

CREATING A CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

BY NEIL VON HEUPT

There is no simple way to develop a plan for the continuing professional development (CPD) needed to create a career. It can't be brought down to five dot-points. But while CPD plans can be complex they don't have to be difficult. An effective plan just needs to be intentional, intelligent and incremental.

Ownership

Learning and Development professionals are often so caught up designing and delivering CPD for everyone else they often risk neglecting their own development. At an organisational level CPD plans are often only concerned with improving the capacity of individuals to do their current roles better and faster, not to change tack or reskill.

Essentially the only person who is going to look after your whole career development is you. We often have such grand plans for our professional development that it can be like the mechanic whose car is held together with duct tape or the builder whose home is permanently incomplete. The scope of what's possible in a CPD plan can overwhelm and paralyse us. Having a big vision for your career is good, not having a plan isn't.

Direction and Priority

The driving question in any CPD plan is "Where do you want to go?". Every career has a direction. Is your career going in the direction that you want? If not, it is possible to change that direction. Once you have established where you want to go, you then have to decide what priority it has. There are two elements to this question of priority – how long do you want it to take to get there, and how much time are you willing and able to give?

When considering these two questions of direction and priority, there is often a gap between where you are and where you want to be. There can also be a gap between how long you want to take to get there and how long it will take – this is influenced by the gap between how much time it needs and how much you

can give it. Be mindful of those gaps as you put your plan together.

Experience/Informal, Exposure/Social, Education/Formal. 70:20:10

When creating a plan consider how you will learn. The content, context and available resources all have an influence. Whether professional development is done through research, learning networks or courses, it is important to build a CPD plan that intentionally factors in all the ways that learning occurs. Use all the tools available to create a plan that is both effective, and interesting enough to pursue. A good reflection exercise is to write down all the CPD that you've done over the last 12 months and then to map it across to these three areas.

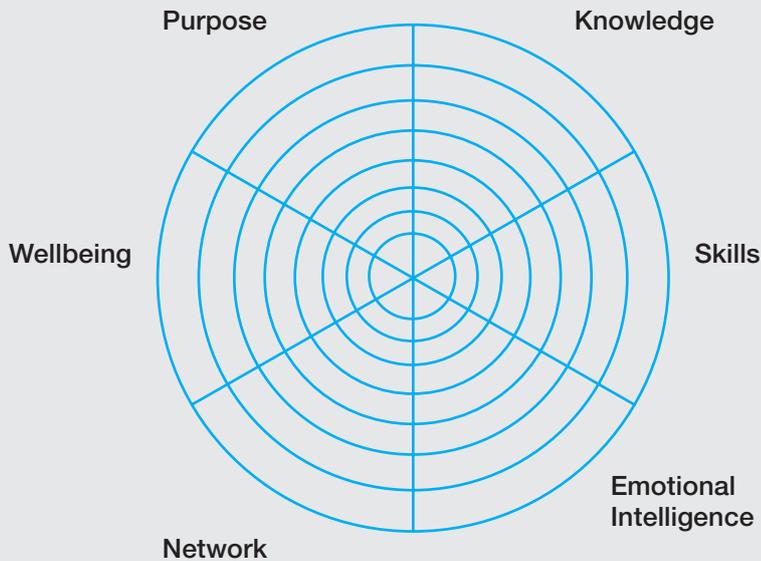
Role, Profession, Industry, Career

It is important to stay up to speed with current developments in the profession and given that L&D spans multiple industries, having an understanding of what is happening in your industry is also important (or if your direction is towards another industry or profession, then those ones). The question of direction will influence the career related CPD that is required – what skills, knowledge or connections do you need to get to where you want to go?

The CPD Wheel

The CPD Wheel breaks a plan into six elements - Knowledge, Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Networks, Purpose and Wellbeing. The diagram can be used to self-rate your current position. Shade it in according to the strength of each field, keeping in mind the question of direction. Your current knowledge may be strong, but is it strong enough to get you where you want to go? Your emotional intelligence may be affecting your career. Your current role may be impacting your health. You may not be hearing about better roles because your network is limited. Your purpose

The CPD Wheel



is shaped by your values, passions and motivation. Be aware that each element interacts with the others and that at different life/career stages your emphasis in each element may change. Once you have established your current position, your direction and priorities, you can begin to put together a CPD plan.

Your CPD Plan

Having grand plans and an overall direction is important, breaking it down to simple, incremental actions is essential. By identifying your overall direction and what you need to develop to get there, you can begin to put a CPD plan together.

A plan is worthless without action. Is your career worth one percent of your day? One percent of your day is 15 minutes! If you plan five ideas that can each be done in 15 minutes then you have one week ready. The key is to write them down, not just think about them. Having a written plan gives it focus, accountability and ownership.

Plans also need to keep some flexibility to handle the disorder of life and serendipitous opportunities that may arise. Creating space to develop a CPD plan can feel uncomfortable. It may shine a light on the lack of one so far in your career, the direction you are currently heading or the impact your choices up until now have had. Whilst it may be uncomfortable, it is an opportunity to give your career some direction and to get it moving.

Neil Von Heupt is the Programs Manager at AITD. He is a CPD alphabet devotee - PLE, PKM, PLN, PLP, WOL, BHAG. Contact via learn@aitd.com.au

