

# 60 ways to learn something new

As you and your manager develop your Personal Development Plan, you will need to consider which activities suit your needs, the needs of your department and the business needs.

Try to think of meeting learning and development needs in different ways - not only in formal off-the-job courses and workshops. There are often far better ways to learn new skills and knowledge.

We hope you will find something in the following list that will encourage you to learn.

## A On-the-job Learning

Often, the most effective learning takes place at your place of work.

1. **Sit-by-Pat** - the most traditional way to learn a new skill or task is to sit with a person who currently does that, and learn through doing it. Keep a log of what you learn to appreciate just how valuable this method of learning is
2. **Delegation** - an individual undertakes a task that their manager would normally undertake eg. Attending a meeting, taking the minutes perhaps, and reporting back
3. **Mentoring** - Either be a mentor to someone else or find yourself a mentor. A mentor provides a source of feedback and general guidance to another member of staff - acting as a trusted adviser
4. **Job Enlargement** - undertaking an extra activity in addition to current duties. The additional activity generally involves a higher level of responsibility
5. **Reality training** - this is an appropriate form of training for members of staff who generally work away from the front line. Usually involves working in the front line eg. with customers
6. **Trial and error and re-trial** - an effective way to learn is by being given the chance to try a new skill or activity in a controlled situation, learning from any mistakes
7. **Appraisals** - The appraisal discussion can itself be a source of learning - besides providing the opportunity to formulate a Personal Development Plan, linked to achievements expected at work
8. **Reviewing your successes** - helpful in analysing and planning for future success - can be undertaken individually or, ideally, with another person
9. **Coaching** - another member of staff acts as "coach" encouraging the development of new skills or knowledge and providing constructive feedback
10. **Shadowing** - attachment to another member of staff or department, for a set period of time in order to learn from them
11. **Observation** - learning from watching others in action

## B Work Experience

12. **Secondment** - taking on a particular task or a different job for a period of time, usually in a different department, unit or organisation
13. **Job Rotation** - this can be a formal or informal arrangement, where two or more individuals rotate jobs for a set period of time. Within teams it can be useful to enhance versatility
14. **Assistant To** - an individual is seconded to work for a Senior manager for a set period of time
15. **Job share** - where the duties of one post are shared between two or more individuals
16. **A Temporary Job Move** - to cover for absence for example, provides opportunities to develop new skills and acquire knowledge in a different area
17. **Temporary Promotion** - "acting up" or deputising for a set period of time
18. **Work Experience in another organisation** - either through job swap or secondment
19. **Job Transfer** - a permanent move into a vacant position at the same level provides further opportunities for gaining new skills and knowledge

## C Group/Team Activities

We gain an enormous amount of knowledge and skills from other people. Group activities are the core components of many training courses- although learning from others can take a variety of different forms.

20. **Task Forces** - groups of people, often from different department, brought together on a full or part time basis for a fixed period of time to carry out a defined project
21. **Working Parties** - groups of people brought together to examine work-related issues
22. **Quality Circle** - a multi-level group of volunteers who meet to discuss how to improve the quality of services and/or products
23. **Team building exercises** - exercises are used to develop the team as a whole. Often a person from outside the department may be used as a facilitator
24. **Problem solving groups** - a number of people drawn together with the purpose of providing a solution to a specific problem
25. **Brain Storming** - an exercise to stimulate ideas, where members of the team propose ideas that are not evaluated or judged by others in the group, but simply collected and recorded
26. **Action Learning Groups** - Groups of 5 or 6 people work to a group contract for personal and group development. Many certificate-based courses provide the opportunity to form such groups
27. **Workshops** - where groups of people explore issues together, often drawing on real life experiences

28. **Discussion Groups** - used as a focus for sharing information
29. **User Groups** - Generally composed of people with similar jobs, or using similar software applications who may meet together from time to time to share information and experiences
30. **Social Clubs** - People who join such clubs will develop useful contacts - often in departments other than their own, to learn about what's going on in other parts of an organisation
31. **Simulation Exercises** - there are now a variety of simulation exercises from which much can be learned about real life situations
32. **Management Games** - These can be externally run or can be a specific team exercises concerned with management issues

## D Self-Development Activities

It is not only the manager's responsibility to provide learning and development for individuals. Self-development activities can improve job satisfaction and long-term career prospects

33. **Adult Education Classes** - there is always a large choice of classes available - local libraries usually have information of courses in their areas
34. **Co-Coaching** - Agreeing to meet regularly with another person to help each other learn from work-related activities, problems and issues
35. **Buddy systems** - A formal or informal systems where who colleagues support each other in work and career -related matters
36. **Time Out** - Approved Leave (without Pay) may be given to undertake self-development activities eg. attend TA activities
37. **Study Leave** - Approved leave (with or without pay) to undertake an approved course of learning eg. attend University Summer School
38. **Special Projects** - Taking on direct responsibility for an assignment to help develop an individual's skills or knowledge
39. **Research** - Undertaking research into a topic of interest which may or many not be specifically related to the person's job
40. **Audio Tapes** - often used for personal development
41. **E-Learning/Computer based learning packages/Learning on-line** - these are packages which help develop an individual's skills and knowledge. Allows learning to take place at the learner's pace and a location that suits
42. **Skills Packages** - usually a collection of materials to aid individual learning eg. Books, CD Roms, Audio cassettes, books (eg [www.scils.co.uk](http://www.scils.co.uk) and [www.eils.co.uk](http://www.eils.co.uk))
43. **Personal Testing Programmes** - These are self-analysis tools often found in management textbooks and on Computer-Based programmes

- 44. **Distance Learning Packages** - Usually relating to specific skills. Most nationally known colleges now produce such packages eg. Henley Management College
- 45. **Open Learning** - Available from the Open University and a variety of other forums. OL is similar to Distance Learning, but each student usually has a personal tutor. OL is usually undertaken in an individual's own time
- 46. **Reading Lists** - Can include journal articles, White Papers as well as books

## **E Courses**

Whilst there are many other L&D opportunities, course-based training is likely to remain popular, and is indeed a very effective method of learning, providing there is a clear link between what's learned off the job and how it is to be applied to real life. The following is but a sample of what's available

- 47. **Short Courses** - one to two days, usually covering specific issues
- 48. **Modular Courses** - these usually take place on several occasions, over time, so that learning can be put into action in the workplace and then reviewed
- 49. **Refresher Courses** - Reminders or updates on specific topics
- 50. **Professional Skills Training** - a planned programme usually run by colleges eg. Accountancy
- 51. **Formal Training Programme** - planned programme for apprentices, management trainees
- 52. **Part-Time Courses** - Day/evening courses which usually lead to a qualification
- 53. **Taster or Awareness Courses** - provide an overview of a topic which may be studied in detail later
- 54. **Residential Courses** - delegates work and live with a group away from the workplace. Usually work takes place in the evenings also, so that learning takes place in the shortest time possible
- 55. **Study Courses** - eg. Open University courses which do not necessarily lead to formal qualifications. They can be group or individual learning based
- 56. **Visiting** other departments and/or different sites/ organisations
- 57. **Networking** is a way by which people throughout the organisation are given the opportunity to meet informally as a means of enhancing learning
- 58. **Seminars** - on a particular topic provide opportunities to hear different speakers and to be involved in discussions
- 59. **Conferences** - Many professional bodies and organisations hold these as an annual event
- 60. **Videos and DVDs** - Can be used as an aid to either team or individual development. Particularly effective if followed by discussion of the issues raised