



**Development plans deserve a fresh look in today's business climate, where the majority of workers are not getting the talent management consideration they deserve.**

# IDP 2.0:

## The Future of the Development Dialogue

By Beverly Kaye

With advancing technology and an impending labor crisis on the horizon, there is a greater need than ever to find and nurture the talent within our organizations. We have greatly improved in succession planning, but we have failed miserably in the opposite talent development process: “buried treasure” planning.

Perhaps we already have the talent we need within our organizations; we have just not looked widely or deeply enough, and many resources continue to be untapped. Modern organizations must re-engage a tool that has great potential: the individual development plan, IDP.



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## **IDP's untapped potential: IDP 2.0**

For decades, organizations have suggested that managers hold IDP discussions or development dialogues (my favorite term, but call it what you wish) with their direct reports. Sometimes these were held as part of the performance management process, and sometimes they were separated out. All too often, however, they were poorly done, if they even took place. And frequently, they were only taken seriously when used to surface high-potential talent or weed out unsatisfactory workers. The process was frequently ignored or de-emphasized with the “massive middle” of employees—the vast majority of the actual workforce.

Organizations today must realize that they can no longer afford to give short shrift to a tool that, when used effectively, can be a critical part of the talent management process. When used correctly and systematically, “IDP 2.0” can increase the performance of your staff and help keep them from leaving, providing relief for recruiters and hiring managers, while making your staffing return-on-investment go much further.

To strengthen the IDP so that it is a critical management tool, organizations must

- genuinely support IDP use throughout the entire organization
- hold managers accountable for the results
- ensure true employee buy-in.

IDP 2.0 provides opportunities to bolster talent over the entire span of the employee life cycle to

- energize and re-recruit new hires
- engage and develop midcareer employees
- retain the institutional knowledge and wisdom of older workers as they prepare for anticipated changes in their work life.

### **Three stakeholders**

The need for continuous learning and development of employees is a given. If you're not nurturing and developing

your talent, and keeping them longer, you are losing extremely vital knowledge and personnel, and that in turn affects the bottom line. This is serious business!

IDP 2.0 implementation requires a stronger commitment throughout the organization than has typically been mandated. Employing the “3 S” model, the organization must devise the systems that support the discussion, as well as the accountability practice; the manager must be prepared to be the “support”; and the employee has to be proactive and jump in as the “spark.”

**Instead of waiting for six months or a year to pass before having meaningful development discussions, managers can unleash the energy of their new hires by engaging them in a series of structured, powerful conversations over the course of the critical first few weeks and months of employment.**

It's not that organizations aren't aware of the issue that managers don't care, or that employees won't listen. The issue is that none of these stakeholders typically receive the training and support necessary to make best use of the tools they have. As a result, unnecessary mistakes are made, and development discussions are often passed to human resources.

Manager involvement, however, is absolutely critical to challenge employees, build relationships, align individual needs with organizational needs, and put employees on projects where they can best utilize their talents and skills. The development dialogue requires ongoing conversations between manager

and employee. No coach, counselor, or HR person can replace this role.

When there is genuine organizational support, when managers are held accountable for engagement efforts, and when employees buy in, great improvements in your organization's staffing efforts (as well as efficiency, productivity, effectiveness, and profit) are possible. Transforming “knowing” to “doing,” getting managers to report up the food chain so that senior execs know what's going on, and giving managers the knowledge and tools to effectively fill out and utilize IDPs are critical necessities in business today.

**A critical re-recruiting tool.** While recruitment continues to be one of the most costly HR processes, its longer-term effectiveness is being eroded by unacceptable attrition rates, especially within the first year of recruits' tenures. Hiring continues to be among the most important tasks managers have today; however, it doesn't stop with the job offer.

New hires come to an organization fully charged. They are excited about their new adventure and are filled with ability and potential. Today, comprised mostly of “Millennial” generation workers, they bring unrivaled energy and ambition right from the start, and organizations can and should maximize their potential by extending the “handshake” well past the beginning of the employment cycle.

Re-recruiting your best new people is as critical as hiring them in the first place. Research continues to demonstrate how critical the relationship between manager and new hire is to retention, performance, employee satisfaction, and ultimately, customer satisfaction. If managers can quickly develop high-quality relationships with their new hires, they will greatly improve first-year retention, decrease time to productivity, and build loyalty and commitment. Suggestion: empower IDP 2.0 to drive these conversations.

Instead of waiting for six months or a year to pass before having meaningful development discussions, managers can unleash the energy of their new hires by engaging them in a series of

structured, powerful conversations over the course of the critical first few weeks and months of employment. Dialogue should be opened around six essential areas critical to new beginnings: relationships, passion, challenge, focus, balance, and intention. If not, managers may find that, six months or a year later, those new hires might already be gone, and backfilling will only crowd recruiters' agendas and impede other staffing demands.

**A massive middle radar tool.** Many organizations focus engagement and retention initiatives on the top 10 to 15 percent—the high-potential talent. It's not wrong to give them attention, but in the process, it is easy to lose sight of another critical segment of the workforce. The massive middle includes the solid citizens—the bulk of the workforce (60 to 70 percent) and the people whom you count on to show up every day and do their jobs. The massive middle includes managers and individual contributors who are often overlooked, especially when it comes to engagement or retention initiatives; and certainly when it has come to the IDP process.

Dozens of Fortune 500 companies, however, are beginning to focus engagement and retention efforts on this group, which is typically made up of Generation Xers and younger boomers. These companies need the bulk of their workforce to be more fully engaged, to bring their discretionary efforts to the job, and to support their leadership. They need those who are not engaged to get engaged now!

While methods vary greatly and must be customized for each population, there are at least three strategic focus areas that can provide an engagement edge with the massive middle: career self-management for employees, complementary career coaching for managers, and a wider and deeper mentoring methodology push. Organizations that embrace IDP 2.0 will see to it that managers are skilled enough to feel comfortable in the dialogue and that employees are skilled enough to take responsibility for their own satisfaction (a great way

to abolish "entitlement!"). When this dialogue is mandated, accountability will be shared.

**A Baby Boomer transition planning tool.** The U.S. Department of Education has stated that 60 percent of the skills of the future are possessed by only 20 percent of our current workforce. However, in the rush to acquire these skills, organizations sometimes forget that it also takes wisdom to effectively put them into practice. Those workers, mostly boomers and some of the younger matures, carry years of valuable experience and industry knowledge with them. As they get closer to part-time employment or full-time retirement, their needs change, and this must be reflected in the IDP 2.0 conversation.

Managers can and should be creative in considering how to tap this wisdom and experience, both in the short- and long-term, and help get the most out of older employees while they are still around. Mentoring and reverse-mentoring programs, built into an IDP 2.0, can provide immense value for these workers. Call it learning transfer, transition planning, or legacy development (still my favorite); the very nature of this conversation would show individuals that their organization values them, cares about how engaged they are, and recognizes their continuing impact on the bottom line. Imagine inviting a 55-year-old to meet for their yearly IDP (groan). Now imagine the reaction if, instead, the invitation was for an LDP (legacy development plan).

## Turn your IDP into an IDP 2.0

The business world moves fast, and staffing attitudes must change along with it for organizations to stay relevant and continue to be productive and profitable. With ever-advancing technology and the impending labor shortage, staffing issues (including talent management, engagement, and retention) become the true competitive differentiators. Ideas that may have seemed crazy a decade ago, such as certifying managers in development and engagement, holding quarterly development dialogues, making engagement a part of managers' evaluation criteria, and having the recruiter and hiring manager "lock arms" to re-recruit existing talent, warrant our serious consideration.

What if the talent we need is already within our midst? What if the identification and development of that talent didn't demand a new HR process, but a tool that we already have that could be merely dusted off, powered-up, and harnessed? What if we could find and develop our own buried treasure by reimagining the IDP as IDP 2.0?

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