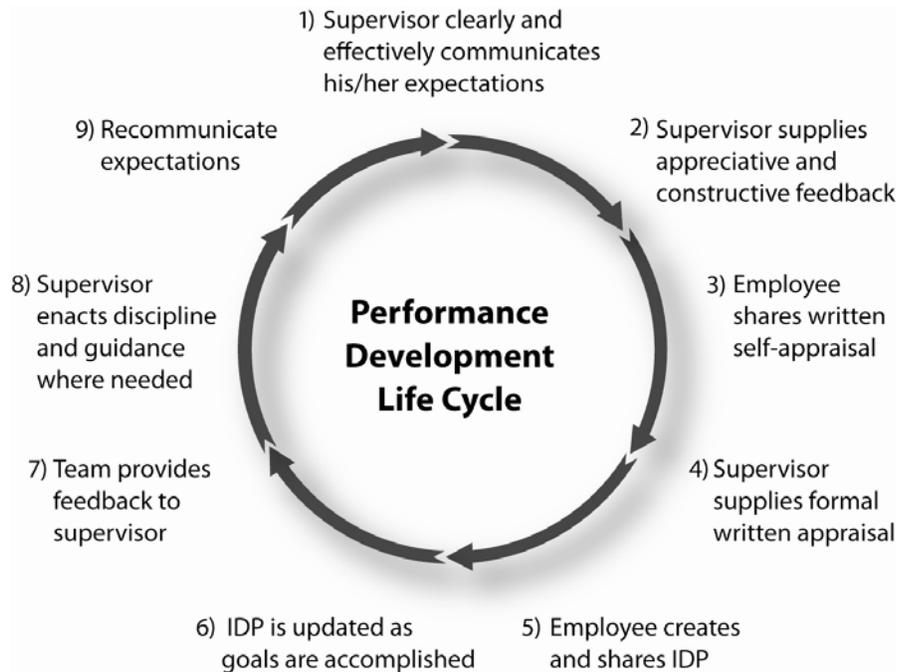


## DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE: THE NINE STEPS

One can view an individual's professional development as having a life cycle. The cycle begins when a person starts working – and continues as long as the employee remains with an organization. In high performing organizations, people are aware of this life cycle and commit to ensuring that everyone is engaged in it.



The life cycle has these steps:

1. The first step is for managers and supervisors to clearly communicate and share their expectations with their employees directly, in person. There are different levels of expectations, including those of the company overall<sup>1</sup>, those of an individual manager or supervisor, and those of the employee. It is the supervisor's job to communicate expectations effectively, in person, on an ongoing basis. Since expectations can change, it is vital that the manager or supervisor communicates them often and checks frequently to make sure the expectations are clear.
2. The second step is to provide ongoing, timely communication and feedback about what the employee is doing well, and what areas need development. The manager or supervisor should not wait for a formal appraisal to provide this feedback, but provide it on an ongoing basis. Depending on the quality of the

<sup>1</sup> These expectations are expressed through the framework of core values.

- employee's performance and the nature of the assignment, it may be necessary to change the employee's responsibilities and expectations. The manager or supervisor needs to communicate this clearly, balancing appreciative and constructive feedback.
3. At minimum, every three months, the manager or supervisor needs to meet with each employee for a 15-minute appraisal of what the employee is doing well and where development is needed. In most cases, a written appraisal is not needed at this time. However, if the employee is not showing the expected development, the supervisor has the option of providing the employee with a written record detailing the areas of strength and the areas which need development.
  4. On the cycle appropriate for the employee's role and level of experience, the employee needs to receive a formal, written appraisal. This should occur in a timely manner. The process begins with the employee completing a self-appraisal and sharing it with his or her supervisor. The supervisor responds with a written appraisal that identifies the employee's specific strengths and areas where the employee needs development.
  5. Based on the appraisal, the employee needs to create an Individual Development Plan (IDP). It is important that the employee consider this to be his or her own IDP – not the organization's. The IDP includes his or her short-term development goals and long-term career goals. It also includes the employee's training goals. The employee needs to share the IDP with his or her manager or supervisor. The manager or supervisor should try to meet the employee's IDP activities through the assignments given. But employees should not expect that it will always be possible to do so.
  6. Employees need to revise their IDPs as they successfully accomplish specific development steps and add new ones. They also need to revise their IDPs with each appraisal and as their professional goals evolve.
  7. At regular intervals, managers and supervisors need to receive input about how they are doing. Part of this occurs via the formal appraisal process. But managers and supervisors also have the responsibility to facilitate discussions with their teams about what is going well and what could be better – and for the teams to provide feedback to the managers and supervisors.
  8. In cases where the employee is not satisfactorily improving in areas that have been identified as areas of concern, the manager or supervisor should provide appropriate feedback, guidance and assistance to the employee. In some instances, an employee's performance or conduct may warrant progressive discipline.
  9. When employees change managers or supervisors, they need to meet with their new boss and share their IDPs. At the same time, the new manager or supervisor needs to communicate the expectations (see Step 1 in the cycle).

This life cycle is significant because it shifts attention away from the formal performance assessment (which the organization owns) toward the IDP, which the employee owns.

The important thing to stress is that everyone, from the CEO on down, needs to continuously work on their professional development and to have an IDP. In some companies, the CEO shares his or her IDP. In others, team members share their IDPs with each other and ask for mutual help in meeting their development objectives.

The other key message is that no one stops developing. It is a life-long pursuit, and those who are actively attuned and engaged in their professional development find deep satisfaction and fulfillment in it.