

People & Strategy

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PERSPECTIVES

IDP: Individual Development Plan or Impediment to Dialogue and Progress?

Beverly Kaye/Julie Winkle Giulioni

Counterpoints:

Joe Garbus/Michael Bazigos/Marc Effron/Kathleen G. Strickland

FEATURES

Competency Models with Impact: Research Findings from the Top Companies for Leaders

Erin Wilson Burns/Laurence Smith/Dave Ulrich

Revisiting College Credentials as Employment Hurdles and Claims About Building Human Capital

Ernie Stark/Paul Poppler

Capturing Success, Not Taking Blame: Bringing HR into the M&A Development and Pricing Processes

Christine Quinn Trank/Jeffrey E. Stambaugh/Heather Bemis

Priming the Talent Pipeline: Redefining the Supply Chain for America's Intelligence Enterprise

Lenora Peters Gant/Paulette J. Goodman/Dan L. Ward

Demonstrating the Value of Executive Education

Skip Culbertson/Keith Owen

The Board and HR

David Creelman/Andrew Lambert

HR | People & Strategy

HRPS


From the Perspectives Editor

Anna Tavis, Perspectives Editor

Anyone who has spent any time in our business organizations would agree that their focus is squarely in the present: Business is about getting results, closing sales, bringing in new clients and balancing books. People development for people development's sake just does not belong here. It does not belong unless it is about the business itself — about those results.

As our very experienced and distinguished panel argues here, if employees' development is about getting better, faster, smarter outcomes and getting them now, then managers cannot ignore them. Employee development will have to be addressed.

The topic of how to do development right is front and center in “Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go,” a new book by **Beverly Kaye**, a thought leader on employee engagement, and her co-author **Julie Winkle Giulioni**. Now is the time to move from “impediment to dialogue and progress to inspiring dedication and possibilities.”

All four panelists have had many years of experience working inside businesses on various aspects of employee development. They unanimously support Kaye's and Giulioni's thesis and take the authors' argument to a deeper level of practical recommendations.

In summary, development that should be assigned to a manager is primarily a “development for performance.” It is about day-to-day, on-the-job coaching of staff. Longer term career development and progression should be assigned to a dedicated team of specialists.

Joe Garbus, The New York Times Company organization effectiveness leader, advises HR that “focusing on the immediate change is where we want to double down” and, further, “planned development gets the most lift when there is hyper-clarity on the necessary behavioral change.”

Marc Effron, the author of “One Page Talent Management,” wraps up Garbus' practical advice in the language of strategy. To Effron, getting it right is a question of getting your talent philosophy right, making it simple and holding managers accountable.

Michael Bazigos, professional development director at KPMG, correlates IDP with delivering business value. A disconnected independent development plan (IDP) process (and form) without “decision support, management development and the management system to reify IDP intent” is insufficient. He goes on to offer concrete examples of how those issues have been addressed in the two organizations he knows best — IBM and KPMG.

Kathleen G. Strickland, the founder and chief executive officer of the Strickland Group, offers her experience as a premier senior executive coach to validate the importance of top management team's support for the development investment. Often, it is about setting personal examples and making time for senior management development as well.

Taken together, this panel offers very useful and pragmatic advice on what to do if you and your organization want to make your IDP process different from what it has been so far. As always, opinions and shared experiences from our readers are encouraged and welcome.

IDP: Individual Development Plan or Impediment to Dialogue and Progress?

By Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni, co-authors of “Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go”

A manager in a health care organization meticulously completes the form and signs his employee up for several training seminars. He's pleased with the plan and his commitment to career development.

A vice president in a financial institution, believing that employees must own their own development, lets employees complete their individual development plans (IDPs) and

submit them to her for approval. It's rare that she doesn't approve their forms. After all, people know best what they need.

A hospitality supervisor uses a template to be able to fit in the 18 IDPs he must complete within a two-week period. Most of his employees are in the same basic role, so he sees it as an efficient way to meet his expectations.

What's Wrong with This Picture?

Individual development plans are a common feature of today's organizational landscape. The process was introduced to meet a very real need: to ensure that all employees benefit from conscious attention to their professional development and career growth. This kind of attention can produce powerful results.

De-emphasize the form. Make it shorter. Make it simpler. Make it a tool that drives authentic connections ...

- It enhances employee engagement and satisfaction.
- It ensures the ongoing development of critical skills and capacities while building organizational bench strength.
- It contributes to the retention of talent and bottom-line business results.

But, not unlike the message in the children's game of telephone, the purpose of the IDP process has become distorted. Unfortunately, in many organizations, today it bears little resemblance to its original intent.

Stepford Managers

The problem is not that managers aren't doing it. They are — some with meticulous precision and according to the schedules outlined by their organizations:

- They log onto the websites.
- They complete the forms.
- They check the boxes.
- They hit “send” so HR receives the needed documentation.

They may even talk to their employees. But given the rigor of the administrative process and the focus on the deliverables, too frequently the genuine human connection that should be at the core of career development gets lost.

In too many environments, the IDP has lost its heart. Managers who survive the extensive and complex process often feel like they've done their career development for the year. After checking all of those boxes on the forms, they check one more:

- Career development

In an effort to ensure meaningful career development, organizations may actually be choking it out.

So What's an Organization to Do?

Increasingly, organizations are taking a long, hard look at IDPs and career development in general. Those that are serious about change are developing new approaches to bring humanity back to this very human act of helping others grow. The following strategies are finding favor with leaders who are genuinely dedicated to making development happen.

Forget the form. OK, that might be slightly strong. But de-emphasize the form. Make it shorter. Make it simpler. Make it a tool that drives authentic connections between the manager and employee and among employees and those in their networks.

Encourage exchange. Individual development planning is all about the conversation. Sure, the manager and employee do some independent thinking. But the magic happens when the two individuals — both committed to growth — come together and talk.

The form is just there to capture the highlights. The conversation is king. Shift the focus of the form from checkboxes and to-dos to questions that surface critical information, prompts that drive insights and what-ifs that inspire action.

Hone the habit. Too frequently, career development feels like one of those regularly scheduled but distasteful annual events. Even when it's done well, once a year is not frequent enough. Without help and encouragement, employees and managers alike put the plans away until next year's inspection.

So help them both hone a regular development habit. Introduce a time-released formula that ensures that career development is top of mind not just at IDP time, but all year round.

Organizations committed to weaving development into the day-to-day fabric of the organization use a range of strategies. They do the following:

- Evaluate managers based upon the development of employees.
- Back up their commitment to development with learning and training opportunities to build capacity.
- Put career development on every meeting agenda.

The Bottom Line

The time has never been better for organizations that are genuinely committed to career development to make a change. It's time to move from “impediment to dialogue and progress” to “inspiring dedication and possibilities.” That's the kind of IDP most organizations really want.

Beverly Kaye is an internationally recognized authority on career issues and retention and engagement in the workplace. She was recently honored with the Distinguished Contribution Award by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) for her groundbreaking and continued impact on workplace learning during the past three decades. She is founder and co-CEO of Career Systems International; contact her at beverly.kaye@careersystemsintl.com.

Julie Winkle Giulioni has spent the past 25 years improving performance through learning. She's partnered with hundreds of organizations to develop and deploy innovative training products that are in use worldwide. Julie is well-known and well-regarded for her creative, one-of-a-kind solutions that consistently deliver bottom-line results. She is co-founder and principal at DesignArounds; contact her at julie@designarounds.com.

Get Hyper-Focused on Performance Development

By Joe Garbus

Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni's smartly written perspective on making individual development plans (IDPs) meaningful struck a chord with me by emphasizing quality conversations over the process and tools.

I have come to believe that conversations are the basic unit of work in an organization; the more effective the conversations, the more effective the organization. As importantly, no conversation can be truly effective without all parties being clear on what they are trying to solve. In his book "Doing What Matters," Jim Kiltz, the former CEO of Gillette, asserts that "success in business boils down to knowing what really matters and then doing it." This simple truth is often missed in the challenging world of talent development. To get to what matters, we have to get hyper-clear what we are trying to solve.

Get hyper-focused on performance development that matters here and now, get to real action with real results, and then use it as a springboard for longer development planning and career growth.

This is particularly true for IDPs. Development plans should capture, in behavioral terms, the sweet spot where expectations of performance intersect with what the employee needs to do more, better or differently to meet those expectations. This could be a gap or using a strength to add more value.

To that end, I suggest replacing IDPs with an intense focus on development for performance. My experiences suggest that focusing on immediate change is where we want to double down. Further, planned development gets the most lift when there is hyper-clarity on the necessary behavior change. Answer

the question: What does the employee need to do more, better or differently to contribute value right now? If Jane needs to influence others more effectively, then her development plan should include clarity on people she needs to influence, approaches to influencing them and a clear and realistic method for feedback.

We need to make it easier for managers to do the right thing. When you ask a manager to make a choice between getting "real" work done versus planning career development, you are putting an unacceptable choice in front of them; doing the work will win every time. Helping an employee produce better work, on the other hand, makes for a much more natural conversation and likely action.

Recognizing that this could be construed as hopelessly short-term, I would suggest that longer term career development is not a result of IDPs. Rather, it is dependent on audience and context: Top talent, leaders and highly motivated employees are likely getting devel-

opment that suits their needs and the company's plan. Everyone else will continue the struggle for time and attention.

So, for everyone else, we can work toward longer term career development by building on shorter-term success. For instance, if we want to develop Jane's potential, then we add more senior-level exposure to see how leaders operate and influence. Keeping it tight and focused will increase the probability of progress.

In short, get hyper-focused on performance development that matters here and now, get to real action with real results, and then use

it as a springboard for longer development planning and career growth.

Joe Garbus is a talent and organization effectiveness leader with 20 years of experience in developing smart and simple solutions across a range of complex, global organizations. He currently leads The New York Times Company's organization capability practice, which includes organization and leadership development, talent and performance management, human capital planning, workforce effectiveness, employee engagement and career development.

Prior to this role, Garbus led teams delivering organization effectiveness and talent development at UBS Investment Bank, the Gillette Company, General Electric, Oxford Health Plans and Literacy Volunteers of America. He holds a master's degree in human resource development from Fordham University in New York and a bachelor's degree in English from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania.

Employee Development is a Business Imperative

By Michael Bazigos

The authors correctly note that, too often, the noble aspiration of the individual development plan (IDP) is lost to a quotidian, mechanical exercise that complies but does not develop. The same could be said of its cousins, the performance management and goal-setting processes, which are linked to IDPs in many organizations. Workforce research and experience with applied solutions by leading organizations suggest that this issue relates to business value and that establishing a self-standing IDP process — without decision support, management development and a manage-

ment system to reify the IDP intent — is an insufficient response: More is required.

Business Value

In my time at IBM, our chief learning officer received a call from the general manager of our consulting practice, who needed to identify 15 employees anywhere in the world with expert-level skill proficiency in an obscure software package to close a significant client opportunity. Because IBM took a supply-chain view of skills, the skill proficiency and competency strength of 450,000 employees globally were assessed and stored in a searchable database. Within hours, we had identified the right resources and closed the deal. (ROI aficionados, take note.)

development conversations was individual skill-gap closure information, including information on learning activities available to close those gaps. In the words of another executive, “The annual development conversation had to last an hour, but without specific information, the employee and manager would come to violent agreement that, yes, the cafeteria should offer Splenda, not just Sweet ‘N’ Low, and be done for the year.”

Management Development

In many organizations, analysis of aggregated upward feedback results indicate that managers’ attention to and support of employee development is one of the bottom-rated areas. Managers need to be developed in the

Conclusion

Employee development is a business imperative. IDPs can indeed work but only as a part of a larger, integrated effort that senior management supports, both in word and in deed.

As executive director for professional development at KPMG LLP (US), **Michael Bazigos** holds firmwide responsibility L&D programs related to market development, leadership development and high-performance culture for 2,200 partners and 20,000 employees, as well as succession planning. He is also on the graduate adjunct faculty for courses in organization and leadership at Columbia University’s Teachers College. Prior organizations include IBM, where Bazigos had global responsibility for strategic initiatives in talent development and talent management; PricewaterhouseCoopers, where he was global director of transformation consulting; and Pace University, where he was an education dean.

To make a meaningful change, we need to focus on flawlessly executing the fundamentals. Managers must be required to engage employees in one meaningful development goal.

We also found at IBM that employee perceptions of their development and career opportunities were the greatest statistical driver of employee engagement. Employee engagement, in turn, was a driver of business results such as year-to-year revenue growth, market share and client satisfaction. (Many other organizations have documented similar linkages; Ben Schneider and Tony Rucci have reported compellingly on this subject.) We found that while business results do affect employee engagement, employee engagement is a stronger driver of results than the reverse. So development is not just an HR concern; it should be a top-of-the house concern.

Decision Support

Each of those employees in the software example had been developed against an IDP where an important input was a skill-by-skill, system-generated readout of their personal skill gaps. An important input to required

art of development, and reward architectures need to consider (among other areas) how well they do this. If our managers feel that development conversations are an unnatural act, there is little a completed IDP form will do. IBM and KPMG invest in developing managers and leaders in this area.

Management System

Let’s say that a sales or market development organization assesses its sales force or business originators against a competency-based success profile and discovers that, on average, proficiency in financial analysis — the key to creating client centered value propositions — is not what it should be. Investment in identifying and developing those individuals who have a gap in this area would be an important outcome. We did just that at IBM, and we are doing it at KPMG. Senior management buy-in is a must for investment, execution and follow-up.

Focus on Flawlessly Executing on the Fundamentals

By Marc Effron

Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni highlight one critical challenge of the individual development plan (IDP) process: managers who studiously go through the IDP motions but don’t actually develop anyone. I’d suggest that the IDP process at many organizations suffers from far more serious and intractable issues.

In a recent New Talent Management Network (NTMN) survey, only 24 percent of companies stated that their development planning process was often or always effective. Not only was development planning the lowest rated process, but its effectiveness

perspectives – counterpoints

rating was 50 percent lower than the next highest item on the list. The IDP process is clearly broken in many organizations. Bringing it up to even moderate levels of effectiveness requires the three fundamental changes outlined below.

Radically simplify: The IDP process is predicated on the belief that the average manager is capable of creating a reasonably sound development plan. They aren't. They may not understand the standards of success for a particular role. They may not know which experiences are critical to building capability. Even with the hundreds of pages of documentation HR provides to "help," the average manager will never be able to assemble a great IDP.

So, instead, let's establish a reasonable minimum standard. Let's hold managers accountable for giving their direct reports one meaningful experience each year that grows the capabilities needed for their *current* role. They can certainly do more if they choose, but 100 percent of managers doing this would represent a tremendously positive change.

Add accountability: Only 19 percent of companies always or often hold their managers accountable for completing development plans, according to the NTMN survey. With that statistic, we shouldn't be surprised that development isn't happening. Why should overworked managers spend time on this activity if no one truly cares?

Once we've radically simplified the process by asking for just one good development item, then it's time to hold the proverbial gun to the manager's head. If they don't set the plan and follow up on it, there's a 10 percent bonus haircut. The employee doesn't even have to improve. The manager simply has to make a serious effort.

Create a talent philosophy: Few organizations have a specific talent philosophy that states their belief about differentiating their development investment. Do they believe that their best talent should get 25 percent more investment than their average talent? 200 percent?

Without these explicit company guidelines, managers will make development investments according to their personal preferences. Your egalitarian manager might decide that Bobby gets to go to the INSEAD program this year because Mary went last year. Never mind that Mary is a high potential and Bobby is not. Your company needs to explicitly state its beliefs about what development investment different individuals should receive.

Development planning is clearly broken at most organizations. To make a meaningful change, we need to focus on flawlessly executing the fundamentals. Managers must be required to engage employees in one meaningful development goal, must be held accountable for actually doing it and must invest according to the company's differentiation philosophy. If companies can't execute these basic steps, making other changes is just shuffling the deck chairs.

Marc Effron is president of The Talent Strategy Group and the author of the book "One Page Talent Management." Effron helps the world's largest and most successful global organizations improve the quality and depth of their talent. His consulting work focuses on radically simplifying talent management processes to ensure effective implementation. Effron has also co-authored two other leadership books and written chapters in nine management books. Effron's prior experience includes talent executive roles at leading MNCs and consulting firms. He has an MBA from the Yale School of Management.

IDP Starts at the Top

By Kathleen G. Strickland

Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni were certainly on target with their assessment of the use and misuse (or avoidance) of individual development plans

(IDPs) in today's highly structured, interdependent world. Corporations and organizations of all sizes now realize the fiscal and humanitarian-crucial necessity for helping individuals examine and act upon their career fit and focus on setting career development goals.

Two key issues to remember, in line with the wisdom offered by Kaye and Giulioni and the successful implementation of IDPs downward through an organization: "It starts at the top," and "We treat others as we treat ourselves." Kaye and Giulioni's counsel is amply reflected in my decades of professional practice.

Executive and senior management must grasp — and hold onto — the value in guiding the practice of generating significant conversations around effective IDPs several times a year. The implementation chain starts at the top.

It is a proven axiom that we learn best through experience. Thus, how we are treated impacts how we treat others. Cumulatively, a positive experience with a thoughtful IDP can aggregate in a domino effect within a corporation or organization. I have found it so in my practice. The overall culture changes — for the betterment of all.

While the truism holds that "We treat others as we treat ourselves," today's gifted top executives tend *not* to apply this truism to themselves. In my many years working with top executives, I have found they have a decided tendency *not* to take enough time for their own quiet, deep thinking focused on their personal goals for career and for their lives. In the hubbub of intense, day-to-day management, everything else tends to seem more important — all of the above in terms of management plus jobs, family, social and charitable endeavors take priority.

Most people now practice some form of "healthy body, healthy mind," so they make time for purposeful exercise and, with it, pursue a healthy diet as a basic to optimum health. In the "American way," much has been accomplished in recent times by well-publicized and practiced examples in pursuit of better bodies and minds.

perspectives – counterpoints

A growing task, allied to the health and vigor of American institutions themselves, is spreading the example of IDPs playing a vital, positive role toward public betterment. Where should we begin? With ourselves, of course! We reach out to others; it is reciprocal. The time we spend in purposeful conversation with others demonstrates the importance of our regard for them. As they better appreciate their importance, they will spend more focused time with themselves and others. We will have planted a seed that will grow. And, as with optimum planting and farmers' pragmatism, we plant many seeds to assure good harvests. While we, like the farmer, don't know precisely which seed will bloom, we can plant enough to assure good harvest. And, by the same token, we know that shrewd planting involves planning at the front end and follow-through to cap the effort.

IDPs are essential for career fit and growth in a larger world of integration and accommodation. IDPs are also vital for motivation and the flowering of positive relationships. Finally, modeling the importance of IDPs to the benefit of all starts at the top.

We know that time is nearly everyone's most valuable commodity. We also know we must take time for what is important to us. We are stretched between work demands, family needs and the self. How can we make time for all this? Set priorities.

How do we make IDPs a priority? As Kaye and Giulioni demonstrate, this is an essential good. My own suggestion toward this end is modeling. Modeling takes time for deep, quiet thinking at work and at home. Not an easy endeavor. But who among us likes easy?

Kathleen G. Strickland is the founder and chief executive officer of The Strickland Group Ltd (1989) and a premier executive coach in the New York region with a global practice. She co-founded The Global Coaching Partnership and was a co-owner in The Change Partnership, Johannesburg, South Africa. Her proactive, positive approach has helped individuals within organizations achieve success beyond expectations. Strickland's global experience provides a valuable perspective and demonstrates its ability to help others develop at the most senior levels.

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