

Do-Good Leadership

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT **PLAYBOOK**

A step-by-step guide to asking your employer to invest in **you** and the great work you do.

PREPARED BY:
Loretta Turner, MA, ACC, CNP



Do-Good Leadership

With Loretta Turner, MA, ACC, CNP



Welcome to your Professional Development Playbook!

Chances are you downloaded this document because you've been thinking about your career goals, and someone may have encouraged you to check out opportunities for professional development. This playbook will be your step-by-step guide on:

- Professional Development 101 -- ***What is it, and why does it matter?***
- Reflecting and Goal Setting -- ***What are your current skills and strengths, and what are you trying to improve?***
- How to navigate professional development at work -- ***What resources are available to you, and how do you ask for them?***

By the time you finish this playbook, you will be equipped with the tools, language, and resources to advocate for your professional development needs. Whether it be receiving funds to attend a conference, participate in a training, or work with a coach, this playbook will support you in asking your employer to invest in you and the great work you do.

In gratitude,

Loretta Turner, MA, CNP, ACC

Loretta Turner

973-216-1943 • hello@lorettaturner.com • lorettaturner.com

© 2023 Loretta Turner Leadership, LLC

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 101

Simply put, professional development (PD) = **opportunities for growth**. Once you've entered the workforce, PD is there to support you with opportunities to gain new skills through continuing education and career training. Individuals who are investing in their PD are intentionally engaging in activities like classes, workshops, trainings, conferences, and networking events that enrich and enhance their career and expertise.

PD is **lifelong work**, as it's an ongoing invitation to deepen your learning while fostering feelings of accomplishment, purpose, and growth.

Why is PD important?

Research consistently shows that professionals with limited access to PD tend to have lower career satisfaction. Without opportunities to expand one's learning or expertise, professionals may experience a sense of stagnation, low morale, burnout, decreased confidence and innovation, and lack the necessary skills to advance in their line of work.

Additionally, research shows that organizations may struggle to retain their staff if they do not prioritize opportunities for PD, or if they do not **encourage a culture of learning** within the organization. This article from [Harvard Business Review](#) paints a clear picture as to why PD is so important, emphasizing that opportunities for PD can “help employees feel a sense of belonging and a connection to purpose.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 101

However, despite PD being a must-have for professionals, some organizations do not offer opportunities for PD. Organizations that do offer PD still have employees who report that they **do not have the skills** and/or training to succeed at work, or they are not utilizing PD opportunities that are available to them.

This playbook will help you not only **become an advocate for your own PD**, but support you in understanding your organization's culture around PD and learning. This playbook will provide you with the tools to:

- Better understand your organization's professional development practices;
- Tips for how you can tap into organizational resources; and
- Tips for how you can advocate for getting the support and training you need to succeed!



REFLECTION

Before we get into the details of **how** to ask for what you need, let's make sure **YOU** are clear on what **YOU** need. Reflection is one of the most important skills we can engage in as leaders. Take out a journal and answer these 5 questions about your current skills and strengths:

1. **What Am I Particularly Good At?** Reflect on the skills and ways-of-doing things that come naturally to you and have consistently yielded positive results in your career. Consider both technical and soft skills, such as problem-solving, communication, strategic thinking, or motivating others.
2. **In What Situations Have I Made a Significant Impact?** Think about instances where your actions or decisions had a positive impact on your team or organization. What skills did you use to achieve these outcomes?
3. **Which Aspects of My Career/Role Do I Enjoy Most?** Identify the tasks or responsibilities that bring you the most satisfaction and enthusiasm. These are likely areas where your strengths shine, and recognizing them can help you articulate your unique leadership style and how you might want to enhance it.
4. **How Do Others Perceive My Contributions?** I encourage you to ask for feedback from colleagues, supervisors, and even friends about your strengths and the skills they value in your leadership. This outside perspective can provide insights that you might not have considered.
5. **What Challenges Have I Successfully Overcome?** Reflect on challenges you've faced in your professional journey and how you navigated them. What skills did you draw upon to overcome these obstacles, and how did they contribute to your growth as a leader?

GAPS & GOALS

This section will encourage you to consider your “gaps,” or the skills, knowledge, and abilities that you would like to possess to enhance your career. Identifying these gaps will help you to **better articulate your goals**, and set you up for success when its time to request PD support. Take your time to answer these 4 questions about your current gaps and goals:

1. **Where Do I See Myself in the Next 1-2 Years?** Envision your professional journey in the short term. What roles or responsibilities do you aspire to take on? What would your title be? What would your day-to-day look like? By considering your future trajectory, you can identify the skills and development areas necessary to excel in those roles.
2. **What Kind of Impact Do I Want to Have in My Community?** When you think about helping your corner of the world, what skills do you need to do that with more ease? Is there a specific certification, improved skill, or something else that you are ready to learn?
3. **How Do My Gaps Impact My Team or Organization?** Consider how your gaps might be affecting your team or organization. What skills or abilities could you learn that would better support your organization's goals?
4. **How Much Time Am I Willing to Invest in My Growth and Development?** Professional development opportunities can range from courses that take a few hours, to trainings that take several years. When you consider your career trajectory, also consider how much time you’re willing to invest in your growth at this point in your life.

NAVIGATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT WORK

Now that you've finished the reflective section, you are ready to engage in the step-by-step process for requesting professional development:

1. **Do Your Research**: The first step is understanding if a PD program is available at your organization. You can typically find this information in the employee handbook **or** speak directly with your Human Resources department. Here are a few questions you might ask:
 - a. *What is the organization's philosophy and approach to employee growth? Do we have any **initiatives, policies, or resources** in place to support ongoing learning and skill development?*
 - b. *Can you provide an overview of the range of professional development **options** offered by our organization?*
 - c. *Can you provide details and guidelines on **budget and funding** for professional development?*
 - d. *Is the organization willing to offer **personalized development plans** based on individual career goals and performance assessments?*
 - e. *How can I submit a formal request to utilize my professional development funds?*

TIP: Make sure you read the fine print once you receive details of your organization's PD opportunities. Some organizations may have budget restrictions (e.g. travel may not be included), expiration dates, or a reimbursement policy (e.g. you will be reimbursed once you complete the course).

NAVIGATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT WORK

2. **Identify Your Opportunity:** Once you are aware of your organization's PD opportunities and policies, now it's time to identify the opportunity you would like to take advantage of. **This could include workshops, working with a coach, training programs, certifications, conferences, memberships and more.**

Here is a [great list](#) of what you might be able to use your PD funds on.

TIP: Collect as many details as possible about your opportunity, as you might need them to make your case. This may include cost and value, dates, contact information, details of the content and curriculum, location, reviews and testimonials, time commitment, and more.

3. **Make the Ask!:** Some organizations may have a formal process for requesting PD that includes a justification narrative. However, even if your organization doesn't require this, it doesn't hurt to include one with your request for PD. A **justification narrative** is a well-organized explanation that outlines the reasons and benefits for seeking the specific training, learning opportunity, or skill enhancement. This narrative will provide a clear and convincing argument for *why* your requested PD is essential for both you **and** the organization. Your justification narrative should include the following:

NAVIGATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT WORK

a) A little background of **your history** with the organization

b) A highlight of your skills, knowledge and accomplishments (which you've already identified in the "**Reflection**" part of this Playbook!)

c) Identification of your gaps and opportunities for growth (which you've already identified in the "**Gaps & Goals**" part of this Playbook!), and how your selected PD opportunity is relevant to your goals, job description, and style of learning.

d) **Alignment** with the organization's goals, which demonstrates how the requested PD will help you to better support the organization's mission, vision, and values and how this is a great **return on investment** for the organization.

e) Your **long-term vision** and potential **impact**, explaining how the PD fits your career trajectory and your overall career goals

TIP: Make sure to provide your justification narrative in writing, and ask your employer if they have any additional questions about your proposal. Be mindful of any deadlines or start dates for your PD opportunity, as approval times could take several weeks.

NAVIGATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT WORK

But wait... what happens if my company doesn't offer professional development opportunities?! In this scenario, our recommendation would be to:

- Engage in PD outside of your organization through **free or low-cost** activities like workshops, networking events, books and podcasts, mentorship, membership groups, or skill-sharing and bartering;
- **Advocate** for the establishment of a program at your next performance review;
- **Lead by example** by showing your supervisors and colleagues the benefits of investing in your PD outside of the organization. You can also **reference our resources list on the following page** to share with your peers and PD allies.



RESOURCES

- [Leadership Training Shouldn't Just Be for Top Performers](#)
 - “Organizations with larger gaps between those who do and do not receive development can also be susceptible to organizational disparity.”
- [3 Ways to Boost Retention Through Professional Development](#)
 - “A recent survey from Better Buys found that employees who get professional development opportunities are 15% more engaged and have 34% higher retention than those who don't.”
- [The ROI of Investments in Professional Development](#)
 - “According to SHRM, nearly half of all businesses cite professional development and training as their most effective tool when it comes to talent recruitment.”
- [Mind-blowing Statistics that Prove the Value of Employee Training and Development](#)
 - “The Millennials had the most significant results, with 87% of them citing access to professional development or career growth opportunities as being very important to their decision of whether to stay or go.”
- [Why Coaching at All Levels of an Organization is the New Workplace Advantage](#)
 - “Coaching helps people build psychological capital that enhances their well-being and keeps them grounded, both in the present and the future.”