

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning

Suggested Readings

Title	Author/Publisher	Learning Mode
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	Covey, Stephen A./ 1990/ Free Press	Book + AudioCD
The Handbook of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: Inspiring Others to Achieve Results	Feldman, Daniel A./ 1999/ Leadership Performance Solutions	Book
Play to Your Strengths: Stacking the Deck to Achieve Spectacular Results for Yourself and Others.	Sigetich, Andrea and Leavitt, Carol./2008/Bookmark Press.	Book
The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.	Senge, Peter./Reprinted 2006./DoubleDay Publishers.	Book
The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance.	Waitzkin, Josh./2007./Free Press.	Book

Activities

1. Create the worksheet shown below and use it to list your strengths and areas for improvement. Once you have completed both columns, circle the three to five items in the left column that you consider your greatest strengths. Then, circle the three to five items in the right column that you will work to improve.

THINGS I DO WELL	THINGS I'D LIKE TO DO BETTER

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning, continued

2. Identify three accomplishments of which you are most proud. For each accomplishment answer the following questions:

- What challenge did I face?
- What did I do to produce results?
- What difficulties did I encounter?
- What skills and qualities did I demonstrate?
- What results did I produce?
- How did I feel about my accomplishment?

After you have completed and reviewed your accomplishments, summarize your patterns of success and your primary qualities and skills by answering the following questions:

- What initial challenges and problems are most common in the accomplishments I described?
- What qualities (honesty, integrity, persistence, openness, etc.) were most frequently demonstrated?
- What skills were most frequently demonstrated in the accomplishments I described?

3. Increase your awareness of how you respond to tough situations by reflecting on the following questions:

- Think of a difficult work situation over the past 3 months that you handled well. What are three things about yourself of which you are most proud?
- Think of a difficult work situation over the past 3 months that you did not handle well. What are three things about yourself of which you are least proud? What might you have done differently to better manage that specific situation?

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning, continued

4. Keep a journal to help you become more aware of your emotions and the role they play in your work life. Use the following process:
 - a. At the end of each workday, or at different times during your workday, jot down in your journal what feelings/emotions you've experienced and what caused them. Write all of them down even though they may not seem significant to you.
 - b. After several weeks, or even a month, have passed, review what you have written. Look for patterns. For example, do you have certain emotions more often than others? Do they result from the same cause? How do your emotions affect your work and relationships?
 - c. Use this knowledge to explore why you are having certain emotions and, if they are having a negative impact, how you can change the situation to avoid having them.
 - d. Look also for emotions you are not experiencing, such as enthusiasm, joy, and pride. Ask yourself why you are not experiencing them and what you can do about it.
5. Identify what it will take for you to feel you've achieved success. To help you do this, use the following process:
 - a. Write a complete description of yourself as the most successful person you can imagine.
 - b. Then, describe yourself, your family relationships, your career, your work relationships, your health, and your financial status.
 - c. Write the things that you are doing and how you are feeling.
 - d. Call this your Picture of Success.
6. Reflect on how you view and use power. Think of a personal or work-related experience that gave you the feeling of being powerful. Describe the experience and what it was like for you. Answer the following questions:
 - Do I feel that I am a powerful person?
 - How does my use of power make me feel?
 - How does the power of others make me feel?
7. Now, refer to the exercise on creating your Picture of Success and answer the next set of questions.
 - How much power would it take to be that successful?
 - What power would I need and how would I use that power to enhance and maintain my Picture of Success?

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning, continued

8. Take time to think about your values. Ask yourself:
 - What is really important to me?
 - When did I have to support or defend something that was important to me?
 - When did I have to support or defend something that was not important to me and how did it make me feel?
 - When was the last time I felt really satisfied? What was the situation?
9. Identify your personal development needs and wants by using the following process:
 - a. First, list what you need to feel that you are growing and developing yourself. Be specific.
 - b. Now, assuming that your personal growth needs are met, list what else you want that relates to them. Be specific.
 - c. Next, list the obstacles that keep you from meeting your personal growth needs and wants.
 - d. Finally, identify things you can do to overcome these obstacles.

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning, continued

10. Conduct an attitude check. Listed below are common attitudes and behaviors. Read each statement and circle the number on the rating scale that best describes you.

	Never		Usually		Always
When someone disagrees with me, I don't take it personally.	1	2	3	4	5
I look at mistakes I make as learning experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
When I begin to feel defensive about an issue, I think it's important to take a brief time-out.	1	2	3	4	5
When a result falls short of my expectations, I take responsibility for my share of it.	1	2	3	4	5
When someone criticizes me, I ask for more information.	1	2	3	4	5
When I'm criticized, I feel it's more important to understand where the other person is coming from than to convey where I'm coming from.	1	2	3	4	5
During an argument, I want my needs addressed respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
In general, when I agree with a criticism, I admit my behavior was wrong.	1	2	3	4	5

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning, continued

11. Consider the following guidelines to help you manage criticism so you can learn from it and improve as a professional.

- **Don't take the criticism as a personal attack and become defensive.** Defensiveness results from the need to justify our behavior and becomes the armor we put on to protect ourselves from embarrassment, anxiety, or loss of self-esteem.
- **Resist the urge to counter-criticize.** It interferes with effective communication and undermines trust and morale.
- **Don't take the criticism as evidence that you're inadequate.** Don't let criticism dismantle your self-esteem. Remember that the objective is to learn and grow from the criticism.
- **Don't make excuses.** Accept responsibility.

12. Identify sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in your current job. Consider using the following process:

- a. Create the worksheet shown below and complete both columns.

Details of my job that are sources of satisfaction for me	Details of my job that are sources of dissatisfaction for me

- b. If you find there is more dissatisfaction with your job than satisfaction, answer the following questions:

- What can I do to reduce or eliminate the sources of dissatisfaction?
- If I am unable to do this, are there other jobs in my organization that might offer me the sources of satisfaction that I've identified?
- What are the jobs and/or what information do I need to learn more about them?

Development Suggestions for Continual Learning, continued

13. Apply knowledge of yourself to determine the development you need to advance in your career, move into a new job that suits you well, or improve your performance in your current job. Consider the following steps:
 - a. Explore the opportunities available to expand your skills and interests in your current job, in a new position in your organization, or in a new career field or organization.
 - b. Target a specific opportunity that you think would be a good fit for you.
 - c. Develop your plan for taking advantage of this opportunity, keeping in mind it may be expanding your current contribution in your organization or in a different organization or career.
 - d. Identify the support you will need and from whom to help you implement your plan.
 - e. Implement your plan. Be sure to build in checkpoints where you evaluate your progress.

Tips

1. View your strengths as development opportunities. In general, your greatest successes will result from leveraging your strengths.
2. Search for meaningful training and development workshops (such as those offered through the USPTO Leadership Development Program) and make an effort to attend them.
3. Commit to being a lifelong learner. Approach each situation by asking yourself, “What can I learn?”
4. Keep a list of the things you want to learn over the next several years.
5. Train others. The best way to further your own skills is to teach them to others.
6. Volunteer for projects that require you to learn new information within tight timeframes.
7. Seek roles that will enable you to work with people outside your department with whom you have not yet worked.
8. Consider how organizational processes can be redesigned to ensure that valuable knowledge is shared/distributed throughout your organization.
9. Create a reference tool that catalogues issues, lessons learned, and innovative solutions that can be shared with other members of your organization.

10. Draw a “map” of your potential internal network. Include the names and positions of both lateral and vertical employees.
11. Be aware of emerging technological advances that could impact your field.
12. Find others in your organization who have skills or knowledge in areas where you are weak. Ask to observe, work with, and get feedback from them.
13. Try to become the expert in your organization in one or more technical areas.