

Planning Your Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the process used to ensure ongoing development and enhancement of an individual's skills and professional competencies. Effective CPD maximises your potential and can help you to achieve your career aims. Use the process outlined in this article to assess your CPD needs, identify relevant opportunities for development and record and evaluate your CPD activity effectively.



1. Identify your CPD needs

At the outset of any CPD activity, it is important to think about what you want to achieve. Effective CPD should satisfy a range of needs, including those of:

- Your employer: what importance does your employer place upon CPD activity e.g. is it a mandatory requirement?
- Your specific job role: what skills and knowledge do you need in order to remain competent in your role?
- Professional organisations: what criteria do you need to meet in order to retain recognised professional standards?
- Your personal career objectives: as an individual, what do you want to achieve from your career?

2. Consider opportunities for CPD activity

Once you have identified your CPD needs, consider what opportunities are available to help you meet those needs. Learning opportunities come from a variety of sources. Consider what activities and events are presented by your employer and your team, as well as through membership of professional bodies and interests outside the

workplace. You should aim to develop a calendar of CPD activities and events which incorporates a range of learning activities. These might include:

- undertaking professional qualifications
- attending conferences, industry events and seminars
- attending training courses, e.g. to improve your IT, presentation or project management skills (either in-house or external)
- networking or shadowing others in your profession
- self-study of particular topics, e.g. reading relevant books, trade publications and journals
- informal learning from colleagues, or from outside the workplace, e.g. volunteering, fundraising or charity work
- registering for e-mail updates, newsletters and subscribing to relevant blogs or networking groups to keep up-to-date with current research and developments in your particular fields of interest

When considering which activities to choose, it is important to aim for a mix of 'maintenance' activities, i.e. those which help keep your knowledge and skills up to date, and 'stretch' activities, which challenge you and take you out of your comfort zone.

3. Record your CPD activity

Recording your activities is essential in order to demonstrate to others that your ongoing work is both appropriate and relevant to your career progression. For example, many employers and professional bodies require documentary evidence of CPD activity, often in the form of a written log, journal or diary. On a personal basis, keeping a written log can also help you keep track of your development, and chart progress towards your personal and professional goals.

Some of the details you may wish to record in your CPD journal or log are:

- date(s) when the activity was undertaken
- name/outline of the activity undertaken or the event you attended
- full details of what was involved
- length of time spent on the particular activity
- the outcomes of the activity
- what you learned or achieved
- key skills and/or competencies gained
- documentary evidence to support the activity such as certificates, awards, appraisal reports or appreciative emails

4. Do it regularly

Many people find making time to undertake CPD activity difficult, and tend to put it off, particularly when other work priorities demand attention. To help undertake CPD activity regularly, you may find it helpful to:

- **Plan your activities** by looking at each week systematically, identifying relevant CPD opportunities and scheduling in enough time to do it.
- **Break it down** into manageable pieces of work which can be spread out over a period of time. Block out time in your diary (e.g. for an hour a week) and let colleagues know that this time is dedicated to CPD activity, and ask for their support. You could also consider working in another location or from home in order to minimise disruptions or interruptions to your work.
- **Keep your CPD log somewhere visible.** Out of sight is often out of mind, so

don't file your CPD log away, as you may forget all about it. Try to add to it every week as a minimum.

- **Jot down CPD ideas** and thoughts soon after you undertake each activity, as this can help with documenting your CPD, e.g. new skills you have acquired and how these have been put into practice.
- **Ensure that you have easy access** to key information sources, whether these are books, journals, trade publications, the internet or other sources.

5. Evaluate your progress

It is important to look back upon your CPD activity, and highlight whether any further action is needed to help meet your career needs. For each activity, reflect on what you have learnt, and ask yourself whether you have achieved what you set out to accomplish. Consider whether you are making use of your new-found skills and experience in the workplace, and if you need to take any additional steps in order to fulfil your desired outcome(s). Additional steps might involve speaking to your manager about creating further opportunities to reinforce your learning, or undertaking additional activities to supplement your knowledge.