Job Assignments

Personal Development

WHAT IS IT

This Guide explains how Job Assignments or On-the-Job Opportunities or Special Projects or Additional Responsibilities can all be utilised to play a major role in stimulating learning and development through challenge-driven 'on-the-job' work.

A range of examples are given below, every one of these experiences provides an individual with opportunities for personal development of skills, knowledge and behaviour.

WHY USE IT

Realising the benefits are almost immediate, even though early experiences can make some individuals feel as if they have been 'thrown in at the deep end'. Learning by doing, experience is the best teacher; practice makes perfect; - each of these familiar phrases are used to describe learning on-the-job and most leadership roles can benefit from such a development option.

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1. WHEN TO USE

When one of the most positive solutions is likely to be some form of hands-on development achieved through a Job Assignment or Additional Responsibilities etc. This may focus on knowledge, skills, behaviours or any combination of these.

2. HOW TO USE

1. Discuss the development need with your manager
2. Agree the need for an on-the-job assignment type of solution
3. Review possible options for assignments and the practicalities of pursuing each of these alternatives
4. Ensure the option you finally agree upon will definitely leverage your development need
5. Agree the objectives, length, evaluation and delivery requirements etc for the assignment
6. Agree the need for this solution to be blended with other options such as coaching
7. What type of support you will need.

3. EVALUATION

As part of the preparation process for implementing the Job Assignment the individual Leader should agree a Development Objective. This should be in a 'smart' format and include quantifiable factors that can be evaluated.

4. TOP TIPS

For the Individual

- Aligning a job assignment to your specific development need should not be difficult as the objective for the assignment should be the same as your need. See examples below.
- Do not rush the preparation stage of agreeing the exact assignment and its deliverables
- Ensure you create a smart development objective (as well as a performance objective)
- Consider blending this development option with one or more of the following:-
    - Coaching from manager or an agreed person
    - Buddying with a colleague of your choice
    - Reading and / or web research

For the Manager

- Provide sufficient challenge or stretch within the assignment for the individual, but avoid over exposing the individual to an unacceptable level of risk such as work overload.
- Be practical, on-the-job assignments may be a very effective option for developing various competencies but their adoption and implementation should be carefully balanced with the demands of the individual's regular job accountabilities.
- Be prepared to consider other less time-consuming options if an additional assignment is going to prove difficult to implement, particularly in respect of the additional demands on the individual.
- Ensure you take enough time to discuss and agree objectives, evaluation methods and support. Careful consideration of these issues at the planning stage will normally pay real dividends for all parties.

5. EXAMPLES

Development Need	Possible On-the-job Assignments
Fix-its	• System / process breakdowns.
Heavy strategic demands	• Significant strategic redirection; visibility by senior leaders
Influencing without authority	• Negotiating with outside parties requiring influencing of peers or higher management
Work-stream Membership	• Short-term or additional assignment to implement - new process, re-organisation etc.
Scale (size)	• Typically involves a jump in number of accountabilities, size of the job, e.g. more people, more countries.
Scope (complexity)	• Managing substantially more breadth. Typically involves new areas of business and increase in visibility, complexity
Significant people demands	• Involves either a sizable increase in the number of people managed, the complexity of the people-challenges faced eg. resistant to change.

External pressure	• Managing interface with important groups outside the organisation, e.g., customers, vendors, regulatory agencies.

NEXT STEPS

We trust that this Success Guide will assist your personal development and help build your capability and performance

You may find some of our other Success Guides of value for your Personal or Career Development. For your convenience we list these below and you can access the index for these via the link below:-

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