

Who is in charge of your development?

In today's rapidly changing business environment there is a strong **need for continuous development**, meaning acquiring new **knowledge, skills and learning** new effective behaviours and approaches. **This article is about you! If you are interested in your own development continue to read.**

Some organisations are today struggling with how to build flexible and agile systems that can keep up with those changes and needs. They are still in a process of moving from centralised functions that "are in charge" of people development and the habit of yearly appraisals. **The need is recognised to move from the centralised situations towards more local and individual responsibilities.**

Sitting and waiting for your yearly appraisal, in the hope that someone will organise a learning event for you will not help you **stay up to date with the changing demands in the workplace.**

You may already work for one of those organisations that have identified and adjusted to the new circumstances by creating systems and procedures (built into the company's culture) to keep up with these **personal development challenges** in your field/position.

Some examples of this would then be recognized through:

- A clear personal development plan, on-the-job as well as off-the-job training
- Clear improvement targets
- Regular feedback - from your leaders, colleagues, and staff
- Monthly appraisals
- Within your team - continuous learning from each other

If you are not that lucky to be already part of a process which supports your development or you just want to keep a parallel track on your development to boost it even further, there are many things you can do to ensure that you yourself oversee your own development.

Continue to read and get some ideas about what you might need to do to take the next step in your career.

Eight things you can do to stay in charge of your own development:

1 You are not sure what you are interested in

You might be stuck in your current position but have no idea what you really want to do. Take 15-30 minutes a week to watch 1 video that you find on TED Talks, YouTube or do a Google video search on a specific topic that you might be interested in. After one year you have then received insights on at least 40 new subjects that might in-turn give you an interest for your future path. It might happen already after 20 clips and then you can move on to step 2.

If you have no idea start with this: [Why we do what we do](#)

2 I know what I want to learn more about, but can't afford any training

Join a class on iTunes U, LinkedIn or YouTube from a free online training provider. Or just google your topic and online free training - When you find one, check for references and reviews before you start.

Some of the classes online are from highly ranked universities and/or training providers. Then join a forum on LinkedIn and share/discuss your findings. There are many great forums on LinkedIn that can help you. If you want to develop your thoughts and reflections further why not gather some colleagues and friends that are interested in the same areas as you and create a learning team on messenger or any similar apps and then share your findings and learnings.

Some examples:

Language: [Duolingo](#)

Higher education: [iTunes U](#), [edx.com](#)

Sales: [Alison.com](#)

3 I don't know my strengths and weaknesses

Ask your manager, colleagues and/or subordinates for feedback. Don't ask what you are doing well, but instead ask very specific questions like:

- Based on what you have seen so far - what do you think I should do more/less of or maybe change in order to improve in my job function?
- Based on all the changes going on, and the needs in this company/position what advice would you give on what and how to improve?

Find the questions that make the most sense for you.

Cultural differences may not make it easy to ask subordinates, so then ask your manager, colleagues or maybe friends that know you well. See feedback as a gift, even if you don't like what you receive - just say thank you! There is always something to learn from feedback.

I don't have a budget

Search for free personality test/indicators - you will find several online tools available to explore your personality for free such as:

1. www.insightsforyou.se
2. www.similarminds.com
3. www.queendom.com

Remember some of these tools are just indicators. Try several and see if the results are consistent for you or change because of context, mood or time. If the tools are pointing in the same direction then it may be something to think about. Use them together with real feedback from friends and colleagues to get a more balanced picture.

I have a budget

Call a consultancy company to get a more professional assessment carried out, be clear about why you are doing it and what you need. This might include: Psychometric assessments, interviews, reflection and 360 assessments and a follow up discussion with a professional coach.

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I know what I want to improve and "learning by doing" works best for me

What do you want to learn more about? Language, IT, Finance, leading people, project management, digital marketing?

Think about what projects or activities would give you more knowledge on the topic; is this project available within your organization or outside?

Since it is an investment in your future you might need to do this outside working hours, waiting for the company you are working for to act may put you in a situation where the train has already left the station

Outside working hours

Help out in your kid's (or a relatives' kid) local soccer team or any other organisation related to the interest your kids might have. There are several different things you can practice like finance, digital marketing or team building etc.

Or join a charity and ask for a position where you can offer support and at the same time develop and learn about what you are interested in. Remember that feedback and reflection are two important companions when learning from doing.

So, ensure that you surround yourself with people that can give you feedback and frequently ask yourself "what has gone well today" and why. And "what did not work so well today", why and what will I do differently next time.

Within working hours

Come up with an idea for an improvement project and ask for the resources to do it, if you can combine an idea for improvement with a clear realistic business result (i.e. this will make us save or this will help us to earn) you may have a good case. Remember to sell in the problem before you sell in the solution and ensure that the people you need to convince have a similar view of the current situation before you present your idea.

5 Find a mentor

One way to acquire knowledge is to find yourself a mentor, who do you know that has the knowledge you need?

Ask him or her if they would be prepared to meet, for example, 5 times per year to discuss specific topics and share their knowledge and experiences of what worked for them and what did not. I know it is a big thing to ask, but all the people to whom I have recommended to take this route have always found a mentor after one or two attempts. People love to share things and there is always room for a free lunch.

6 Change job

If your current position is not challenging enough and the training you need to stay attractive in the market is unavailable to you and your employers don't react positively when you initiate a discussion about it, then it might be time to leave. *(Check with someone you trust to give you honest feedback and see if your demands are realistic first).*

Some things you can do in order to get started:

- Create/Update your profile on LinkedIn to get relevant offers and join relevant networks
- Contact head-hunters/agencies and present your CV
- Activate your network and be active within the network
- Practice job interview techniques with a trusted friend/colleague

7 Build and invest in your network

In today's job market it is common that a lot of vacancies are filled through contacts within networks, these may be digital, school, job or private networks. Make sure you are keeping your network up-to-date and nurture it with material, knowledge, meetings, lunches, support etc. to ensure that people in your network are there for you when you need them. You need to invest before you can harvest.

8 Nothing of the above works for me

Ask yourself:

Do you really want to develop?

Who do you want to fix it for you?

Or are you in fact happy just how things are, at least for now.

Finally: Remember very little development happens in your comfort zone, in order to learn how to ski well you need to dare to take a fall. The same thing applies to any development; you can't do it without failing now and then - Be sure to fail fast and fail cheap and recover quickly.

Then ask yourself two questions:

What did I learn and how will I deal with it next time?

Did you learn to walk without falling over?

Enjoy your learning journey – Stay in tune and make sure you sustain your ability to deliver high quality work in your current and future position.

Lastly - don't expect and wait for someone else to do it for you.

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