

# Training and Staff Development

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**Description:** How often have you heard this platitude: "Our employees are our most important asset"? How do you give teeth to this now highly overused statement? To be credible to your employees you need to exhibit a genuine commitment to their professional growth, while remembering that you are not running a training organization. Achieving this balance is not that hard. Actually, the key to success is keeping it simple. The essential elements of a development plan are clearly tying training/education to business objectives, defining and obtaining mutual commitment to specific actions and following up periodically on the commitments made. In practice, you will find that employees who were complaining about not being given opportunity to develop their skills, in fact may not be living up to their end of the commitment. Over an extended period of time, those who are committed to developing their skills become evident.

**Benefit:** An effective training and development strategy offers a many benefits:

- Provides a clear statement to employees that you are interested and committed to their professional growth
- Focuses on the mutual commitment (employee and employer) necessary to make career development a reality
- Enables predicable budgeting of training costs
- Provides for feedback on the efficacy of training

**First Steps:** If you do not have in place a formal training/development program, take the following steps:

1. Develop a program for training and development using as the foundation a form similar to that provided in the example below (we recommend you keep it simple)
2. Ensure that there is adequate funding available to carry out the program
3. As the senior IT professional in your group, assert your commitment to the program
4. Ensure that support for the program is part of the management evaluation process for your management team

**Example:** An Individual Development Plan template is provided in Figure 1 below. It is important to note the simplicity of this form. In reality, it is a tool to achieve a basic agreement that the employee and his/her manager will commit to one another that the development plan is feasible (e.g. funding will be available) and that the end result is mutually desirable.

