

Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) can be undertaken by all employees to improve their competencies. CPD is carried out through individuals' own actions but organisations can support CPD efforts as part of talent development initiatives.

DEFINING CPD

Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to the practice by which individuals take control over their own learning and development. It involves curiosity and reflection on experiences encountered and using these to develop competencies through action.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CPD AND TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

CPD differs from organisational training and development programmes because it puts the individual learner in control. It is future-focussed and can have long-term and well as short-term objectives.



CPD can address all aspects of life, not just employment, and can embrace a balance between work life and personal objectives. Even if an employer is unsupportive of training and development, individuals can use CPD to pursue their own goals – both career and personal.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Professional development is pursued as a continuous process. Individuals engaging in CPD can follow its principles throughout their lives as it has no formal end point. Each person decides their own learning needs and how best to meet them. Goals can be pursued to the degree that individuals feel most comfortable. There is no pressure to reach formal targets.

CPD works best when it is recognised as beneficial and not seen as an additional duty. It can be particularly effective when it is linked to an individual's employment goals but it can be practised to pursue dreams, not just everyday work requirements.

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

CPD is a professional requirement in some disciplines. If so, employers will be concerned that individuals undertake CPD and record it as required by the relevant professional body.

Where CPD is voluntary, employers should recognise the benefits it brings through competency development, thereby improving their workforce skills profile. CPD thus assists with succession planning.

Employer support for CPD, for example, through the provision of resources for employees to pursue it, can improve talent retention.

HOW TO ENACT CPD

CPD follows the principles of experiential learning: concrete experience; observation and reflection; theorising and planning; and testing out/using the learning in practice.

Following this cycle, individuals step back from each experience (an event/activity) to think about what they have learned from it. In this period of reflection, curiosity can be employed to consider how to use this learning for future development. When this is put into action, this creates another experience and the cycle continues.

RECORDING CPD

A CPD plan helps to identify future goals for the short-, medium-, and long-term, using the following headings:

- what do I need/want to learn?
- what will I do to achieve this?
- what resources/support will I need?
- what are my success criteria?
- target dates for review and completion.

A CPD log is helpful to record learning events as they happen so that these can show progress towards the goals identified in the CPD plan. This might comprise the following headings:

- date/activity that took place
- why the activity was undertaken
- what were the learning points from this activity?
- how will this learning be used in future?

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