

A Professionals Guide to Assessing Your Learning and Development Needs



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Introduction - Taking Ownership of Your Professional Growth

Welcome to this resource designed to guide you, as a professional through the essential process of assessing your own learning and development (L&D) needs. In today's dynamic and competitive landscape, continuous professional development is not just beneficial, it's crucial for career progression, maintaining relevance, and achieving personal and professional fulfilment.

This guide, will empower you to take ownership of your growth by providing a structured approach to identify your current skills and knowledge, understand your future requirements, and pinpoint areas where development will have the most significant impact for you. By systematically assessing your needs, you can proactively shape your learning journey, ensuring it aligns with your aspirations and the evolving demands of your profession.

This resource will cover:

- ▶ Understanding the importance of your self-assessment
- ▶ Exploring different methods for identifying your learning needs
- ▶ Developing your personal learning and development plan
- ▶ Strategies for reviewing and updating your development needs
- ▶ Reviewing your development and keeping your plan on track

Embarking on your journey of self-assessment is an investment in your future. Let's begin by understanding why this process is so vital for your professional success.

The People at Work 2025 report by ADP, which surveyed almost 38,000 workers, found just 3.8 per cent of respondents had developed new skills on the job within the past two years.

“According to talent management platform Clear Company, 74 percent of employees say that a lack of professional development opportunities are preventing them from reaching their full potential. Additionally, 94 percent of employees would stay longer at a company if it invested in staff development.”

Why Self-Assessment Matters for Professionals

Self-assessment is a subset of self-awareness. Self-awareness is a key skill for personal and professional growth

Self-assessment is the cornerstone of effective professional development. It provides a clear understanding of your starting point and illuminates the path towards your goals. Here's why it's particularly important for professionals:

- ▶ **Maintaining Professional Standards:** Many regulated professions, such as law, accounting, and banking, require professionals to maintain their competence through ongoing learning. Self-assessment helps identify areas where development is needed to meet these standards set by professional bodies like the Law Society, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), or the Chartered Banker Institute (CBI). Outside of these professions, the foundation of success is built on a foundation of learning and growth.
- ▶ **Career Advancement:** Identifying skills gaps and proactively addressing them positions you for career progression. Whether you aspire to a promotion, a new role, or greater responsibilities, targeted development based on self-assessment makes you a stronger candidate.
- ▶ **Adapting to Change:** The economic and professional landscape is constantly evolving due to technological advancements, regulatory changes, and global trends. Regularly assessing your skills ensures you remain adaptable and relevant in your field. Professional bodies often provide insights into emerging trends and required skills within their sectors.
- ▶ **Enhanced Performance and Productivity:** Addressing your learning needs can lead to improved performance in your current role. Acquiring new skills and refining existing ones can boost efficiency, problem-solving abilities, and overall contribution to your organisation.
- ▶ **Increased Confidence and Job Satisfaction:** Feeling competent and capable in your role contributes significantly to job satisfaction and overall well-being. Self-directed learning empowers you and fosters a sense of control over your professional journey.
- ▶ **Personalised Development:** Unlike generic training programs, self-assessment allows you to tailor your learning to your specific needs, learning style, and career objectives. Making the development process more effective and engaging.

By recognising these benefits, you can approach self-assessment not as a task, but as a valuable opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Methods for Identifying Your Learning and Development Needs

There are various methods you can employ to effectively identify your learning and development needs. A combination of these approaches often provides the most comprehensive understanding and insight.

- ▶ **Self-Reflection:** This involves consciously thinking about your current role, responsibilities, performance, and career aspirations. Ask yourself:
 - What are my strengths and development areas in my current role?
 - What tasks do I find challenging or less enjoyable (you might find yourself avoiding these things)?
 - Where do I feel less confident in my abilities?
 - What are my short-term and long-term career goals?
 - What new skills, knowledge and experience would help me achieve these goals?
 - Are there any areas where I consistently receive feedback for improvement?
- ▶ **Performance Appraisals and Feedback:** Your employer's performance appraisal process is a valuable source of information. Review past appraisals, paying attention to areas identified for development. Seek regular feedback from your manager, colleagues, and clients. Constructive feedback can highlight blind spots and areas needing your attention.
- ▶ **Job Description and Personal Specification:** Revisit your current job description and any relevant personal specifications and competency or behavioural frameworks you have in place. Identify any skills or knowledge listed that you don't currently possess or need to strengthen. Also, consider future roles you might be interested in and analyse their requirements.
- ▶ **Skills Gap Analysis:** This involves comparing your current skills and knowledge against the requirements of your current or desired roles. Create a matrix or list of essential competencies and honestly assess your proficiency in each. Identify the gaps that need to be addressed through learning and development. We have given you examples on pages 14 to 17

- ▶ **Professional Standards and Competency Frameworks:** Many professional bodies provide detailed competency frameworks that outline the skills, knowledge, and behaviours expected of professionals at different stages of their careers. Examples include the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) standards of proficiency or the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Profession Map. Reviewing these frameworks can help you identify areas where your skills may fall short of the expected standards.
- ▶ **Networking and Industry Insights:** Engaging with other professionals in your field through networking events, online forums, or professional associations can provide valuable insights into emerging skills and industry trends. Pay attention to discussions about future challenges and required competencies.
- ▶ **Training and Development Records:** Review any previous training or development activities you have undertaken. Consider whether the learning outcomes were fully achieved and if any follow-up development is required.
- ▶ **Focus on your passion and what excites you:** If you have a specific passion, or are deeply interested in a specific area, this can be an indicator of an area for growth. You might know doing something you really care about is far easier than something you find challenging. Note – we can't *just* focus on what we love, there is a richness of learning in exploring new and challenging areas too.
- ▶ **SWOT Analysis (Personal):** Adapting the business tool, conduct your personal SWOT analysis:
 - **Strengths:** What are your key skills and advantages?
 - **Weaknesses:** What are your areas for improvement?
 - **Opportunities:** What external trends or changes could benefit you if you develop certain skills?
 - **Threats:** What external factors could hinder your progress if you don't address certain skill gaps?

By employing a combination of these methods, you can build a comprehensive picture of your learning and development needs. Again, you find an example and blank version for you to complete on pages 18 and 19.

Leveraging Professional Sources of Information and Guidance

Professionals have access to a wealth of resources provided by professional bodies and other organisations. These sources can offer invaluable guidance in assessing your learning and development needs and planning your professional growth:

- **Professional Membership Bodies:** Joining a relevant professional body in your field provides access to a range of resources, including:
 - **Competency Frameworks and Standards:** As mentioned earlier, these frameworks clearly outline the expected skills and knowledge for professionals in that sector.
 - **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Requirements:** Many bodies mandate CPD and provide guidance on what constitutes appropriate development activities. They may also offer tools and templates for recording CPD. For instance, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has a CPD framework for its members, and the Law Society has a range of guidance in all practice areas for lawyers and legal practitioners.
 - **Mentoring Schemes:** Some professional bodies offer mentoring programs that can provide guidance and support in identifying development needs and planning your career. It's worth exploring mentors both from within your organisation and those outside.
 - **Training and Development Resources:** Many bodies offer their own training courses, workshops, and online resources tailored to the specific needs of their members.
 - **Publications and Research:** Journals, reports, and research publications from professional bodies often highlight emerging trends and required skills in the industry.
 - **Career Development Advice:** Some bodies provide career counselling and advice on professional development pathways.
- **Online Learning Platforms:** Numerous online platforms (e.g., New Results and LinkedIn Learning) offer courses developed by reputable institutions and industry experts, catering to a wide range of professional development needs. When selecting online resources, consider their credibility and relevance to your professional standards.

When using these resources, consider the following:

- **Relevance:** Ensure the information and guidance are specific to your profession and personal context.
- **Credibility:** Prioritise information from reputable professional bodies and recognised institutions.
- **Timeliness:** Look for up-to-date resources that reflect current industry trends and regulations.
- **Alignment:** Ensure everything you explore is aligned with your personal development needs.

By actively engaging with these professional sources, you can gain valuable insights and support in your self-assessment process.

Developing Your Personal Learning and Development Plan

Once you have a clear understanding of your learning and development needs, the next crucial step is to create a personal L&D plan (see the sample and your own version to complete on pages 20 and 21). This plan acts as a roadmap for your professional growth. Here are the key components of an effective L&D plan:

- ▶ **Clearly Defined Goals:** Based on your self-assessment, articulate Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals. For example, instead of "improve my communication skills," a SMART goal would be "Complete a 2-day advanced presentation workshop by the end of Q3 and deliver one internal presentation to my team with positive feedback on clarity and engagement."
- ▶ **Identified Development Activities:** For each goal, outline the specific activities you will undertake to achieve it. These could include:
 - Formal training courses or workshops
 - Online learning modules
 - Mentoring or coaching
 - Reading relevant books or articles
 - Attending conferences or seminars
 - Reading White papers and research
 - Taking on new responsibilities or projects
 - Reading Blogs and listening to podcasts
 - Job shadowing
 - Attending networking events
- ▶ **Timelines and Deadlines:** Set realistic timelines (ensure these aren't too stretching, and aren't too easy, put in a healthy dose of stretch) for completing each development activity and achieving your goals. This will help you stay focused and accountable.
- ▶ **Resources Required:** Identify any resources you will need, such as funding for training, access to online platforms, or support from your employer or mentor. Make sure you discuss this with someone you trust to help give you a rounded perspective.

- ▶ **Methods for Measuring Progress:** Determine how you will track your progress towards your goals. This could involve:
 - Completion certificates for training courses
 - Feedback from colleagues, mentor, coach or managers
 - Self-reflection on new skills applied
 - Tangible outcomes from new responsibilities
- ▶ **Alignment with Career Aspirations:** Ensure your L&D plan directly supports your short-term and long-term career goals. Regularly review this alignment to ensure your development efforts remain relevant.

Note – Link your goals and motivators to what you are trying to achieve. It's easier to get started, make progress and complete a task when you are clear about how it links to your personal motivation and values.

Example L&D Goal and Activities:

Goal: Enhance my stakeholder management and engagement skills to confidently lead cross-department projects within the next 12 months.

Activities:

1. **Month 1-3:** Complete an online introductory stakeholder mapping course. Create my own stakeholder maps.
2. **Month 4-6:** Shadow a senior manager on a current cross-department project within my organisation. Review my stakeholder map with them discussing impact and engagement for all of the key stakeholder groups identified.
3. **Month 7-9:** Agree to lead an internal project. Have a plan to debrief your success and what challenges you had.
4. **Month 10-12:** Seek feedback from your senior team and your manager on your stakeholder management and engagement.

Your L&D plan should be a living document that you revisit and update regularly as your needs and circumstances evolve.

Implementing and Reviewing Your Learning and Development Plan

Developing a plan is only the first step. Effective implementation and regular review are crucial for its success.

Taking Action: Once your plan is in place, commit to the activities you have outlined. Schedule time for learning and development, just as you would for any other important work task. Be proactive in seeking out opportunities for growth.

Seek accountability: Coaches, mentors, managers and leaders can support you by checking in and supporting your activity. They can also identify blind spots, both in the things you are doing well and other areas where you have scope to improve.

Seeking Support: Don't hesitate to seek support from your manager, HR department, or mentor. They may be able to provide resources, guidance, or opportunities to facilitate your development. Discuss your L&D plan with your manager during performance reviews to ensure alignment with organisational goals.

Staying Motivated: Maintaining motivation can be challenging. Break down larger goals into smaller, more manageable steps. Celebrate your achievements along the way. Connect with other professionals who are also focused on their development for mutual support and encouragement.

Tracking Your Progress: Regularly monitor your progress against your L&D plan. Keep records of your learning activities, outcomes, and any feedback received. This will help you stay on track and identify any areas where you may need to adjust your approach.

Reflecting on Your Learning: After completing a learning activity, take time to reflect on what you have learned and how you can apply it in your role. Consider what went well and what could have been done differently. This reflective practice enhances the learning process and helps you internalise new knowledge and skills.

Regular Review and Update: Your learning and development needs are not static. As your career progresses, your role changes, and the industry evolves, your needs will also change. Schedule regular reviews of your L&D plan (e.g., quarterly or bi-annually) to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with your goals. Consider:

- Have your initial goals been achieved?
- Have new development needs emerged?
- Are your current activities still the most effective way to address your needs?
- Do your goals still align with your career aspirations?

Be prepared to adapt your plan as necessary. Flexibility is key to continuous professional development.

NOTE – Celebrate the wins! It's too easy to miss how much you have achieved. Make a note of your successes, note down the positive feedback and keep a clear record of what you have achieved. These notes and feedback will help you keep on track on the challenging days and weeks.

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

Alvin Toffler

“We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.”

Peter Drucker

Conclusion - Embracing Lifelong Learning

Assessing your learning and development needs is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that is integral to a successful and fulfilling professional career. By taking a proactive and systematic approach to self-assessment, you can identify opportunities for growth, enhance your skills and knowledge, and stay ahead in a dynamic environment.

Remember to leverage the wealth of resources available from professional bodies, industry organisations, and educational institutions. Develop a clear and actionable L&D plan, commit to its implementation, and regularly review and update it to ensure its continued relevance.

Embracing a mindset of lifelong learning is essential for navigating the complexities of the modern workplace and achieving your full potential. By continuously investing in your development, you are not only benefiting your own career but also contributing to the growth and success of your organisation and the wider professional community.

Take ownership of your professional journey, embrace the process of self-assessment, and enjoy the rewards of continuous learning and development. Your commitment to growth will be your greatest asset in the years to come.

I wish you every success in your lifelong learning journey.

You have made a positive step forward by reading this document, you now need to take the next step and take action!

Skills Gap Analysis - example

Example

Skill	Novice/ Beginner	Intermediate/ Capable	Advanced/ Competent	Expert/ Proficient	Notes / Why
Accountability		X			Struggled with accountability on last project
Coaching				X	Trained coaches, and regularly coach others
Communications			X		Get positive feedback on communications and realise I still have space to grow
Conflict resolution	X				I AVOID CONFLICT – need to deal with this
Courageous conversations		X			Links to the above point – I tend to avoid these
Decision making		X			My decision making is ok, I could do with more tools and skills in this area
Emotional intelligence			X		I do well in this space (specific feedback from the team) and I would like to develop this further
Evidential feedback				X	I can identify and capture specific example to use in my coaching

Skill	Novice/ Beginner	Intermediate/ Capable	Advanced/ Competent	Expert/ Proficient	Notes / Why
Influence and persuasion		x			Links to conflict and courageous conversation. I need to improve the way I influence my key stakeholders
Innovation and creativity			x		I don't have lots of scope for innovation, and feel I could benefit with new approaches
Leading change				x	I have lots of experience in this space and have been described as "the go to person for dealing with change"
Managing change				x	Managed both the process and people through significant change in this role and past. Consistently get great feedback on this.
Negotiations		x			I am being exposed to more suppliers and I need to improve how I negotiate with them, also internal negotiations need to improve
Problem solving			x		I tend to rely on one or two methods, and I could do with broadening my outlook especially on strategic problem solving
Horizon scanning		x			I feel I need to do better thinking strategically rather operationally

Assessing Your Learning and Development Needs

Skill	Novice/ Beginner	Intermediate/ Capable	Advanced/ Competent	Expert/ Proficient	Notes / Why
Resilience				X	This is part of my change experience, I understand what resilience is, how I build and maintain it.
Strategic planning			X		I haven't had the chance to lead any strategic projects and it is a long time since I used my strategic planning skills
Strategic thinking			X		I have just started to be involved with a strategic project, and it's clear I don't have a broad enough view (I have been given feedback that I think too operationally)
Tech literacy	X				This scares me, I feel like I am being left behind. Need to bring myself up to speed on this.
Time / self management			X		I am efficient and effective in my role, and I think I need to improve to make sure there is nothing I am missing.
Trust		X			I need to explore how I build trust with all of our stakeholders. I am generally good at this, but I know I have some blind spots with some of our key stakeholders

Your template:

Skill	Novice/ Beginner	Intermediate/ Capable	Advanced/ Competent	Expert/ Proficient	Notes / Why

Skill	Novice/ Beginner	Intermediate/ Capable	Advanced/ Competent	Expert/ Proficient	Notes / Why

SWOT Analysis (Personal): Adapting the business tool, conduct a personal SWOT analysis:

- Strengths: What are your key skills and advantages?
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- Opportunities: What external trends or changes could benefit you if you develop certain skills?
- Threats: What external factors could hinder your progress if you don't address certain skill gaps?

Example

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Ability to lead in periods of change.</p> <p>Deep management experience.</p> <p>Trained as a coach and trained others in coaching techniques.</p>	<p>Weakness:</p> <p>Struggle when dealing with conflict and tend to avoid conflict.</p> <p>Communication skills, especially technical writing.</p>
External origin	<p>Opportunities:</p> <p>A new team gives me an opportunity to refresh and develop coaching skills.</p> <p>Ongoing coaching, taking in specific feedback (especially around my own blind spots).</p> <p>Seeking a mentor to give me more specific commercial knowledge.</p>	<p>Threats:</p> <p>Stable period, so no opportunity to use change skills.</p> <p>External IT factors (AI) and new technology, I am less familiar and comfortable with these.</p>

Your template

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	Strengths:	Weakness:
External origin	Opportunities:	Threats:

Developing Your Personal Learning and Development Plan - Example

Example:

Learning goal / desired outcome	Types of development needed	Support and additional learning from:	Timeline	Who is involved and responsible	Notes	Reflections on completion
Trust – improve trust between me and all teams and three major stakeholders.	Training in trust. Coaching on specific feedback received.	Trust video from Charles H Green. Read “Speed of Trust” Steven Covey.	Training by end of Q2. Read both books (and create my own notes by Q3).	Me and my coach.	This is an area that I need to focus on, based on recent and consistent feedback.	
Accountability – focus on being accountable for all decisions I make.	Attend online webinar on accountability and complete eLearning course on accountability.	TED talks on accountability.	Complete by end of Q3.	Me.		
Conflict resolution – learn to deal with conflict more effectively (not just avoiding it).	Attend training course on conflict resolution.	Make a note of specific examples and discuss them with my coach.	Complete by end of Q3. Review with coach for remainder of year.	Me and my coach.	I tend to avoid conflict. I need more tools to deal with each situation and individual appropriately.	

Your template

Learning goal / desired outcome	Types of development needed	Support and additional learning from:	Timeline	Who is involved and responsible	Notes	Reflections on completion

Your reflections and actions

What will do as a result of reading this resource?

Action	When	How will I know / how will others see this?
Things I need to start to do...		
Things I need to stop doing...		
Things I need to continue doing...		

A Little More About Us (and how we can help you)

We are New Results

A comprehensive training agency committed to supporting you and your teams on your professional development journey. By focusing on your own unique learning needs, we aim to unlock your teams strategic potential. Our expertise spans across:

- ▶ Leadership & Management Development.
- ▶ Personal & Professional Growth and Development.
- ▶ Business Growth Strategy and Operational Development.

How we work with you

Our services are flexible, dynamic, and also partnership focused to be aligned with your unique needs. Whether it's through direct programme delivery, enhancing your internal training programmes or offering licensable content for your platforms. We're here to adapt and grow alongside you as a committed learning partner.

Learn more

If you're interested in learning more about New Results and how we can help you, please visit our website: www.newresults.co.uk . Or explore our client testimonials and case studies – [New Results Case Studies](#).



Assessing Your Learning and Development Needs



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