

Adopting a developmental management style

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A developmental mindset

A 'developmental style' of management can usefully apply to our everyday behaviour as managers. It also helps us be more effective in the more formal conversations we have with individuals about their work performance and development, such as planned 1-1 meetings, performance reviews and team meetings.

As explained more fully below, the developmental style outlined here expects managers to combine greater attention to employee development and learning, including appropriate feedback and challenge, with an emphasis on behaviours widely used in coaching: helping individuals to find their own solutions and to take greater ownership of their actions at work.

Different conversations will be developmental in style to differing degrees. There are times when individuals need clear top down messages and instruction. But on most occasions it is more effective to involve individuals in problem-solving rather than simply to tell them what to do.

A developmental style of management applies to all employees, not just those with high potential or those with performance problems. It aims to help everyone become the best they can be, to develop their own potential and to move from competent to outstanding.

Being a developmental manager is indeed a mindset, but is shown through specific patterns of behaviour as illustrated below.

Why do organisations need developmental managers?

- Being stretched and actively developed at work makes people more motivated and engaged, leading to better job performance and customer service.
- In tough times we need our people to be willing to take more responsibility at work, to come forward with ideas for improving the way we do things and to be flexible about taking on tasks they have not done before. They can only do this if they know they will be actively supported by managers when they 'speak up' with ideas and will be given the skills, knowledge and support to rise to the challenge of new ways of working.
- Managers who role model a developmental style also encourage everyone else to help each other, leading to higher levels of trust, better collaboration in diverse teams with both colleagues and partners. In other words, it leads to a shift in culture in the workplace to a more developmental way of working.

- Adopting an adult-adult relationship with individuals and respecting their opinions and ideas, reduces workplace stress and absence. It also improves well-being both at work and in the way we deal with other people outside work.
- We have a responsibility to our staff to develop their own abilities to learn at work and develop their own careers, which may need to take them beyond their current workplace.

What might I do differently as a manager?

As a manager there are a number of behaviours which add up to a 'developmental style'. You will not use all these behaviours all the time, but the more you make them a habit, the more your staff will develop as part of daily working life. They will also notice that you care about their work and its impact and help them take charge of their work and learning.

It is useful to think about your behaviour in terms of what a member of your team would see you doing and how they would feel as a result. In describing some of the key behaviours below, we organise them into four broad clusters and start each sentence describing a specific behaviour with 'My manager.....'

TALKING, REFLECTING AND LISTENING

My manager....

takes the time to talk to me about my work, showing a real interest in what I'm doing and its impact, even when we are all busy

helps me to reflect on how things are going, any work issues or problems arising and what I am learning or need to learn

ensures we have **regular one-to-one meetings** which include appropriate air time for work issues I wish to raise and to discuss my own development

also uses **informal discussions** at work to help me address issues as they arise

listens attentively to me, asking questions to check understanding and helping us both to summarise our conversation and any actions we need to take

HONEST FEEDBACK AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

My manager....

gives me clear and timely **feedback** on how I'm doing my work, praising me for things I have done well, acknowledging my contribution, challenging me and telling me honestly when I am not doing things well

does not respond to my **mistakes** by blaming me, but rather makes sure I know how to do better next time and supports me in achieving this

helps me find my own solutions to work issues by talking them through and helping me clarify approaches that I think I can use

WORK AND DEVELOPMENT GOAL SETTING

My manager....

expects and encourages me to take as much **responsibility** as I can for my own work and learning

ensures that we **agree clear goals** for my work and my development, so that I can improve my performance further, even if I'm already doing a good job

encourages me to think about my **career aspirations** and interests and develop the skills and knowledge I will need for the future as well as for my current job

MAXIMISING DEVELOPMENT AT WORK

My manager....

takes time to develop me and gives me the support I need as I take action on my learning goals

makes as much use as possible of **learning in or close to the job** and enabling me to learn from the other people around us

identifies and encourages me to take on **new or challenging tasks** to develop my potential further

supports **formal training, where necessary**, ensuring that any course is really relevant to my needs, that I know what I'm hoping to gain from it and we review what I've learned afterwards

uses **team meetings as a learning opportunity**, accommodating important issues as they arise and helping us learn from each other through how we review and plan our work together