**Growth and Development – Skill Development**

#### What to Know:

Growth and development opportunity is often a main driver of employee engagement. In today’s workforce, people tend to stay with an organization longer when there are development opportunities; on the other hand, people are likely to look for employment elsewhere when these opportunities are lacking. Rich development opportunities attract strong talent, keep them motivated and equipped to perform well on the job, and build a culture of continuous improvement.

#### Mythbusters:

It is easy to assume that employees know about the full range of training, learning, and development opportunities at your organization and that they feel encouraged to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, this often is not the case. Employees may be unaware of programs. People may be unsure how to apply, get funding, or meet the needed requirements. They may receive mixed messages about being encouraged to “grow as a professional” but job demands do not allow time for doing so. It takes a certain culture to offer and encourage employee growth opportunities.

**Questions to Ask:**

* Do we have the skills we need to be able to accomplish our priority? What are we missing that people would like to learn?
* What is the current process for making sure we have the skills we need to be effective/competitive? What aspects of this process work well? What does not work well?
* What gets in the way of skill development? What barriers do you encounter? After the team responds, ask “why” those things get in the way. Keep asking why until you get to the root of the issue.
* What resources are available for employee development that relate to our business priority? What resources would you like to have that you currently do not?
* What is the employee’s role in skill development? What is the role of his or her supervisor? What is the role of the organization?
* What can we do within this group to provide each other with more development opportunities (consider cross-training, mentoring, peer feedback, etc.)?
* What could your supervisor do differently to be more supportive of your development?

**Best Practices:**

* Skill development can come in many forms. On-the-job training (managing a project, taking on a new task, serving on a cross functional team, and job shadowing), training through interaction with others (mentoring, coaching, and leading a staff organization), or formal training (seminars, podcasts, webinars, and conferences.)
* Emphasize ways to develop that are less formal: opportunities to work on innovative projects, peer-to-peer teaching/mentoring, increase in the variety of work, opportunities to share ideas.
* Provide a clear avenue for employees to share their developmental needs and explore ways in which this training can be provided. Determine whether this is an individual need or training that could be provided at the group level.
* Have regular one-on-one conversations with employees: what is going well? Where are you having challenges? How can I help?
* Look for cost-effective training opportunities such as webinars, free training or networking events, book clubs, lunch-and-learns, podcasts, etc.

#### What Managers Can Do:

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#### What Employees Can Do:

Be proactive about your own development. Look for cost-effective training opportunities such as webinars, free training or networking events, book clubs, lunch-and-learns, podcasts, etc. Talk with your supervisor about carving out time to pursue these opportunities.

Your manager may be more willing to support training or learning if he/she knows how it will help you in your current role. Advocate for your own development and be ready to explain how a specific opportunity you’re interested in will benefit you and your team.

#### What Leadership Can Do:

When you come across something that peaks your own interest – a blog, a podcast, a good book — share it with your team. And encourage that they do the same.

On a regular basis, ask members of your team to share what they are currently doing to develop themselves. Emphasizing the importance of continual learning will encourage your leaders to make time for their own development and nurture growth in their teams.

**Watch:**

* [How to Train and Develop Your Employees](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejIyoRit6z8)

**Read:**

* [*8 Key Tactics for Developing Employees*](https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2015/07/20/8-key-tactics-for-developing-employees/#3a94bddf6373)
* *Learning in the Age of Immediacy: 5 Factors for How We Connect, Communicate, and Get Work Done by Brandon Carson*

**King County Resources:**

* [King County Learning and Development](https://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/learning-development.aspx)