an organization, you can determine how the IDP process is implemented, along with who is eligible to participate. This may be influenced by company size, management competence, budget and employee desires. Below are two options.

### Company Wide Initiative

In some organizations, the commitment to learning and development is company-wide – where every employee can participate in the IDP process and benefit from a learning and development plan.

### Selected Employees Participate

IDP's can be particularly effective for your high performers, and those identified as having high potential. Focusing the IDP efforts primarily on those team members can allow for a more focused effort and targeted use of development budgets. This approach provides more formality to identifying top talent while ensuring a fair and equitable process. For either option, effective communication is key. It's important that all employees are aware of the company's commitment to the program, and which positions and job functions are impacted. Formalizing your process, and perhaps implementing a policy around this, will ensure that there is an understanding by all.

# THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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## HOLDING AN IDP MEETING

An IDP meeting is a future focused one where career aspirations, interests, strengths, and any related learning opportunities are discussed and actioned. Here - a manager can ask about and employee's interest. Here are some tips to get started:

### Plan

- Review the company's policy and/or philosophy on IDPs. Is there budget available or restrictions you should be mindful of?
- Look at the employee's performance appraisal, what skills, knowledge or competency gaps have been discussed. What are their strengths?
- Review business goals and any new business requirements for your team, or for the company.
- Is there any pre-work you would like the employee to do in advance of the meeting? (e.g., have them consider their career goals, what additional skills they may need to obtain those goals and how can acquire those skills).
- From your perspective are their next steps this employee could take?

### Discuss

- Here you want to understand the employee's career interests and learning and development goals. Here considering using the questions from Table #1 - Questions to Help Facilitate Development Discussion
- Brainstorm options for training or learning opportunities to help them reach their goals. Clarify with the employee that it will be their responsibility to take the initiative to progress through and update the IDP as needed.

### Document

- Ask the employee to provide you with a filled in copy of the IDP - [\*A Sample IDP Template has been included at the end of this document\*](#) - and schedule a follow up discussion.

### Follow Up

- Review the employee's draft plan to ensure you are both aligned and encourage the employee to get started
- Schedule check in meetings to monitor progress and to help address challenges that may arise.
- Don't forget to provide opportunities for the employee to put their learnings into practice. This will help them practice what they have learnt and should be help the company at the same time.

# THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**TABLE #1 - QUESTIONS TO HELP FACILITATE A DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION**

To	Ask
Uncover learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your short and long term career goals?</li> <li>• Is there a specific next step that you would like to take in your career</li> <li>• How does your work here fit in with your career aspirations?</li> <li>• What are some of the identified gaps between where you are today and your aspirational next job?</li> </ul>
Establish and agree on learning actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on our discussion, what do you want to learn this year?</li> <li>• How could you learn those objectives?</li> <li>• What projects, committees, or other initiatives would be of interest to help develop your career?</li> <li>• What other experiences could help you progress toward your career goals?</li> <li>• What learning objectives are you willing to commit to?</li> </ul>
Identify resources and support needed to be successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there outside courses or training requirements?</li> <li>• What do you need from me to support you in accomplishing this learning action (e.g., funding approval, approved time to dedicate to learning objective, introductions, or connections to resources)?</li> <li>• Who else can provide you with mentoring or coaching to support this action?</li> <li>• How can you put your learnings into practice?</li> </ul>
Ensure on-going progress, commitment and follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are realistic timelines to achieve the defined objectives?</li> <li>• What are you learning?</li> <li>• Is anything getting in the way of your success?</li> <li>• What's helping you succeed?</li> </ul>

# THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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## OPTIONS FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are many ways for employees to build on their skills, knowledge, and experience. The key is to ensure the chosen methods match the employee's learning style, are realistic for your business, and allow for the employee to realize their desired learning outcomes.

Below are formal and informal learning methods:

- Training programs through classroom or web-based opportunities
- Rotational assignments
- Job shadowing assignments
- Cross team/departmental projects
- Self-directed study programs
- Professional conferences/seminars
- Coaching and mentoring relationships

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

As you embark on this journey with your team, here are a few considerations to help you be successful:

- Help keep the process moving by being available for on-going, real-time feedback and by being available for regular check in meetings.
- Allocate budget and scheduled time off for training and development.
- Work with HR or other departments to identify opportunities for company-wide learning.
- Take time to share and explain in detail aspects of your job or of the department to help employees with their growth and understanding.
- Remember to respect the aspirations of the team member – even if you see them as a high potential, if they are happy where they are, support them to develop and expand in their current role.

# TEMPLATE: INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Employee Name:	Employee Position:
Plan Start Date:	Manager:

Career Goals and Aspirations:

[Insert specific career goals & aspirations – what position are you interested in?]

Identified Skills and Competency Gaps:

[What additional skills and competencies do you need to be qualified and capable for the position identified above? Include any training and certifications you may need.]

When looking at what's next, if an aspirational role has been identified, it might be helpful to look at the job description for that role. Pay close attention to the required skills, education, experience and competencies to help identify gaps & determine specific learning outcomes.

<b>Learning Objectives:</b> What do I commit to learning? (e.g. new skill, develop a competency)	<b>Learning Actions:</b> How will I learn it? (e.g. a course training, job shadowing)	<b>Demonstrated Learning:</b> How will I demonstrate and put into practice what I have learned?	<b>Resources:</b> What do I need to be successful? (e.g. money, time, access to...)	<b>Targeted Timeframe:</b> When do I want to learn this by?
<b>Objective 1:</b>				
<b>Objective 2:</b>				
<b>Objective 3:</b>				



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