

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction

This assignment aims to critically examine the purported benefits of workplace development initiatives for both organisations and individuals. While the concept of employee development is widely promoted, it is essential to scrutinise its actual impact and return on investment. The study will analyse various development tools available to organisations, evaluating their effectiveness through empirical evidence rather than relying on promotional claims. Furthermore, it will explore the often-overlooked challenge of managing individual expectations in the development process, proposing practical tools to address this issue.

Benefits to Organisations and Individuals

Enhancing individuals within an organisation can improve productivity, boost motivation and strengthen connections within the organisation. Jha (2016) emphasised that offering training and development enhances productivity, which consequently yields beneficial financial outcomes for the organisation over the long term due to improved employee performance quality. This will diminish the necessary supervision for employees as they will have acquired crucial skills, feel more empowered, and be capable of working independently.

Chang & Lee (2007) highlight the critical leadership initiative: fostering a positive learning attitude consistent with the organisational ethos of promoting employee utilisation of newly acquired skills. Promoting individual development in the workplace is frequently regarded as a vital strategy for organisational success (Omotayo, 2015; Gardiner & Whiting, 1997). However, a thorough analysis uncovers both benefits and possible disadvantages that organisations must consider. A key advantage of workplace development is improved employee performance. Training and development programs can provide employees with new skills and information, thus enhancing productivity (Salas et al., 2012). The true effect on productivity can vary considerably based on the quality and usefulness of the development initiatives.

Organisations frequently invest resources to employee development as a strategy for retention. The 2023 Workplace Learning Report by LinkedIn indicates that offering learning opportunities is the primary strategy organisations employ to enhance retention. The report claims about 90% of organisations report concerns regarding employee retention, they also suggest 'The number one way organisations are working to improve retention is by providing learning opportunities'. Whilst this suggests a positive link between development and retention it is important to acknowledge that other factors, such as salary and workplace environment also influence employee retention. Jha (2016) reported that the provision of high-quality training will produce a sense of job security within employees, which will lead to a decrease in employee turnover. Therefore, team spirit will increase, which will have a positive impact on production and the satisfaction of employees.

As employees acquire new skills and knowledge via training programs, mentoring and other learning opportunities, they enhance their capabilities and efficiency in their roles (Dachner et al, 2019). This enables them to undertake more intricate duties, operate independently and contribute at a higher level.

Investing in employee development is essential at any career stage, generating advantages for both the individual and the organisation (Ransom, 2021). Keep (1989) argues that investing in

employee development is crucial for promoting elevated levels of motivation and job satisfaction amongst employees.

Kate Heniz (updated 2024), states in order to remain at the forefront of their respective industries, organisations must consistently innovate and adapt. This requires offering continuous development to their employees. Ensuring that employee development is an integral part of the company culture ensures that employees remain up to date with current trends and obtain new skills. This, in turn, increases employee engagement and attracts in the highest quality talent. This also serves as an effective retention strategy, as it signifies the organisation's commitment to employee development. This can enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty, therefore decreasing costly turnover (Castle & Shugarman, 2005).

However, there is the risk that newly upskilled individuals could boost their marketability and opt for other opportunities. Retention advantages can be maximised when development is integrated with career progressions (Dachner, et al, 2019).

Organisations are primarily responsible for the development and execution of upskilling initiatives as part of their strategic human resource management (Schreiber-Shearer, 2024), Managers are significantly accountable for the support and guidance of their team members development, which includes the creation of personalised development plans and the facilitation of access to appropriate learning resources (Urwin, 2024). Educational institutions and the Government also contribute to the upskilling ecosystem by offering specialised programs that are in alignment with business demands, offering funding and setting policies (Brown, 2023). Hammed and Waheed (2011) assert that when organisations facilitate growth in skills for employees, it encourages greater employee engagement. Whereas, The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), suggests development should be employee-driven, necessitating that employees actively recognise their skill requirements, seek development opportunities and oversee their careers independently in addition to organisational investment. They must adopt a proactive approach to their development. (Antonacopoulos, 2000; Clark & Schramm, 2009; Fugate, et al, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Employees must possess a mindset orientated towards skill enhancement and have a willingness to learn and embrace further development.

With the constant evolution of business demands, the development of new technologies, and the intense competition, continuous upskilling can assist an organisation in maintaining a competitive edge whilst maintaining pace. Staying ahead of competitors is crucial. According to the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, "The skills of today will not be suitable for the jobs of tomorrow, and newly acquired skills may quickly become obsolete." Enabling you to remain agile in a competitive market and adapt to new demands, upskilling your workforce through regular training and recruiting specially trained talent to integrate into your existing teams is crucial. Employee upskilling can also incorporate new skills into your organisation and create new specialisations, enabling you to offer new services or leverage new technologies to enhance your services. Client satisfaction is equally critical to employee satisfaction. It is essential to deliver exceptional service or experience to your clients in order to secure new clients or recurring business.

The demand for technology specialists is increasing to align with advances in technology, fulfil job vacancies, and boost the growing economy. By promoting upskilling opportunities to your employees, you can help in achieving these goals. Ultimately, enhancing your employees'

abilities will positively influence the industry, contributing to the elimination of the digital skills gap (Brown, 2023; Royle & Laing, 2014; Ibrahim et al, 2017).

Managing Individual Expectations in the Workplace

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'Expectations' as 'a strong belief that something will happen or be the case' and 'a belief that someone will or should achieve something'.

Effectively managing expectations is an essential skill in the workplace. It reduces the likelihood of disappointments, frustrations and miscommunication between colleagues and employers. It encompasses a complex relationship involving employees, supervisors and organisational culture. Efficient expectation management can enhance job satisfaction, boost productivity and minimise turnover (Rousseau, 1995). Nonetheless, it involves a complex strategy that harmonises organisational requirements with individuals goals. Managers are crucial in this process, as they are tasked with effectively conveying job responsibilities, performance expectations and professional development (Schein, 2010). Studies suggest that neglected expectations may result in breaches of the psychological contract, which negatively impact staff engagement and performance (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Promoting a culture of transparency and mutual understanding can reduce expectation discrepancies and create a harmonious environment (Kotter & Heskett, 1992).

Having expectations in the workplace is essential as it forms a crucial component of a healthy work environment (Wiskow et al, 2010). Establishing expectations between managers, supervisors and colleagues at work boosts morale, improves productivity, and fosters accountability. Defining realistic expectations in the workplace is essential for employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organisational success. Here are the best practices for effectively managing expectations:

Clear Communication: Communicate expectations frequently and at early stages. Start the process of defining expectations during the recruiting process and maintain them throughout introduction and regular check-ins. Use straightforward and clear language when documenting plans, deliverables, and responsibilities. Guest, D. E., & Conway, N. (2002).

Collaborative Approach : Involve team members in collaborative decision-making to promote responsibility and shared ownership. This method guarantees that expectations are realistic and align with employees' skills (Scott & Caress, 2005).

SMART Goals Framework : Establish expectations that adhere to the SMART goals framework. This framework enables the development of clear, realistic and actionable expectations.

Feedback and Review : Conduct regular check-ins and performance evaluations to discuss expectations and progress. This facilitates prompt adjustments and assists staff in maintaining focus.

Set realistic Deadlines : Set realistic goals and timelines, clearly communicating any constraints and highlight priorities. Be mindful of workload and avoid setting expectations that could lead to burnout.

Connect Expectations and Organisation Objectives : Guide employees on the ways in which their work contributes to the main objectives of the organisation. This offers context and motivation for fulfilling expectations (Branson, 2008).

Flexibility and Adaptability : It is important to acknowledge that expectations may need to adapt as circumstances change. Be willing to modify expectations in response to feedback and evolving circumstances.

By adopting these techniques, leaders can establish an environment in which expectations are clear, achievable, and aligned with both individual and organisational objectives. This method increases communication, accountability and enhances overall performance. Transparency is crucial as it promotes trust, facilitates honest communication and emphasises the organisation's commitment to supporting personal growth possibilities.

Development Vehicles

Development vehicles are the diverse methods and approaches that are utilised to improve the skills, knowledge, and competencies of employees. These vehicles are essential for the development of organisational effectiveness and individual growth. Formal training programs, mentoring and coaching relationships, job rotations, stretch assignments, action learning projects, and self-directed learning opportunities are the most frequently used development vehicles (Noe et al., 2017).

In order to critically assess the development vehicles that are available to an organisation and their suitability for the development needs of individuals, it is crucial to consider the various methods, their effectiveness and their suitability for distinct learning objectives and individual needs.

Training

Traditional training programs, both formal and informal, continue to serve as an essential development tool. These structured learning environments provide the benefit of uniform sharing of information and can be customised to meet the specific requirements of an organisation. However, their effectiveness can be limited by factors such as individual learning styles and the quality of delivery.

The theory of learning styles and their impact on academic performance have been the subject of extensive research and debate in the field of educational psychology (Pashler et al, 2008). Learning styles are the distinct methods by which individuals prefer to learn, analyse and retain information.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) has had a significant impact on this area of study. Kolb (1984) hypothesised that individuals have preferred methods of perceiving and processing information, which can be categorised into four learning styles: Diverging, Assimilating,

Converging, and Accommodating. This model has been extensively implemented in educational environments to improve and comprehend the learning experiences of individuals.

Felder and Silverman (1988) established an additional learning style model that divides learners into four categories: sequential/global, sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal, and active/reflective. Students' academic performance could be enhanced by aligning teaching methods with their preferred learning patterns, according to their research.

The VARK learning style model was created by Neil Fleming in 1987. Fleming developed this model as a way to help students understand their preferred learning styles and optimize their learning processes. This model identifies four primary learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing & Kinesthetics.



Although there are numerous learning style models, the VARK model is one of the most extensively recognised. Understanding one's preferred learning style can help in tailoring study methods and seeking out appropriate resources. Educators and trainers frequently endeavour to combine a variety of teaching methods in order to accommodate a variety of learning preferences and improve the overall efficacy of the learning process. However, some researchers have questioned the effectiveness of instruction based on learning approaches. Pashler et al. (2008) conducted a thorough evaluation of the learning styles literature and determined that there was insufficient evidence to substantiate the practice of customising instruction to the learning styles of students.

Management by Objectives (MOB)

The Management by Objectives (MBO) method is a strategic organisational management approach designed to connect individual employee goals with overarching business objectives. Formulated by Peter Drucker in 1954, Management by Objectives comprises an approach in which managers and employees collaboratively establish specified, quantifiable objectives to be accomplished within a set timeframe (Ingham, 1995).



The MBO appraisal method enhances communication between employees and management by fostering a reciprocal dialogue, as reported by Kumar (2012). Enhancing employee motivation and boosting concentration during the establishment of work-related objectives which increases commitment and give management a clearer understanding of an employee's needs.

Shaout and Yousif (2014) document Management by Objectives (MBO) may lead to conflict if employees and management fail to reach consensus on established goals. The strategy is not always suitable to all positions, and careful analysis is required to determine its suitability for an employee's requirements.

360 Degree Appraisal

The 360-degree appraisal method, referred to as multi-rater or multisource feedback, is an extensive performance review technique that collects input from several stakeholders within an employee's work environment. This method deviates from traditional top-down assessments by incorporating feedback from multiple sources, including peers, supervisors and occasionally external parties such as customers or suppliers where appropriate.

The primary objective of the 360-degree feedback approach is to provide a holistic view of an employee's performance, skills and behaviours from various perspectives.

Key components of the 360-degree appraisal approach include:

Multiple raters: Feedback is collated from a variety of individuals who engage with the employee on a regular basis.

Anonymity: In order to encourage open and honest feedback, responses are frequently submitted anonymously.

Structured feedback: Raters usually complete questionnaires or surveys that assess specific competencies or behaviours.

Self-assessment: The employee being evaluated often completes a self-assessment as part of the process.

Comprehensive reporting: Results are compiled into a report that highlights patterns, strengths and areas for improvement.



Research suggests there are many benefits to applying this approach, studies have shown that multi-source feedback correlates with improved employee performance and leadership effectiveness (Seifert et al., 2003). Employees acquire an understanding of how their actions and behaviours are perceived by others. This enhanced self-awareness can be significant for both personal and professional growth. Self-awareness is associated with enhanced work efficiency and career success (Fleenor et al., 2010). By collecting feedback from various sources it provides a well-rounded view of an employee's performance. Research has demonstrated that multi-source feedback is connected with enhanced employee performance and leadership effectiveness (Seifert et al., 2003). The feedback process encourages open communication and can result in enhanced working relationships. Employees are more inclined to comprehend the consequences of their actions on others and adjust their conduct accordingly. Team unity and performance are reliant upon the implementation of effective communication and feedback techniques (London & Smither, 1995). It benefits employees in concentrating on their development objectives by identifying areas for improvement and their strengths. Higher employee engagement and satisfaction are linked to development-focused feedback (Ghorpade, 2000). With the knowledge that feedback will originate from a variety of sources can serve as an incentive for employees to maintain a high level of performance and take greater responsibility for their actions. By increasing the transparency of performance evaluations, multi-rater feedback systems can improve accountability (Nowack,

2009). It can promote innovation and positive behaviours within an organisation which can lead to engagement and job satisfaction (Karkouliau, Srour & Canaan Messarra, 2020).

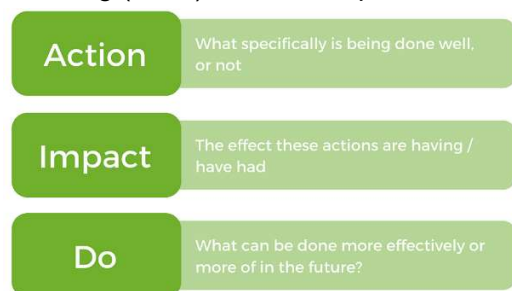
Despite the fact that the research presented above would indicate that this approach is entirely advantageous, there are researchers who would dispute this statement. The quality of the feedback provided is a significant factor in the effectiveness of 360 degree feedback. The feedback may be vague, unhelpful or biased (Heijden & Nijhof, 2004) if raters are not properly educated. Research has demonstrated that unstructured feedback can result in misinterpretation and confusion (Atkins & Wood, 2002). There is potential for misuse if not implemented correctly. This can lead to anxiety and mistrust among employees. Misuse of feedback systems can undermine their effectiveness and damage organisational culture (Bracken et al., 2001). The effectiveness of these development vehicles can be enhanced through careful alignment with workplace strategy, clear objectives and ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms (Garavan et al., 2012).

Feedback

Feedback is essential for developing a work environment that is both growth-oriented and productive. The positive effects of consistent, constructive feedback on employee performance, engagement, and organisational outcomes have been consistently demonstrated by research. Compared to employees who receive annually feedback, those who receive daily feedback from their managers are 3.6 times more likely to be intensely motivated to perform exceptional work (Gallup, 2023). A Harvard Business Review survey revealed that 72% of employees consider critical feedback from supervisors essential for career advancement, whereas only 5% report they receive such feedback (Zenger & Folkman, 2014). Efficient mechanisms for feedback enhance work performance, encourage collaboration and boost staff retention (Corbett, 2022).

Various models have been proposed to facilitate effective feedback delivery. The AID (Action, Impact, Desired Outcome) framework, as outlined by Landsberg (2015), is an example of such a model. This model offers a structured method for delivering performance-based feedback to employees, which includes both constructive and positive components.

There are three key components of the AID model. Initially, the 'Action' stage entails the presentation of factual observations of the individual's behaviour or performance, with a focus on objectivity and avoidance of personal interpretations. This method guarantees that the feedback is based on observable actions rather than subjective assessments. Secondly, the 'Impact' stage is dedicated on establishing the repercussions of these actions on the team or organisation. This step should maintain a factual tone, emphasising both positive and negative impacts without personalising the feedback. Lastly, the 'Desired Outcome' stage motivates the recipient to recognise the feedback and work together to pinpoint areas for greater success or improvement.



Personal Development Plan (PDP)

In modern workplaces, Professional Development Plans (PDPs) are essential for the promotion of organisational success and employee development. The positive effects of structured development initiatives on employee performance, engagement and retention have been repeatedly proven by research (Greenwell, 2017). Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) conducted a study that demonstrated that well-designed PDPs can result in improved individual and team performance, as well as increased organisational efficacy.

PDPs offer a definitive framework for skill development and career advancement, allowing organisations to foster a skilled and versatile workforce equipped to address evolving business challenges. Additionally, the execution of PDPs has been associated with increased innovation and creativity within organisations, as employees are motivated to enhance their knowledge and explore unfamiliar areas of expertise (Sung & Choi, 2014).

Employee Name & objective	Training Activities / Tasks	Mode of training	Desired completion	Reviewed timescale	Person responsible to oversee	Status
Kirsty Become Officer Manager	UWTSD course Confidence building In-house management training	External	2 Years (Dec 2026)	18 months (April 2026)	Elected representative	In progress
Georgina Promotion to senior caseworker	Caseworker system Policy making training	Inhouse	1 year (Dec 2025)	6 Months (June 2025)	Office Manager	In progress
Ryan Senior policy analyst role	Networking Crisis management Policy review	External	3 years (2027)	2 years (2026)	Office Manager	In progress
Tracy Communications & Development role	Networking Public speaking	External	1 year (2025)	6 months (June 2025)	Office manager	completed
Nicola Become full time	Update training	In house	1 year (2024)	6 months (June 2024)	Office manager	Not completed (maternity leave)

A structured approach to the development of the skills and experiences required for advancement in the political field is provided by this PDP. It is imperative that it be periodically reviewed and modified to guarantee that it remains consistent with the organisation's requirements and the employees evolving career objectives.

Conclusion

Strategic planning, consistent execution, and alignment with broader organisational objectives are necessary for achieving the numerous potential benefits of employee development. The most effective development initiatives are those that are personalised to the specific requirements of both the individual and the organisation, and that provide clear pathways for the implementation of new skills and knowledge in practical ways.

By providing upskilling programs, you can distinguish your business from competitors and attract and retain high-performing candidates who are seeking to advance their careers and improve their skills. These are the candidates you are seeking and who will be instrumental in the success of your organisation.

Organisations must establish systematic procedures for establishing, communicating, and regularly assessing expectations. This might include setting objectives, procedures, regular feedback sessions and clear communication channels.

When executed effectively, 360-degree feedback is an effective instrument for professional and personal growth. It enhances self-awareness, improves communication and promotes accountability by providing a comprehensive view of an employee's performance from multiple perspectives. Nevertheless, organisations must be mindful of the potential disadvantages, including the quality of feedback and the bias of raters. Organisations can realise the full potential of 360-degree feedback by encouraging a culture of continuous development and improvement by conforming to best practices, including ensuring anonymity and providing appropriate training.

Feedback models such as the AID model aims to provide constructive feedback environment that encourages clarity, objectivity and measurable outcomes. This framework not only facilitates the provision of performance-based feedback but also promotes continuous development and advancement within the context of the organisation.

Organisations can utilise feedback to align individual efforts with organisational objectives, identify areas for improvement and promote innovation by establishing a culture of continuous improvement and open communication. The establishment of trust between managers and employees is facilitated by consistent feedback exchanges, which results in a more engaged workforce and stronger working relationships (Noe et al., 2017). Consequently, it is imperative for organisations that aspire to enhance their performance and maintain their competitive edge in the current business climate to develop effective feedback systems.

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