OCHR FACTSHEET

Individual Development Plans

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

This Fact Sheet:

- Explains the benefits of a focus on employee development
- Describes the content of an Individual Development Plan
- Answers some frequently asked questions about Individual Development Plans

Introduction

One of the five steps in the performance management cycle is "developing," which refers to increasing the capacity to perform. In a high-performing organization, employee developmental needs are routinely evaluated and addressed. Defining employee short- and long-term development goals not only strengthens job-related skills and competencies, but also leads to strong performance, employee satisfaction and engagement, encourages recruitment of strong candidates, and ensures that organizations can keep up with changes in the workplace.

Planning for Development Needs

One effective tool for creating a plan for current and future development needs is an Individual Development Plan, or IDP. In the Department of the Navy (DON), supervisors are encouraged to create IDPs for each employee, although some organizations do require every employee to have one. Through an IDP, supervisors and employees are encouraged to identify and discuss learning and training needs, assess strengths and weaknesses, list developmental and career goals, and determine what resources will be needed. The IDP can be viewed as an investment strategy, which can assist the employee in sustaining personal and career growth and can ensure that the organization has people with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the mission.

Creating an IDP

There are many templates for the creation of an IDP, but they generally consist of a framework to enable a discussion concerning goals and needs. An IDP may include:

- Short-term goals for your current position;
- Long-term goals for your career; and
- Identification of desired or required courses, training, certifications, or other resources.

It is important to remember that an IDP is not a promise that the goals will be met or that the requested training will be offered; rather, it is a communication and planning tool that assists supervisors and employees in determining how to effectively increase performance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are some ways to develop competencies?

A. There are many ways to develop skills and gain experience. It is helpful to have a discussion about which resource would best help you to achieve your goals. Some ideas include traditional classroom training, certifications, computer-based training, distance learning coursework, rotational assignments or details, self-study, job shadowing, and formal or informal mentoring programs.

Q. Does an IDP relate to my current job duties only?

A. Although an IDP can help define how best to perform your current job duties, IDPs are also useful for developing a career progression plan for future positions. In fact, participating in a discussion about your future career goals with your supervisor may help your supervisor to be on the look-out for assignments and opportunities to help you achieve your goals.

Q. When should I prepare my IDP?

A. Although an IDP can be prepared at any time, it may be appropriate to discuss your IDP with your supervisor at the beginning of each appraisal period. The discussion regarding your supervisor's expectations for the upcoming appraisal period is a natural fit for a discussion about what resources and development you may need.

Q. Is an IDP a guarantee once signed?

A. No. Particularly in times of budget constraints, the unfortunate reality is that employees are not going to be able to take every training course desired. However, once you have a clear idea of your career goals, your supervisor should be able to discuss with you alternate methods for achieving these goals should your desired resource not be attainable. An IDP is a "living document" – it can be modified at any point and can be used as a basis for a discussion about development at any time.

Where to Find Additional Information

Need additional information on performance management? Visit the OCHR Performance Management and Awards portal site at: **www.portal.navy.mil/donhr/WorkforceRelations/Pages/PerformanceManagementAwards.aspx**