# **Developing Yourself – Enhancing Your Career**

If you are a manager, you should always look for ways to advance your employees’ careers. If you are an employee, you should be looking at ways to develop yourself. Whether you are an employee or a manager, it’s crucial to have personal goals to grow and enhance your career. Don’t wait on someone to approach you and ask if you want to develop yourself; it could be a long wait. Take control of your career and yourself.

If your city or county does not have a structured career development plan or an informal way to “move up” in the ranks, you can always develop a plan for yourself. Following these tips will help you take on more responsibilities and expand your skill sets, which can lead to better pay or promotions.

## See the source image**You Need a Plan – The Career Roadmap**

Image courtesy of johnrodsett.com

You need to develop a plan for yourself to learn new skills and ways of doing business that you may not have done in the past.

Your plan does not need to be a complex spreadsheet with rank and date ordered specific training you want to take. It can be as simple as putting down your thoughts about what training you would like to take. Is it something that expands on your current job, or is it something that you want to try that is new – such as a new career path? Write out your plan. Putting your ideas down on paper reinforces and makes you “own” the plan as it’s yours, not given to you by someone else.

When you decide on a plan, you need to put the following on your roadmap:

## ***Time investment***

You will need to set aside and take time to develop yourself. If your employer sends you to a training event, that time is on the clock. They will often send you to conferences and seminars that are paid time development. It is typically at the employer’s discretion if online training is on the clock or your own time. Don’t assume – ask!

## ***Financial considerations***

Numerous training events can be attended by county or city employees for no cost, such as classes provided by the Texas Local Technical Assistance Program ([www.txltap.org](http://www.txltap.org)). Ask your supervisor to request training from TxLTAP brought on-site at no charge.

## ***Needs of my existing employer***

Try to align your development plan with the needs of your organization. Consider your long- and short-term business objectives. For example, if your organization moves towards more out-sourced work rather than doing all work in-house, you will need a qualified construction/maintenance inspector. What skill sets does an inspector need? Is this a field you’re interested in? Do you have any skills or experience in inspection? Are you willing to learn the skills to move into these roles?

## ***Engage in active participation***

This means not only when you attend training but also when back on the job. Ask your supervisor to do the work you learned at the training actively. If you are a supervisor, encourage and ask your employees to share what they learned in training with you and others.

## ***Alternatives to formal education***

There are numerous types of personal development and training you can participate in to develop yourself that does not require formal education. Explore the following:

***Stretch Assignments****.* Other than a job change, stretch assignments are hands down the best way to learn and develop. Look for opportunities that are aligned with their development needs and career aspirations. Approach your supervisor about taking on a new or different assignment to help you learn and grow.

***Conferences*.** Attending conferences is a great way to learn technical and soft skill learning objectives and provide the opportunity to network with peers. Many people come back from conferences with contact information of others they met who share the same problems and challenges.

***Seminars.*** Short, sweet, and specific. Typically, seminars are tailored to a particular or set number of technical topics or a bite of soft skill issues to help prepare employees to develop them to assume management positions later in their careers.

***Formal training events.*** Formal training evens may also be referred to as Instructor-Led Training (ILT), where a prepared agenda, curriculum, and set learning objectives have been designed. ILT training is very beneficial for standardized training.

***Webinars and online training.*** This is a great way to attend training at the office and for a short period. The Texas Association of Counties is a great example that routinely schedules webinars on various safety topics. The Texas Municipal League has a great library of online training courses for use by cities.

### ***Professional organizations and local networking groups***

There are professional organizations that your city or county may have a membership allowing the taking of online training or providing access to recorded webinars. Such organizations would include the Project Management Institute and the Society for Human Resources Management.

### ***Working with a Subject Matter Expert***

Quite often, you have a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in your workplace that is the “go-to” person on how to do a process, complete a specific task, schedule a complex project, or be well versed in how to navigate difficult situations. Ask your supervisor to work with a person like this for a couple of days to learn from them. Once you grasp what you wish to learn, apply it on the job the best way you can.

### See the source image***One-on-one coaching and mentoring***

Image courtesy of blog.vertisourcehr.com

If your organization does not have a formal mentoring or

coaching program, ask your supervisor about the

possibility of creating one. Free technical assistance can

be provided to your city or county on how to develop and

implement such a program for no charge from

the TxLTAP program.