

PDP GIVES DIRECTION

Bloem explains that a development plan allows you to map out the direction that you need to follow to achieve your goals and growth. "Your plan should not be rigid, it should allow for flexibility and you need to be able to adapt it to the changing professional needs that we find ourselves operating in," she says. As your needs, goals and environment change, your PDP should change, too.

She adds that a development plan creates more possibilities and opportunities and eliminates the feeling of being trapped in an unchanging environment.

Here's how to draw up and map your own plan, and make it work for you.

Step 1: Find your vision

According to Bloem, self-assessment is the best way to discover your vision. Ask yourself various questions:

- What are your mental, physical and emotional skills?
- What are your values and needs?
- What kind of environment would you like to work in?
- What are your strengths?
- What are you passionate about?
- What are your energy levels?
- What challenges do you enjoy?
- What are your academic achievements?

According to McKay, this step will help you to develop an action plan, which can be considered as a roadmap that will help you get to your ultimate goal.

Public relations consultant Rob Subs says accountability is important here. He explains that accountability is probably the hardest part in creating an effective development plan.

"You need to be honest with who you are and your skills. Once you have assessed yourself you can decide on your course of action, which will make it easier to map out your growth and any changes you need to make," he says.

Step 2: Know your options

Once you've discovered your vision, interests and abilities, you need to do research. Find out about the different career paths that interest you and those that match your energy levels.

"Think out of the box," says Bloem. "This opens up your thinking and allows you to discover more opportunities." She adds that job-shadowing someone who is in a profession that interests you can help you see if it will really suit you.

Step 3: Set goals

Subs advises drawing up a list of goals that will help you achieve your vision.

"Goal setting allows you to define what you want to achieve, what you will get it from, and when it will be achieved," he says.


Goals need to be believable and attainable, and have set time frames.

Break your goals into two categories: short term and long term. Short-term goals can be achieved in one to five years, and they should be steps towards your long-term goals.

For example, your long-term goal could be to start your own consultancy. Your short-term goals need to focus on gaining more experience, creating a respected reputation in your industry and gaining the financial stability you'll need to start out on your own.

Step 4: Take action

Taking action can be difficult, according to Subs, so follow these tips.

- Develop personal habits and patterns that will help you achieve your goals. Depending on your goals, these could be things such as improving your time management or do things to stimulate your creativity.
- Be patient – understand that change does not happen overnight.
- Do what you need to realise your goals. This could involve attending a course.
- Constantly monitor your performance.
- List barriers that might prevent you from achieving your vision. Then work out ways to overcome them.
- Stick to your goals and action plan. Focus on the end result of achieving your dreams.
- Find a mentor who can guide you on your way to achieving your goals. This could be a colleague you respect or someone in your community who you think is successful. 

REAL LIFE STORY

Mpotseng Lebentlele, an SABC3 brand manager, says that she has always developed plans to achieve her career goals.

"I always compare my career to a house. Everyone has a picture of how their ideal house has to look – from the location and foundation to the building of that house," she adds.

"That's how my career journey started. I set goals for myself, learn from my experiences, and build on that."

"But, my overall career goal is to succeed and put out a good reflection of my skills, which has kept me going."

To stay focused on your goals, put up pictures that represent what you want to achieve around your house and office. Seeing them will motivate you.

5 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PLAN WORK

Even though you have set career goals it is important to follow your plan through to make it work. Here are ways how:

- Set realistic goals that are within your limits.
- Be true to yourself and don't plan according to what others think of you.
- Seek guidance when you feel you are not making progress.
- Find a mentor or someone who has done what you intend to do.
- Stay focused and don't be distracted by petty things that keep cropping up.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- **Rich Dad Poor Dad** by Robert Kiyosaki is an inspirational book which suggests that if you have a personal coach who has realised most of their dreams, you can learn their principals and apply them in your life.
- **Goals! How to Get Everything You Want Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible** by Brian Tracy advises that without well-defined goals you will not be able to be successful, as your goals drive you.
- **Your Career, Your Life** by Annette Kinnear make readers aware that career growth is a process that starts with you.