

7

Staff development

It is important to think about how to develop staff in order to improve the organisation's work. Staff development might involve education, opportunities to gain experience, and learning from others. Some of the benefits of investing in staff are outlined below:

For the organisation

- To be effective, an organisation needs staff with knowledge, skills and experience to carry out their jobs and deliver the organisation's strategy. It is not always possible to recruit the right people, so it is sometimes worth taking on people who show potential and providing them with learning opportunities to enable them to meet the demands of the job.
- When people have opportunities at work to grow and develop, they are likely to become more motivated. Increased motivation leads to more effective working.
- Staff are more likely to stay in an organisation that provides opportunities for staff development. Such an organisation is usually more effective because it keeps organisational knowledge and learning.
- The context in which an organisation works is constantly changing. It is therefore essential to keep learning.

For individuals

- Opportunities to learn and grow lead to increased job satisfaction and a sense of achievement.
- Opportunities to learn and grow enable staff to develop their careers both within and outside the organisation.

Bible study

Read Philippians 3:12-14.

- *Do Christians know everything there is to know? Are they perfect?*
- *What does this passage say to people who feel content with their Christian life?*
- *What is the danger of not 'pressing on towards the goal'?*
- *How is this passage relevant to our work lives?*
- *What role does our organisation have in inspiring and enabling staff to 'strain towards what is ahead'?*

Developing people is like growing a plant. We cannot make the seeds grow, but we can provide the environment they need to flourish – water, good soil, the right amount of sun and shade, fertiliser and protection from weeds and pests. In the same way, we cannot make people develop, but organisations should try to provide the environment that staff need to flourish. This section looks at how organisations can create this kind of environment.

7.1 Issues to consider at organisational level

To create an environment where staff can flourish, there are a number of things that need to happen at the organisational level. These are beyond the control of individual managers or members of staff and need to be agreed at leadership or board level. Five important areas to consider are:

1 Clear strategy

Every organisation needs a clear vision and a strategy and objectives outlining how the organisation will deliver the vision. Each member of staff should understand how their role contributes to the achievement of the strategy. Staff development ensures that the organisation can deliver its strategy.

The leadership of the organisation should ask: Where are there gaps in knowledge, skills or experience in the organisation that will prevent us reaching our goal? The answer to this question will identify strategic development needs. Gaps will often relate to new areas that the organisation wants to develop in its strategy or changes that are likely to happen.

2 Staff development policy

Staff need to know that decisions about their development are consistent and fair. It can be helpful to have a policy about staff development so that staff know what they can expect. A staff development policy could outline the organisation's commitment to developing people, how requests for support will be prioritised, what development opportunities the organisation will and will not support, responsibilities of the line manager, individual and Human Resources Department, and a description of the processes that need to be followed.

3 Clear processes

Processes help staff to identify needs, find options, prioritise, plan and review progress. These processes include briefing and induction, regular catch-ups, formal appraisals and personal development planning.

These are all part of the performance management process, which is the focus of Section 6.

4 Skills in people management

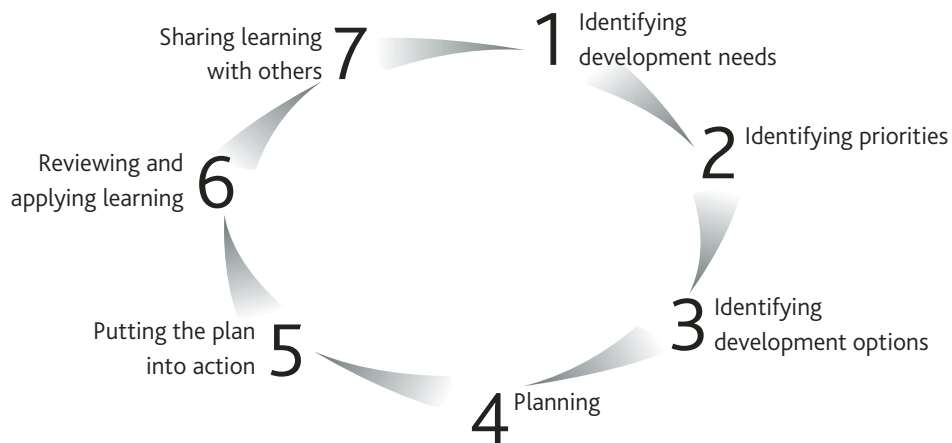
Reviewing performance, giving feedback, coaching and setting objectives are all skills that managers need in order to encourage staff to grow. Often managers will need learning opportunities and support to be able to do this well.

5 Resources available

Investing in people requires time and money. Funding should be included in the annual budget. A budget line for developing staff could be included in project proposals that are sent to institutional donors, provided it can be shown that it will increase the effectiveness of the project. It can be helpful to provide guidance on how much staff time can be used for learning activities. For example, each member of staff could be allowed up to five days per year for learning or personal development.

7.2 Issues for managers to consider

To create an environment where staff can flourish, managers should support staff through seven steps. This is an ongoing process and it is helpful to think about it as a cycle.



The steps in this cycle can also be used for planning staff development at the organisational level.

STEP 1 Identifying development needs

Development needs should be identified at both organisational and individual levels. At an individual level, these will be the areas where a particular person need to grow in order to be more effective in their work. This growth could be in knowledge, skills or experience.

Development needs are not necessarily due to weakness. A member of staff can be strong in an area, but still benefit from development in order to be even more effective in their role. In fact, building on strengths usually produces the greatest improvement in someone's performance. However, there may also be areas of poor performance that need to be addressed.

Growth may be needed in one or more of the following areas:

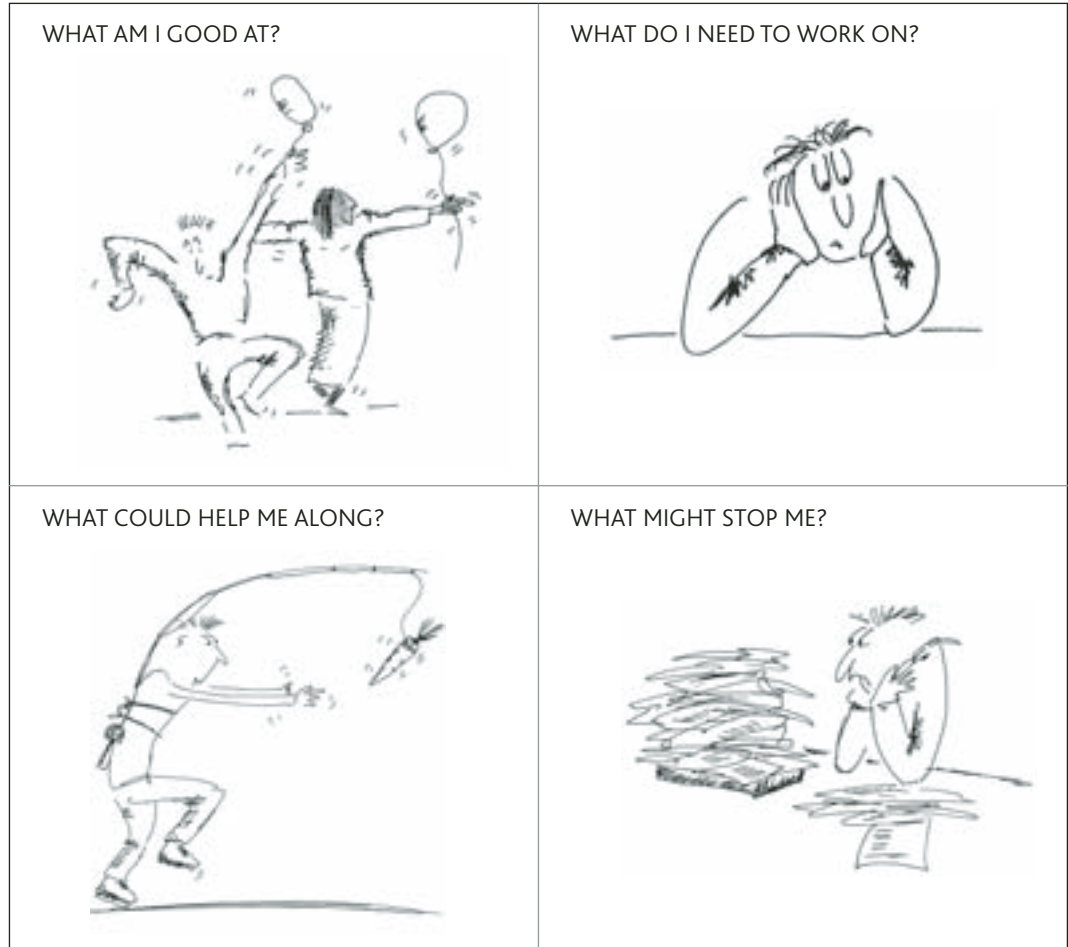
Knowledge	There are two main types of knowledge. Technical knowledge relates to work tasks, such as knowing how to create a spreadsheet on a computer. Organisational knowledge relates to the way the organisation works, such as knowing where to find information or why things happen a certain way, or learning from the last time something was tried. Technical knowledge is much easier to replace if someone leaves the organisation. Organisational knowledge will be lost unless efforts are made to capture it.
Skills	Everyone needs personal skills such as communication skills, presentation skills or the ability to organise their work. Technical skills are more specific to a role, such as the ability to treat a patient, train others or cook a meal.
Experience	Experience is about what people have done with their knowledge and skills. Experience can be gained through formal employment, voluntary activities or everyday life.
Attitude	Attitudes affect how people approach their work and include commitment, motivation, initiative and determination. This is a difficult area to develop but is essential for success.

To identify our development needs, we all need:

- Clear objectives so that we know what we are being asked to deliver (see Section 6).
- A good understanding of the skills, experience and knowledge that are needed to deliver the objectives. Some of these will be included in the job profile.
- Feedback about how well we are doing – this helps us to understand our strengths and areas for improvement.

It is the role of the line manager to make sure these three things are in place and to help the staff member to identify their needs. This could happen during a regular catch-up or formal appraisal.

The tool opposite may help staff to reflect on their own development needs. This can then be used to start a conversation with their line manager.



Development needs may arise out of poor performance. When faced with poor performance, a manager should always try to find out the root cause of the problem in case there is a need to grow the individual's knowledge or skills or experience. However, be aware that poor performance could be caused by other factors as the example below shows.

EXAMPLE

Peter is an Administrator who has to write monthly reports for his line manager about the amount of correspondence the department receives. He does not always produce quite what his line manager, Anita, wants. During his appraisal, they discuss development needs. Peter says he wants to do a computer course as this will help him to produce good reports. However, Anita knows that Peter is already good at using the computer. As they discuss the issue, Anita realises that there are two real problems. Peter does not fully understand what information the report should contain, and he never receives feedback on the content of the report as Anita usually reads it at the last minute. They agree that Anita will explain in more detail what is required in the next report and she gives Peter some examples of a good quality report. She also decides to give Peter advice and feedback on the next three reports so they can work at improving them together.

Writing objectives After identifying an area for development, it is helpful to write a 'development objective'. This should describe what you want to achieve.

- Easy steps to writing development objectives**
- STEP 1 **Identify:** the area you want to improve.
 - STEP 2 **Clarify:** be as specific as you can about the learning.
 - STEP 3 **Define:** what you want to be able to do with the learning.
 - STEP 4 **Test:** how you will know you are able to do it.

Writing a development objective After identifying an area for development, write a development objective by using this structure:
To be able to so that by

Avoid using vague words like 'understand' or 'know'. Instead, use words that explain what can be done with the understanding, such as: describe; explain; train others; apply; demonstrate; advise.

EXAMPLE

STEP 1 **Identify**
To deepen an understanding of good practice in HIV.

STEP 2 **Clarify**
To be able to describe examples of good practice in HIV among pregnant women.

STEP 3 **Define**
To be able to describe examples of good practice in HIV among pregnant women so that I am able to write a proposal for funding.

STEP 4 **Test – Make the objective SMART** (specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, time-bound)
To be able to describe examples of good practice in HIV among pregnant women so that I am able to write a proposal for funding that will be approved by the organisation's leadership by the end of December 2009.

STEP 2 Identify priorities

Individual needs must be prioritised against the strategic priorities. Individual needs that fit under the strategic priorities should be given high priority.

After prioritising against strategic priorities, line managers should allocate resources for staff development needs in a fair and consistent way. The table opposite gives some questions that can help a manager to prioritise development needs in their team. **'Principal questions'** refer to areas that should be the highest priority for any organisation. The **'Return on investment'** questions help managers to use judgement and balance the costs and benefits of particular options. The **'Resources'** questions raise issues of funding.

It is important to set aside a reasonable amount of money for staff development such as three percent of staff costs. Even when this happens, there will often be learning opportunities that the organisation cannot afford to support. Staff time is also limited. Due to these constraints, prioritisation of needs is an essential process.

	QUESTION	COMMENTS
PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS	Is there a legal requirement? Is there a health and safety requirement?	For example, training in first aid.
	Is there a strategic requirement or need?	For example, if HIV is a priority for the organisation, it may be necessary to prioritise training on working with people living with HIV.
	Is there a change in practice?	For example, the organisation may start to address a new technical issue.
	Is there a significant risk to be addressed?	For example, child protection.
	Is there a good practice requirement?	For example, it might have been decided to ensure that all programmes are to be gender-sensitive.
RETURN ON INVESTMENT	Are there specific direct benefits?	For example, skills training related directly to job performance. What is the benefit to the individual? What benefit will it bring to others?
	Are there specific indirect benefits?	For example, motivation and morale, retaining staff.
	What are the costs?	This includes the training fees and the cost of having a member of staff away from their usual tasks for the period of the training.
	Will benefits outweigh costs?	This will usually be a matter of judgment.
	Is this the right person?	Consider the impact on the organisation's work and the person's commitment, role and length of contract. Do they have a commitment to applying and sharing the learning?
	Is now the right time?	Consider workload and priorities for the individual and the organisation.
	Is this the best method?	Consider the various options.
RESOURCES	Are there resources available?	
	Can it be funded externally?	

STEP 3 Identifying development options

- When a line manager and a member of staff have agreed a development objective, the next step is to consider the options available: Consider how the staff member likes to learn – do they learn best by doing or by reading? Do they like to learn by themselves or by talking to someone else?
- Plan a variety of ways to help the person learn.
- Consider the resources that are available, such as time, money and expertise. Location will also determine the options that could be chosen.
- Think about opportunities for the member of staff to share their learning and to apply it in their work. Learning is quickly lost if it is not shared and used.

We often put too much emphasis on training courses. Most of what we learn as adults is learnt by doing or experimenting, reading or watching someone else at work. Formal training only plays a small part in learning. In fact, we may learn very little from training unless it happens at the right time, is at the right level and meets our specific needs. We also need opportunities to apply our learning after the course.

The table below outlines a variety of methods that could be used to develop staff.

Learning option	Description
LEARNING FROM OTHERS	
Learning from a colleague	Someone else in the team or organisation may have the necessary knowledge, skills or experience.
Shadowing	Shadowing involves observing someone in their work for the purpose of learning. A member of staff may shadow someone more senior or someone doing the same role. Shadowing could take place during a couple of hours, a day, a week or longer. It is important to take notes during the shadowing and to set aside time, and to discuss observations with the person who was being shadowed.
Exchange visit	Often it is helpful to visit another project or organisation. To make the most of the visit, it is important to have clear objectives and communicate expectations with the hosts. Set aside time to reflect on learning during and after the visit, and make an action plan to apply the learning.
Mentoring	Mentoring is the process of learning from a more skilled or experienced person. The mentor encourages, advises and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person through meeting regularly, such as for an hour every two weeks. It is important to set objectives and agree what will be discussed in the meetings. At each meeting, the mentor could ask: What has happened this week? What did you learn? What will you do differently next time?

table continues

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Learning option	Description
Coaching	Coaching is about helping a member of staff to perform better by asking them questions rather than telling them what to do. A coach encourages someone to find their own solution and supports them in doing this. Line managers should aim to coach their staff. In some circumstances, it can be helpful to employ a coach from outside the organisation.
Internal learning groups	Members of staff can learn from each other in a group setting. Groups should agree the purpose of meeting, how often they will meet and how they will use the group to support their learning. Learning groups can be used to research a particular topic together, to share learning, to answer each other's questions, or to learn from external experts. The groups do not have to meet in person – some groups communicate by email or using the internet.
Joining an external network	There are many different external networks that staff could join to share learning and expertise. To find relevant networks in the local area, ask other organisations or search on the internet.
Membership of a professional society	Membership of a professional society often offers development opportunities.
LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE	
Delegation of a special project	Delegation is about passing on responsibility for something to another staff member. Managers often delegate to people in their team. Delegation should be seen as a way of developing people as well as a way for a manager to save time. Although the manager will retain accountability for the end result, delegation provides a staff member with an opportunity to use their initiative, develop their skills and gain experience. It is important that the line manager: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ defines and explains the task (objectives, standards, skills and resources required) ■ makes clear the decisions the member of staff can and cannot make ■ agrees a date to review progress ■ encourages ownership and lets the staff member solve any problems, providing coaching if necessary ■ rewards and praises progress and successful completion.
Secondment to another role	Releasing someone to another role within the organisation or outside the organisation provides a powerful opportunity for development. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how long will the secondment last? ■ who can cover the person's role? (is this also a development opportunity?) ■ how will we use the person's new experience, knowledge and skills when they return?

table continues

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Learning option	Description
LEARNING FROM READING, RESEARCH AND STUDYING	
Books and journals	Research and reading is a good way to build knowledge about a specific topic, find out about good practice and learn from what others are doing in a specific area.
Internet	A lot of information is now available on the internet. This can be a low-cost and reliable source of information but remember that anybody can put information on the internet so the quality will vary. Many well-known organisations publish useful material on their websites, such as reports, guidelines, training resources, articles and case studies.
Formal qualifications	If someone wants to study for a formal qualification, always check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ that the standard of teaching is high at the institution ■ that the qualification is relevant to the need identified ■ that the staff member can fit study time in with the demands of their role ■ that relevant equipment is available, such as a computer, access to the internet, reliable email or access to a DVD or video player.
LEARNING FROM TRAINING	
Using internal trainers	Often a staff member will have training expertise. Ensure the trainer understands why they are being asked to provide training and what the objectives of the course are. Ensure they use appropriate training techniques.
Hiring a trainer from outside the organisation	If there is a specific training need, or a lot of staff who need the same training, it may be worthwhile to hire a trainer from outside the organisation. It is essential to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ take up references ■ ensure that the trainer understands the training needs and the course objectives ■ ensure there is a written contract for the services provided.
Going on external courses	External training will usually be available locally or nationally. Training organisations exist to sell training, so it is important to be sure that a course will provide value for money. Before someone attends training, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is this the right course? What are the objectives? Are they relevant? How will the training be delivered? Will the style encourage learning? Is the course at the right level? Is this the right person to send on the course? ■ Even if the course is being offered free, it is important to consider training carefully, as the organisation is investing the time of its staff in it. ■ After any training course, line managers should always help staff members to apply their learning. It is good practice to develop an action plan at the end of a course.

EXAMPLE

Philip needs to improve his French language skills for his new role. After talking to his line manager he agreed a development objective for the next six months:

To improve my written French so that I can communicate clearly with French donors by email in six months' time.

Philip likes to learn through reading. He likes to be able to work at his own pace but realised he needs some feedback in order to know he is improving. With his line manager he agreed the following options:

- Philip will work through a French grammar course on the internet by himself. He will do this in his own time.
- Philip will spend an hour a week at work reading French reports on the internet that are relevant to his role.
- Philip will spend an hour each week at work with another member of staff who speaks French fluently. This member of staff will provide feedback and will comment on emails that Philip writes in French.

REFLECTION

- Think about something you recently learnt: how did you learn it?
- Which methods of learning are we using in our organisation at the moment?
- Which methods could we use more?

STEP 4 Planning

A development plan is a useful tool for three main reasons:

- It allows an individual to record objectives and track progress.
- It provides a basis for conversations between a line manager and a member of staff about development.
- It enables a line manager to have an overview of the development needs in the team or across a whole organisation so that resources can be allocated effectively.

A development plan should record:

- development objectives
- planned learning activities
- cost of activities
- time required
- possible challenges and how to overcome them
- who is responsible for what.

It is helpful for someone to have an overview of the development needs and priorities in an organisation. This means that learning opportunities can be co-ordinated for staff with similar development needs and that strategic priorities are being addressed. It is therefore helpful if line managers send a copy of team members' development plans to this person.

STEP 5 Putting the plan into action

Each member of staff should own their development plan. It is their responsibility to implement it with the support of their line manager. Line managers should review development plans with each member of staff every six months.

Example of a Development Plan

Name					
Role					
Line manager					
Date					
Development objectives	Development activities	Cost	Responsibility and support	By when	Comments during review
Line manager's signature				Date	
Staff member's signature				Date	

STEP 6 Reviewing and applying learning

It is important to make sure that learning is retained by staff. Some guidelines for encouraging this to happen include:

ENCOURAGE STAFF TO APPLY THEIR LEARNING as soon as possible so that members of staff do not forget it.

REVIEW THE LEARNING ACTIVITY WITH THE STAFF MEMBER BY ASKING:

- What did you learn?
- What do you want to do differently as a result of that learning?
- Did you achieve your objectives?
- What do you need to do now?

AS A LINE MANAGER, REFLECT ON THE SUCCESS OF THE LEARNING ACTIVITY by assessing whether the staff member's ability has improved in the appropriate area. If there are any doubts, consider the following points:

- Was the need assessed correctly?
- Was the appropriate option chosen?
- What should be done differently next time?

STEP 7 Sharing learning with others

Organisations should encourage staff to share learning. This is an important way of making the most of learning. It also helps to reinforce what has been learned. Some ideas for how to do this are listed below.

- Invite staff to a monthly learning event and provide them with an opportunity to share their own learning.
- Encourage staff with similar roles in the organisation to meet regularly to share their learning.
- Include sharing of learning as a regular part of a team meeting.
- Each week start one day with a 30 minute session for sharing learning. Ask a different member of the team to lead it each time.
- Encourage staff to write down their learning and send it by email to others who may be interested.
- If the organisation has an intranet site, create a learning zone where staff can share their learning.

REFLECTION

■ How does our organisation view its staff? Are members of staff given opportunities for development? Are volunteers given opportunities for development?

■ What processes could be put in place to encourage staff development?