MCQUAIG PRESENTS

THE QUICK GUIDE
TO EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Few managers would argue that the secret to staying ahead of the competition lies in their people and a company's ability to retain and develop them. Keeping the right employees in the right seats is crucial when it comes to driving productivity and achieving targeted results. But how do good managers tackle the issue of employee development? And what sort of strategies can they use to provide the training their staff is looking for?

Modern employees often report they want positions that will help them grow. Development opportunities are a sought after perk as new ways to build career and advance within a company emerge. Employees know the best way to move forward is to always be learning something new, be it new insights, abilities, or skills. But this creates a unique challenge for busy managers who may not have given much thought to development. Luckily that's where this eBook comes in. In the following pages we'll explore some strategies for supporting and encouraging employee development and what benefits you can expect to see by helping your employees become the best versions of themselves.

Did you know?

Disengaged employees cost US companies up to $500 billion a year.[1]

Why does developing employees matter?

When starting an employee development program, you might get some push back from people asking why it matters. After all, if your employees are doing the job they've been hired for and doing it well then everything is fine, right? And to a certain point that's true. You can get by as you are and meet the targets you have in place right now. But what about meeting challenges in the future? **Development helps a company take a more forward thinking approach to where they want to be later, rather than where they are today.** You might be successful at the moment but what happens when your star players leave for a company that offers them more opportunities for growth? Or what if the talent market gets more competitive and you can't attract high achieving employees?

 When you develop your team, you're investing in creating better employees who can work more easily together on teams or step into harder leadership roles. Then when positions open up across your company, particularly those at higher levels, you'll have a host of internal candidates to choose from, rather than needing to rely on external candidates to fill your talent pipeline. This approach provides upwards momentum to your employees which keeps them, and the knowledge they've accumulated, at the company longer.

What are the benefits of developing your staff?

Beyond providing a chance to grow and helping retain your team longer, what are the benefits of actively championing employee development? Let's see what the numbers have to say about what companies can expect to get from their investment.

- 93% of employees say they'd stay at a company longer if it invested in their careers[2]

- Companies who invest in training show up to a 24% higher profit margin[3]

- 70% of workers report training and development opportunities have influenced their decision to stay at a company[4]

- 40% of employees who receive little or poor job training leave their roles within the first year[5]

13%

87%
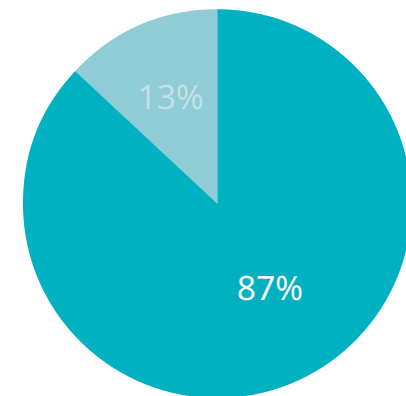
87% of Millennials rate development as being an important factor of their jobs[6]

Investing in development helps increase employee engagement, employee retention, and productivity. And failing to provide any learning options can lead to early turnover, particularly with the younger generations looking to grow their careers quickly.

What are the best ways to support employee development?

Clearly, employee development has a big impact on a company. Once you gain buy-in from senior leadership to green light such a program, how do you get your own employees onboard? Development isn't always an easy path and sometimes it can be very personal which isn't something every employee wants or is ready to take on in a public way. **It's a good idea to take the temperature of your team before embarking on learning and development plans to see how interested in the process they are and how deep they want to go.** Most employees will likely jump at the chance to learn something new but not necessarily all. A good manager, and a good coach, knows how far they can push people without the employee balking or dismissing what they've just learned.

In the next few pages we'll explore a few strategies to help you prepare your team and encourage learning and development. While many companies will need tailored solutions to meet the unique needs of their team members, there are a few common tactics any manager can make use of to get a program off the ground.
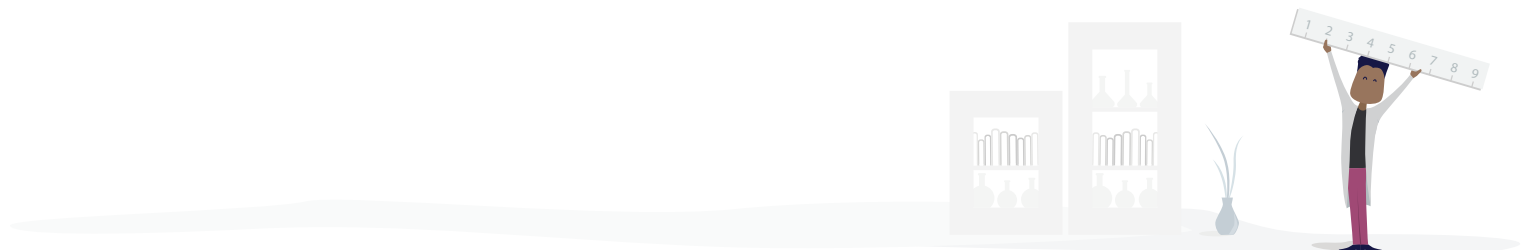
Getting started with employee development

Once you decide to invest in developing the skills and abilities of your team, where should you start? Let's explore some of the key factors of successful development programs.

Identify any skills gap: What does your team need to work on? What skills would be beneficial to the department or to an employee's future career? Before you begin, it's important to have a clear picture of what you're trying to achieve and what abilities you're trying to improve on. This step can happen as a formal skills assessment to see if there are mismatches between job descriptions and those in the role or you can a more informal look at any areas your team could use a boost in.[7] Development could focus around hard skills, like new IT training, or it can look at softer skills like communication and team building.

Choose your tools: Once you know what skills you'd like to develop, choose the right tool for the job. Employee development can happen in a variety of ways from courses to assessments so it's important to think about any time or budget limitations your working with and what sort of activity makes the most sense for the people on your team. If you do choose to use an assessment, many self-development or personality assessments can be done quickly and efficiently while providing a foundation of insights managers can use to guide future learning.

Getting started with employee development

Make sure management is ready: Part of developing strong employees is developing stronger managers. If a manager or team leader is going to lead a development activity with your team, make sure they have the skills to be a successful coach.[8] You want people who will provide employees with the support they need to actually internalize what they're learning. That requires a good understanding of team dynamics, a willingness to be a coach, and the ability to reframe and be patient when it comes to the personal development of others.

Tie development to the employee experience: You want people to want to be a part of your company and this is one great way to do it. Employees are looking for places to work that help them build the skills they'll need to grow and progress through the company.[9] Better yet, employees who feel like their company is investing in them are more likely to stick around. Developing employees should be tied into the culture of the company and the employee experience that comes from working there. Creating a community of learners who value feedback and growth helps strengthen organizations and improves the resiliency of their workforces.

Be prepared: Once you know what you want to do and how you want to do it, make sure everything is ready to run smoothly when you start developing your employees. Among other things, this means warning employees far enough in advance that they aren't surprised by the development exercise you want to conduct. You should also be familiar with the tool or activity you're going to be using with your team so you don't run into any barriers. If resources such as IT or HR support is required, make sure everything is coordinated before your employees show up. You want their focus to be on developing themselves, not navigating unforeseen bumps in the road.

Tips for long-term growth

Once you've committed to developing employees, what can you do to support long term change? There's a few tactics you can try to make the learning experience more personal.

Create personal development plans: Each employee should have their own development plan that lists what areas or skills they need to work on and how that development will be measured and supported. The idea is to make continuing the learning as easy as possible for the employee. Plans can outline what measurable goals will be expected in what sort of timeline and any performance metrics that will be used to evaluate the employee once everything is over.[10]

Check-in: This is the most important part of supporting ongoing development. Managers should be checking in with their employees on a one-to-one basis to track what is being achieved on the employee's development plan and what is getting stalled. It's important to adjust where needed to ensure the employee keeps progressing and that their development goals are aligned to their annual tasks and targets.

Real world connections: The more often managers can create opportunities to use the skills being developed, the better the employees will learn the ability. Where possible, try to provide your employees with situations where they can test themselves. This might be allowing a quieter team mate to lead a new project or having the team sort through internal conflict on their own to create a new communication solution. Any chance you can provide that connects the development work being done to real world situations will help cement the employee's learning.
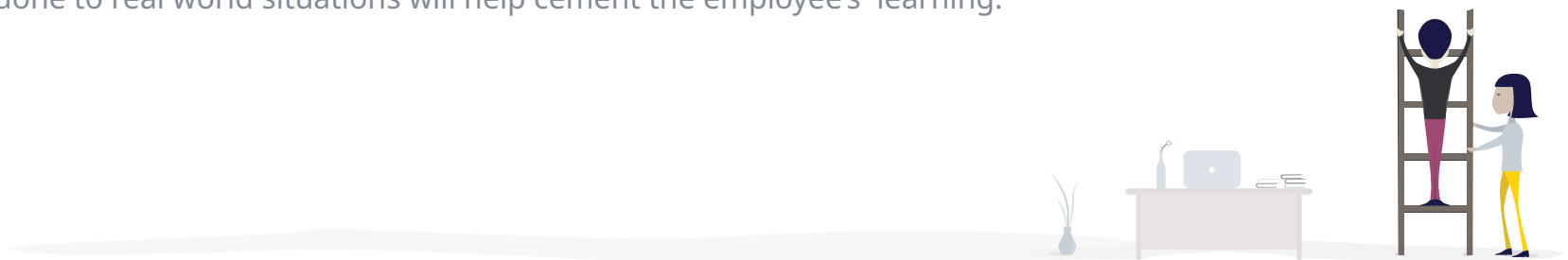
How can assessments help?

One way to start tackling employee development is with the help of assessments. Assessments can be a great time saver for busy managers and can help bring structure to the start of a development program. Psychometrically valid measures can bring a sense of objectivity to the discovery process as an employee dives deeper into their own strengths and weaknesses and they can also help lay out a strategic path to follow to support ongoing development.
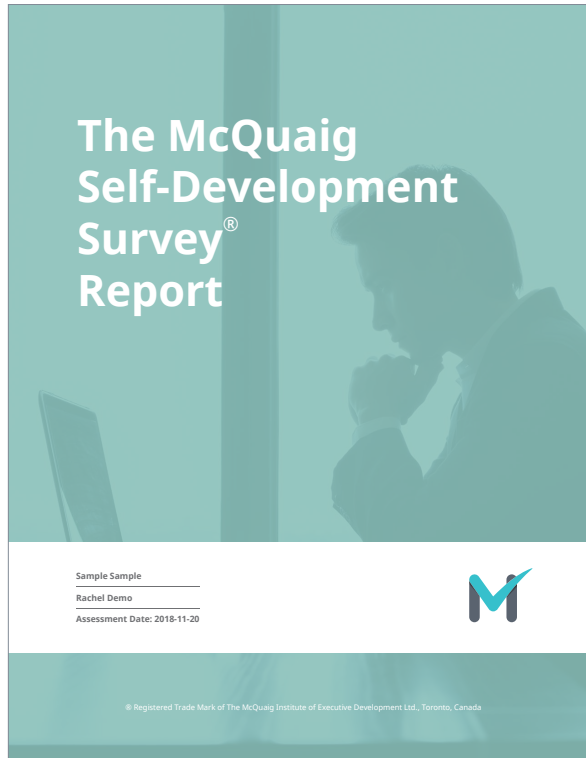
While there are many ways to assess employees, a good rule of thumb is to find a test that's scientifically sound with good reliability and validity results. You'll also want to look for one that is a reasonable length of time so employees don't lose interest. Typically good measures fall around 10-15 minutes and include a full report that can be used by the manager to debrief the employee on what was learned. The report should give managers a good overview of what traits or skills an employee is stronger in than others to help narrow the focus of development to the areas that will provide the most benefit.

Once completed, the insights taken from the assessment results can become the roadmap of what employees need to work on. That knowledge should feed into the personal development plan created between a manager and employee to ensure they are hitting the right targets and that expectations are reasonable. Retesting employees at a later date is also a great way to track ongoing development and assess where the key learning objectives are being met or whether something in the development plan needs to be adjusted.

The McQuaig Self-Development Survey

The McQuaig Self-Development Survey® Report

Sample Sample

Rachel Demo

Assessment Date: 2018-11-20

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If you are interested in learning more about how assessments can support employee development, we'd like to suggest starting with the McQuaig Self-Development Survey. Backed by 40 years of behavioural research, the Survey is a versatile assessment designed to help employees manage and take charge of their own self-development. The assessment takes about 15 minutes to complete and provides insight into where an employee falls along a number of trait scales. This helps identify areas of strength and provides recommendations for areas needing more development.

Many managers are often left facing the "so what now?" question after using assessments for development. The Self-Development Survey aims to answer that question with specific actionable recommendations that ensures employees walk away from the experience with real insight into how they can grow. That learning allows employees' to take ownership over their own development process and work on skills that matter the most to their own roles and careers.

If you would like to learn more about the assessment or would like to try it out for yourself, please visit us at **www.mcquaig.com** to learn more.

Conclusion

Finding the right way to develop your employees can be a tricky task but the benefits of investing in your people are long reaching and can be felt in many areas of an organization. From increased employee engagement, to better team effectiveness, to growing and grooming future leaders, there's no denying development can have a large impact on an organization. And when employees feel empowered at work, they are more likely to stick around longer which drives down turnover and increases knowledge retention at your business.

"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."[11]

-Anthony J. D'Angelo

If you're going to develop your employees, then take the time upfront to do it right. Gain buy-in from your senior leaders and integrate what employees are going to learn into their daily routine. Think about development as a long term strategy, rather than a short term project, and choose activities that will help employees work on skills or abilities that align with overarching company goals. To that aim, make sure you're checking-in and supporting ongoing growth to keep employees learning. Where you can, build in opportunities for them to apply their knowledge in new and different ways. When you do it right, helping your people reach their true potential is never a waste.

Notes

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2   Biro, M. (2018). Developing Your Employees Is The Key To Retention -- Here Are 4 Smart Ways To Start. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/meghanbiro/2018/07/23/developing-your-employees-is-the-key-to-retention-here-are-4-smart-ways-to-start/#3b40ffdb3734

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