

Professional development for strategic managers

[Business](#), [Management](#)



It is now widely perceived that there are many benefits to organisations and professionals adopting continuous development programmes. The need for continuous education through our working lives has never been more important as it is becoming increasingly rare for an individual to stay on one career path all of their working life. With global competition business direction is constantly changing and the organisations have to continually re-structure to meet this demand and this in turn creates many new and different diverse opportunities.

There are various models based on self-tests that can be used to evaluate personal and professional skills sets that can be tailored to achieve personal and organisational goals. These models are not specific and can be adapted to fit personal as well as business objectives.

It is important to remember that each individual is different and what will work for one person may not necessarily work for another. Also that a test only fingerprints a specific moment in time and that the same test could produce different results at a later date such is the subjective nature of the evaluation process. A single test in isolation can provide an indication of a specific requirement. But what is more helpful is to see the bigger picture and be able to recognise the kind of person you actually are and a collective series of tests helps to provide a more accurate profile.

The structure of assessing your personal and professional skill sets is based upon self analysis, evaluation, and then creating a development plan with specific actions.

The self-analysis process will include assessing recognition of your learning skills. Then through assessing your time type it will give you a clear indication of how you perceive time and provide a guide of how you are able to receive and process information for learning purposes. How you use your time is critically important if you are to achieve strategic goals and analysing a daily log over a period of time (a week) will give you a good indication of how productive your use of time actually is. Results even at this stage may be surprising and can encourage immediate behavioural changes for efficiency and focus.

The next step in creating your profile and start to be able to shape outcomes is to perform a personal SWOT analysis to assess your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A personal SWOT is different to business SWOT because this is specific to you and how you and preferably others via feedback see you as well.

At this stage you have gathered a significant amount of information about yourself and how your profile relates to your position in your organisation and should be able to start planning how you fit in to the overall strategic direction of the business. Before you can do this though you need to look deeper at the business and develop a good understanding of the external factors that can help or hinder your career progression.

A PEST analysis is constructed in the same way as a SWOT but draws relevance to the Political, Economic, Socio-cultural and Technological environments in which you function. These factors are all external and ones that you cannot control. By understanding the business challenges you

create a much more dynamic picture of the opportunities that lie ahead and you can plan accordingly.

The findings now should present a compelling story of your personal and professional skill sets and provide a clear indication of how these should be further progressed to achieve your strategic goals.

Section2

Demonstrate how you would conduct a skills audit to identify learning style:

A learning style describes the subjective conditions in that that an individual is most likely to learn. There is no right or wrong set of conditions but if you are able to help someone learn by identifying their learning style it can aid development. With is in mind educationalists have established tests that help classify a learning style or rather a set of ideal learning conditions specific to an individual. In establishing a classification an individual can tailor their learning needs to that style and better understand their specific learning objectives.

I would conduct a skills audit based on the Honey and Mumford model that has been adapted from a model first devised by Kolb (circa 1984). Under the classification headings Pragmatist, Theorist, Activist and Reflector you are asked to score from between one and ten a series of bullets/questions. As you score yourself the higher the score the more accurate you see the question is of your perceived personal profile. When you have completed the test and added up all the scores the categorisation with the highest score is your ideal learning style.

From my results from this activity classified me as a Pragmatist. I can see many attributes in this classification that relate to me and for strategic planning purposes I can see methods to use these learning characteristics. Having worked for many years in sales and production centric positions problem solving and being creative to produce successful outcomes was all part of the role. Now that I have had the opportunity to recognise these as skills in arguably a natural capacity I can shape my strategic thinking and future leadership initiatives to my strengths.

The results from the test showed me to be fairly well rounded with Pragmatist 90, Theorist 88, Activist 80 and Reflector 72. The good to come out of this test is that I would have said before taking the test that my own assumption would have been that reflector would have been possibly the top score. So what I think and what I do are obviously quite different in practice, which was very interesting to me.

The conclusion of using this test or any similar test is that it is best used as part of an overall development plan as it can only act as a guide. When included in to a Personal Development Plan with further academic tools it starts to become a far more effective reference point for planning and overall strategic direction decisions.

Section 3

Demonstrate how you would implement a personal development plan:

For any Continuous Professional Development programme to be effective it has to be an integral part of an organisations strategy. It has to be part of the fixtures and fittings and not something that is picked up once a year in

panic as part of an appraisal process. Their needs to be budget set aside and are firmly driven as benefitting the business from the top-level management downwards.

The key to organisational success is being able to identify the key personnel who can truly mutually benefit personally and professionally from organisational support on a PDP. A PDP can in theory benefit everyone but not everyone has the same drive for continuous improvement and the levels set by the organisation will reflect in their budgets required for success. Therefore the implementation of a skills audit and evolving PDP is of significant importance.

To implement a Personal Development Plan you need to create a systematic step-by-step process that is measureable and can be revisited at any time to assess progress and achievement. The steps to complete in creating your own PDP and be able to assess and measure for strategic leadership are as follows:

1. Time Type This is a test to provide a measure of how do you perceive time, and how is this reflected in your behaviour. This behaviour is classified as Sensing, Intuitive, Thinking and Feeling and descriptive rational is given for each type so that you can better understand your time perception.
2. Daily Log This is a simple exercise of recording your daily activity and highlights how much of your time is either efficient or ineffective so corrective action be applied if required.
3. Learning Style This test helps to determine your learning style defined as an Activist, Pragmatist, Reflector or Theorist. The descriptors for each

provide a rationale that allows you to identify a style that will help you learn in a comfortable manner.

4. SWOT A personal analysis of your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats can produce some very powerful insights to your personal situation and your relationship in the organisation. By knowing your strengths, you can focus your efforts on what you are good at, and understanding your weaknesses you know what to avoid, what to improve, and where to get help from people who do those things better.

5. PEST The SWOT analysis looks at your personal profile and the factors that can influence your success. The PEST analysis looks much deeper into any external factors from which you have little to no control over but can seriously help or inhibit your career success. Set up in the same way you create a SWOT table the PEST, which stands for Political, Economic, Socio-cultural and Technical describes the environments in which you function. When analysing a SWOT & PEST you create a very powerful tool to be able to make very strong considered strategic decisions for future direction.

6. SMART The SMART principle can be used for setting a specific goal and can be used at any time against any part of your overall PDP. SMART stands for Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound. It is a simple tool to ensure an action is completed in a grid format to a defined specification that is both measureable and relevant with a timeframe.

7. Managing Stress A key point that is often overlooked is managing stress. Not all stress is bad as it shows you care about what you do and want to achieve something. However no one knows you better than yourself so

having an awareness of escalating issues and taking appropriate action when required should be all part of your continuous development plan.

Implementing a PDP is as much about you as it is the organisation and the more you put in to it the more you will get out of it. An effective PDP should help you understand your current position in the bigger picture that includes your personal as well as professional situation. If you have the full backing of your organisation you should benefit with rewarding career progression and enjoy your role, as you will understand it better. In the overall benefit you should reduce any anxiety or stress suffered, as you will be much more in control of your professional journey.

Reflective Learning Statement The assignment has help to focus me and remind me of the techniques required to progress personally and professionally in an organisation. By documenting where you are and where you want to go gives you a strong impetus to succeed on an agreed career path. I can only see massive incentive for a business to get this process right and have a totally engage and creatively thinking employee who can only add value and ultimately profit to the organisation. There is a saying that I continually use that is ' what gets measured, gets improved' and by way of embracing a PDP you give yourself every opportunity of continual success.