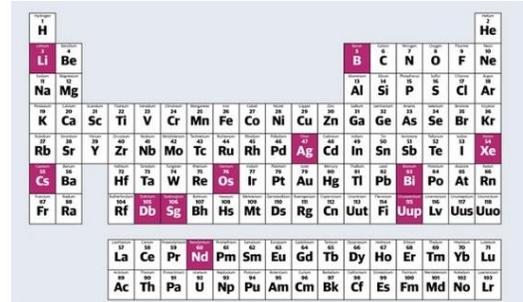


## The 4 Elements of a High Impact Talent Development Plan

Now that 4 new elements are being added to the periodic table that we all memorized in our youth, it made me think of the 4 elements that are critical to a high impact development plan.

Properly instituted development plans can provide the roadmap for success for new and existing employees. However, many companies may find themselves following a “one size fits all” development plan without realizing positive results because they lose focus and momentum on the elements that offer high impact for their employee. By ensuring these 4 key elements are customized to your company’s periodic chart you will be on your way to instituting a high impact development plan.



### 4 Talent Development Plan Elements:

#### 1. Focus on Two Opportunities

When development plans are overly complex, the participants and management lose momentum and commitment to the plan. There is great value in keeping it simple and thus increasing sustainability. Creating two impactful opportunities for development is manageable and offers opportunity for achieving success without exhaustive resources spent on non-impactful initiatives.

- a. Identifying two impactful opportunities:
  - i. In many cases, companies hire an employee based on prior experience then fail to maximize the external expertise of each individual in their development plan. Creating an impactful opportunity begins with making it personal to the employee and his/her desired career path.
  - ii. Be thoughtful about encouraging items that offer an early win so that the development plan is off to a good start and a strong momentum is ignited.

#### 2. Align Goals and Resources

While it seems like a simple concept that the goals outlined in individual development plans would need to align with business goals, sometimes that idea gets lost in translation. Each individual development plan should be aligned with company goals without losing site of the varying degree of individual control and clear direction on how he/she may contribute to attaining the goal.

- a. Outline strategies with timelines
  - i. Whether the employee is new to an organization or a tenured team member, annual goals and strategies evolve and need to be communicated to each employee with leadership direction on how he/she may impact the attainment of that year’s goals. It’s critical to also outline

expected timelines and milestones. Exploration and redefining of timelines is also encouraged as the company needs change. A customized plan does not demand static adherence.

- b. Providing adequate training and coaching
    - i. Our experiences and expertise are unique as is the need for training and coaching. Empowering employees with the proper training and customized coaching gives them a support system to confidently thrive in record time and with high impact results. *Co-Active Coaching* by H. Kimsey-House, K. Kimsey-House, Sandahl and Whitworth describes the coaching environment in a rock climbing metaphor whereas the rock climber is ascending the cliff face and striving for the summit while experiencing feelings of exhilaration, exhaustion, and being scared. But knowing that there is the equivalent of a belay team holding their rope gives them the confidence to keep climbing.
3. Ongoing Support

Even the most well-intentioned leaders may lose sight of the importance of the ongoing support required of development plans. Focus may shift to putting out the fires of the day instead of talent development.

- a. Losing momentum is common if development plans are not reviewed frequently. It's vital that adherence to expectations and numerous milestone updates are provided to self and key stakeholders so that the desired progress is maintained.
  - b. True Support, not just "touch points" from leadership is required to retain commitment from all parties. Consistent feedback from self and others provides for the identification and resolution of any potential derailleurs. *The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan* by Bradt, Check, and Pedraza discusses the importance of focusing attention on areas that would be defined as a "might miss" to ensure that support can be given in advance to pave the way for successful completion of target goals.
4. Make it Measurable

A crucial element of a solid development plan is defining what success of the plan means prior to committing to the plan. As a leader, if you cannot define what success means to the employee's development than how can you expect him/her to achieve desired results?

- a. If success is not measurable than it may prove to be a de-motivator as the employee is attempting to deliver a product without understanding the intent of the initiative and clear expectations.
- b. There are several items to include to ensure that the outcome is measurable.
  - a. Develop a clearly defined objective or problem to be solved
  - b. Define specific and attainable metrics (i.e. YOY cost reduction of x% or decrease non-exempt employee turnover by x%)
  - c. Identify key stakeholders and resources required in advance to ensure alignment

- d. Create expected timeline for completion (inclusive of milestones as appropriate)

A successfully implemented development plan consisting of these critical elements will yield results. Not only will the defined primary objectives be attained but the added benefit of a confident and motivated employee will be added to your company's "periodic table".

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