

Whitepaper: Six Keys to Personal Development



info@lc-consultants.com
www.lc-consultants.com



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We are all influenced by our surroundings, whether it's the neighborhood where we grow up, the school we attend, the sports we choose to play or the footsteps of those we follow in our family. The decisions we end up making are impacted by what's around us.

In early childhood, we are reliant upon our parents, older siblings, relatives and others around us to help us make good, sound decisions. But as we grow older, our parents allow us to take on new challenges – whether it be in school, sports or hobbies. In addition, parents often extend decision-making for opportunities like college choice.

I'm the first to admit that – while I have been very fortunate to receive a great education and experience success in my professional career – my development was not carefully planned. My college decision was based upon size, location, campus and academics. I became interested in the Industrial and Organizational Psychology field because my neighbor was an I/O Psychologist and it seemed “really cool.” Today, after obtaining a Master's in I/O Psychology more than 21 years ago, I still apply what I've learned from school. My passion is helping others and continues to get me out of bed every day. But I've been lucky, as I had no formal plan.

You must be enthusiastic and passionate about your development. To be successful, you need to embrace it like an athlete who wants their coach to know of (and see) their desire for playing time. Therefore, we call our development approach “PLAY ME.”



P – People Focus

It is important to think about who is “in your corner” when it comes to your growth and development. Make sure to constantly expand your network and seek connections with individuals who could be mentors, coaches or references for you. Think about ways you can increase your reach through social media.

Action Planning Questions

- > Who has had an influence on you during your life? How?
- > How do you continue to leverage these individuals when you make important decisions?
- > How are you actively pursuing professional relationships? How are you being strategic to maximize your time doing that?



L – Long-Range View

I was once told by an executive whom I worked with “always be thinking two jobs ahead.” It is important to have a plan for your development and constantly revisit it. Know what your end goal or objective is. Find ways to stretch yourself and get outside of your comfort zone. Until you do that and fail, you will never know what you are truly capable of accomplishing.

Action Planning Questions

- > When have you failed recently? How did you use that experience for future motivation?
- > What is (currently) your dream job? What is your path for getting there?
- > What have you done to learn about other roles you aspire to move into?



A – Accountability Partner

Find someone reliable to push you towards your goals and aspirations. If you already know who that might be, make sure they are going to take the responsibility seriously. This person should not “sugar coat” how you are doing against your goals, but instead push you to greatness.

Action Planning Questions

- > Who in your past (or present) will hold you accountable for achieving your goals and objectives?
- > How do you prefer to communicate?
- > How can you return the favor?



Y – You

Before you are able to push your personal and professional development forward, you need to be able to articulate your strengths and opportunities. We recommend gathering multiple data points through personality inventories and other related instruments. The more information you can collect, the better.

Action Planning Questions

- > What makes you “tick”?
- > How are you actively leveraging your strengths?
- > How do you address your opportunities?

M – Milestones

Creating a roadmap to track success with your development is critical. We recommend considering daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly milestones to ensure you stay on track. Your milestones should support other plans (e.g., goals, objectives, activities, initiatives).

Action Planning Questions

- > What specific ways can you have others (coaches, mentors, accountability partners) assist you with defining and reaching your milestones?
- > How will you know when you are successful?
- > How comfortable are you with setting objectives?

E – Enrichment

Attitude. Passion to Win. Positivity. Having these feelings when engaging in development activities are signs you are moving in the right direction. But enrichment must come from your heart. As soon as you become detached from one or more of these descriptors, it's time to look for other development alternatives.

Action Planning Questions

- > How can you ensure your development activities are providing you with needed growth (enrichment)?
- > How often do you check in with your accountability partner?
- > What other resources can you leverage going forward to further your enrichment?



Conclusion

Each of these keys to development – on its own – is an effective method. Together, they represent a comprehensive blueprint for tackling your career ambitions and realizing them all.

Good luck with fulfilling your dreams! Let us know how we can help.