

**City Administrator**  
**Professional Development Plan 2017**  
Reviewed by City Council on December 13, 2016

**Areas of Focus**

The following areas of focus reflect specific areas of development identified in the *CheckPoint* 360 assessment feedback tool. The individual development plan is attached and it identifies specific challenges that I, as City Administrator, can undertake to address those issues.

**Thinking Creatively**

- Approach job with imagination and originality
- Inspire innovation in the organization
- Be willing to take bold, calculated risks
- View obstacles as opportunities for creative change

**Leadership**

- Seek leadership positions in regional, state, and national organizations

**Communicating Effectively**

- Express thoughts clearly in writing
- Become an effective, articulate speaker
- Cover issues thoroughly without overdoing it
- Communicating in a straightforward manner - Even when dealing with sensitive subjects
- Continue to provide regular and timely updates to the City Council (“before it hits the news” standard).
- Create and implement a City Communications Plan, seek feedback from City Council and other stakeholders as to improvements
- Improve City’s communication with residents
- Provide regular Strategic Plan updates, as part of Council agenda.
- Create a City-wide communication event to pull together community leaders in a common mission

**Providing Direction**

- Make expectations clear
- Establish a manageable and equitable workload
- Accomplish long-term objectives by planning incremental steps
- Focus on the overall mission while implementing details

**Staff Development**

- Develop a training and development plan for employees that can be consistently applied across the organization

## **CheckPoint 360: Individual Development Guide**

### **Area of Focus: Communicating Effectively**

#### **Expressing Thoughts Clearly in Writing**

##### **Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Ask yourself before writing a memo or letter, "What is the purpose of this communication?" View it from the reader's perspective. "What does the reader need to know? What do they already know? What can you tell them?"
- Outline the important information you wish to convey. Organize information in a logical, easy to follow manner. Omit unnecessary details and get to the point.
- To communicate clearly and effectively, use simple and concise language. Author written communication by writing as if you were speaking with recipients.
- Explain in written communication the actions and follow-up required of others. Do not use indeterminate language such as 'sort of,' 'rather,' 'somewhat,' etc.
- Email is a quick, informal means of communication, but the usual rules of grammar, punctuation, and style still apply. Email is every bit as important as other communications in establishing credibility. Even email with a peer could be distributed to others in the company.

##### **Challenging Activities**

- Volunteer for a writing assignment, such as a company newsletter. Ask a talented writer to edit your writing, and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Email is becoming more common as a communication tool. Learn to write powerful introductions and subject lines. State your message clearly and concisely, and keep supporting information relevant to the topic.

#### **Being an Effective, Articulate Speaker**

##### **Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Strive for conversational, dynamic delivery. Avoid stiff, formal presentations. Become animated, when appropriate. Use gestures and body language to emphasize your communication efforts.
- Always thoroughly prepare and practice before each presentation.
- Know your audience and their stake in the information you present to them. Consider what the audience needs to know, what they want to know, and why they need to know it. One technique is to ask participants what they hope to learn from your presentation.
- Be direct and assertive when presenting your opinions. Avoid phrases that can lessen the impact of what you say, such as 'It seems to be,' 'It is likely,' or 'It depends.'
- Use practical examples to support key points, if appropriate. Audiences are often eager to hear interesting stories.
- Ask others for feedback to check if the content, delivery, and tone of your presentation was appropriate and well-received.

## Challenging Activities

- Consider joining organizations that offer the opportunity for you to speak in front of others. Active participation in local clubs can help polish your speaking skills.
- The audience can become visually overwhelmed with too many bullet points and sub-points. Limit visuals to no more than ten per topic. Review recent presentations and note the ten visuals that present the most important points. Add variety by presenting further information on flipcharts or handouts. Visuals should focus attention, reinforce key messages, stimulate interest, and illustrate points that are difficult to visualize.

## Covering Issues Thoroughly without Overdoing It Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice

- Never tell your audience more than they need to hear. Analyzing your audience in advance will help establish how much information is required. Do not become so enthusiastic about the topic that you tell them everything you know about it.
- Be succinct. You can lose your audience's attention with too much data and too many stories. Apply the "Rule of Three:" identify three important points you want to convey and support each point with three pieces of evidence. Consider introducing the topic with a strong delivery, and closing the presentation with a call to action.
- Limit your response to a question to a minute or less. If a participant asks an unrelated question, assure them you will address the issue later. Return quickly to the subject and follow your outline. If you stray off-topic, apologize, and return back to the important topic as soon as possible.

## Challenging Activities

- George Bernard Shaw said, "If you teach a person everything, they will not learn." Before sharing information, ask yourself, "What do I need to share with this person? If I could only share one piece of information about this topic, what would it be?" Repeat this for all topics in the presentation. This could produce a succinct and successful presentation.
- Before meeting with a group to discuss an issue, conduct a thorough analysis of your audience. Answer the questions below before preparing your presentation.
  - Who will be present? How does this issue affect them?
  - What do they need to know?
  - How much do they already know about this subject?
  - What types of examples, stories, or illustrations could interest them or offend them?
  - How can I present information most efficiently?

## Communicating in a Straightforward Manner - Even when Dealing with Sensitive Subjects

### Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice

- Communicating in sensitive situations can be difficult if you do not already regularly communicate with your direct reports.

- When asked questions in challenging and sensitive situations, give honest and complete answers. Answering evasively damages your credibility and perceptions of your integrity. If you are unable to answer a question fully, state your reasons, and talk about the areas of concern that you can address.
- Do not procrastinate or be evasive when you must communicate negative information. Remain sensitive, yet direct.
- Recognize that your ability to receive feedback is as important as your ability to give feedback.
- Have the professionalism and courage to say what you need to say. However, be compassionate and speak sincerely. In sensitive situations, act the way you would want others to act with you.

### **Challenging Activities**

After dealing with a sensitive matter, rate yourself on the following:

- Introduced the sensitive topic in a caring, but direct manner
- Listened compassionately while the other person stated an opinion
- Accepted the other person's perceptions as valid
- Used good questioning skills to sort through the person's perceptions about the situation
- Exhibited patience while the other person spoke, then worked through the situation
- Took time to think before responding too quickly
- Defused any tension surrounding the situation
- Upheld your credibility, integrity, and trustworthiness

### **Making Current Job-Related Information Available to Others Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Believe the research: informed employees are motivated employees; motivated employees are engaged and productive employees.
- Recognize the difference between the attitudes 'information is power - hoard it' versus 'information empowers – share it around as widely as possible.' Be forthcoming with information that can make others more effective.
- Realize that what you and your management colleagues take for common knowledge, e.g. how things are going, what challenges are down the road or what new products are coming may not be known to your team. Inform them as soon as it is appropriate to do so.
- Provide continual feedback on how the organization and department are doing – and what part every team member can play in helping you to do even better.
- Make sure every single team member knows these four basics: (1) Your business focus: what you're in business to achieve, (2) Your target market: your ideal customer, (3) What performance is expected of them, (4) How their performance will be measured.
- Share good news – positivity and optimism is infectious.
- Share bad news quickly and explain how you're managing negative situations. Rumors are always worse than reality.

### **Challenging Activities**

- Create a weekly blog post from every department head outlining the key news and information for the week.

- Use social media to send daily or weekly updates — short, concise reminders of what employees need to focus to reach the organization's goals.
- Schedule a regular team meeting that includes formal sharing of all relevant company news, updates and information.
- Share useful articles and blog posts on anything related to the organization or your industry.
- Create update alerts for all key aspects of your business and industry and share the results of these alerts with your team.
- Create a schedule of one-on-one meetings for each member of your team and use those meetings to share updates and solicit news and updates from their perspective.

## **Area of Focus: Providing Direction**

### **Making Expectations Clear**

#### **Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Make all expectations known. Clearly communicate goals and objectives and the rationale of your vision, mission, and strategies. Spell out the expectations of your customers.
- Clarify each of your direct report's responsibilities for accomplishing objectives. Explain and answer questions until expectations are perfectly clear. Meet at least once every quarter with your direct reports to discuss performance and goals for the upcoming quarter.
- Clarify the standards or guidelines you will use to evaluate performance. Identify what is important to you (the results you expect), including how the direct reports meet ethical standards.
- Clearly communicate policies, procedures, and guidelines, as well as priorities and timelines.
- Develop job descriptions that are distinct and specific. Involve your direct reports in constructing job descriptions.
- Provide timely, concise feedback about performance, as measured against expectations.

#### **Challenging Activities**

- Meet with those direct reports who may need you to clarify your expectations. Ask them to provide helpful and specific methods for making expectations clear.
- When delegating tasks and assignments, use a delegation checklist to clarify your expectations.
  1. Describe the task and the results expected;
  2. Agree on standards of performance and timetables;
  3. Determine training needs, and training schedules;
  4. State the amount and frequency of feedback expected;
  5. Define parameters and resources, including budgets; and
  6. Tell others who is in charge of the assignment.

### **Establishing a Manageable Workload**

#### **Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Make known your commitment to working with your direct reports to establish and maintain manageable workloads.
- Distribute responsibilities so that all task functions are covered and there is not duplication of effort. Keep the workload for each direct report challenging and fair. Redirect work that has not been as productive as planned. Celebrate the elimination of all unnecessary tasks.

- Conduct a brief meeting to discuss workload, priorities, or topics that are affecting the output of your work unit. Discuss problems with assignments and explore solutions.
- When analyzing a person's workload, ask yourself if the task they are performing is a requirement for success. Some direct reports may expand their job by taking on tasks they enjoy, but may not be necessary to achieving the work unit's goals and objectives.
- Have the managerial courage to set priorities. Someone must take the step and lead when multiple priorities are to be accomplished.

### **Challenging Activities**

Brainstorm with your work unit the following areas for solutions to establishing manageable workloads. Initiate a Development Plan to correct, if applicable.

- Combine activities or tasks performed by more than one person or one group.
- Identify the work unit's internal and external customers, the activities not directly related to meeting customers' needs, and ways to eliminate or reduce time spent on these tasks.
- Identify your work unit's goals and objectives. Identify activities not directly related to meeting these goals and objectives and ways to eliminate these tasks.
- Identify performance problems of some direct reports that affect the workload of others.
- Determine ways to more evenly distribute the workload.

### **Accomplishing Long-Term Objectives by Planning Incremental Steps Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Discipline yourself to take the time to plan. Initial planning will reduce the time needed for rework at the end of the project.
- Establish long and short-term goals that are consistent with your work unit and organization's mission. Divide objectives by quarter and then by month. Use the objectives document in all work unit meetings. Be prepared to modify the plan if necessary.
- Communicate your work unit's goals and objectives clearly. Encourage your team to share suggestions for improving the process of dividing objectives into incremental steps.
- Set definite deadlines for accomplishment of incremental objectives. Hold your direct reports accountable for meeting those deadlines.
- Review the progress made toward completing your objectives on a regular basis. Meet at least once every quarter with your direct reports to discuss performance and goals for the upcoming quarter.
- When dividing your plan into incremental steps, translate the steps into responsibilities. Direct reports who clearly understand their responsibilities are more likely to complete tasks efficiently.

### **Challenging Activities**

- Create a communication board, where the status of long-term objectives can be clearly viewed. Use a color-coding system by placing appropriate colors next to a step, allowing others to see the progress.
- Conduct annual off-site meetings with your direct reports to discuss performance in the past year and goals for the coming year.

## **Focusing on the Overall Mission while Implementing Details**

### **Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Review your organization's strategic plan. Identify your work unit's role in accomplishing the plan. Make sure everyone understands and feels a part of the organization's mission. Never pass up an opportunity to share how the work being performed links to the overall mission.
- With your direct reports, review the work unit's operational plan. When your direct reports have ideas that help achieve your objectives, let them champion those ideas.
- Celebrate the accomplishment of incremental steps and details. Your team is more likely to stay focused on the details if they know you care and that their success is the organization's success.
- At least once a month, review goals and objectives so that all direct reports understand the target. Have team members report their individual status, ultimately shaping a comprehensive view of the group effort.
- Think about delegation when working on the details of a project. Are there activities you should do yourself or can certain details be delegated to someone else?

### **Challenging Activities**

- Write down your interpretation of the overall mission. Meet with your manager to check your understanding. Confirm that both interpretations are consistent.
- Attend meetings that keep you informed of the company's progress toward achieving the overall strategic plan. Report to your team on the company's progress.

## **Area of Focus: Thinking Creatively**

### **Approaching Your Job with Imagination and Originality**

#### **Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Do not get too comfortable with the status quo. Constantly look for new opportunities and improved ways of doing business.
- Imagination and originality do not exist without knowledge gain. Knowledge growth is essential to nurture the intellect. It is the desire to learn that fuels your creative drive.
- Using imagination and originality consists of organizing existing elements into new and different ways to produce the desired outcome. The most valuable solutions can result when you pay attention to even the smallest ideas.
- Remember that your direct reports make things happen. Give them the creative freedom, as well as the resources they need, to meet your expectations. Do not hamper their creativity by constantly intervening.

### **Challenging Activities**

- Create an Imagination and Originality File. When you think of something creative regarding a problem or issue, record it. Consider any original, creative idea a possibility.
- Discourage direct reports from responding to suggestions that may belittle others for offering a creative solution. Statements that may prevent others from volunteering their ideas include:
  - *It will never work.*
  - *We explored that option ten years ago.*
  - *We're too short-handed to work on crazy ideas.*

- *It is not in the business plan.*
- *Interesting. Let's see what organizational leadership thinks about it.*
- *That is the most idiotic thing I've ever heard.*

## Inspiring Innovation in the Organization

### Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice

- Encourage others to contribute ideas. Fully consider an idea's merit before evaluating its drawbacks. Reward all ideas and make sure to explore and evaluate the best ideas.
- Give recognition to direct reports, peers and your manager when they suggest innovations that make a positive impact on the organization.
- Set aside all restrictions, policies, and established processes at the outset of a creative problem solving meeting. Let ideas flow freely, unlimited by boundaries. Avoid references to how things have traditionally been done.
- Encourage your direct reports to use intuition and curiosity in all aspects of problem-solving. Provide resources, time and support. Ask your direct reports what they need to be innovative and provide it to them. Encourage the use of tools to improve innovation, such as books, courses, and brainstorming sessions.
- Do not expect commitment from your direct reports if you persist in controlling instead of empowering.
- Express your commitment to innovation, convey expectations clearly, and follow through with action.
- Most important of the creative skills is the ability to ask questions. Failing to ask questions promotes stagnancy. Ask questions relevant to your objectives such as: "Who, What, When, Where, Why, Which, How, and Will it improve things?"

### Challenging Activities

Determine your tendency to accept innovation by choosing a few of the following statements, then working on those you feel should be strengthened in your attitudes and behaviors:

- I encourage individual freedom. I am empowering and trusting.
- I am open to risk and tolerant of failure.
- I encourage innovation.
- I use a program of rewards and recognition for innovation.
- I hire enterprising, talented people.
- I encourage sharing information across all departments of the company.

## Being Willing to Take Bold, Calculated Risks

### Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice

- Realize that actions with the greatest potential benefits usually carry some risks. To achieve optimum long-term results, taking risks is necessary.
- Analyze risks and realistically determine worst-case scenarios. Determine ways to reduce risks without completely avoiding them.
- Accept the occasional failures that are bound to occur when you promote innovation. Promote the idea that certain amounts of risk must be accepted if there is to be innovation and prosperity.

- Without risk-taking, innovation and creativity are stifled. Effective leaders recognize that it takes time and patience to create an environment where failure is viewed as a common risk of aggressive innovation.
- Terminating or relocating people involved in failed projects sends the message that one should avoid risk-taking. Accept mistakes as an expected risk of the creative and innovative process.

### **Challenging Activities**

Before taking risks, follow these guidelines to minimize the chance of failure:

1. Clarify the objective associated with the risk.
2. Organize and evaluate basic alternatives.
3. Assess your risk-taking tendencies.
4. Develop a strategy for change.
5. Select a decision process.
6. Gather information and explore the risk.
7. Overcome barriers.
8. Take action and evaluate the outcome, then follow-up.

### **Viewing Obstacles as Opportunities for Creative Change Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes to Adapt and Practice**

- Stay positive. A problem may redirect a course of action for the better.
- View an obstacle as an opportunity to find a new approach. You are in a much better position to create or improve methods when the current ones are not working.
- View obstacles as a challenging puzzle. Realize that several workable solutions probably exist.
- View a dilemma from multiple angles. Step out of your role and look at the problem from an entirely different perspective.
- Use failures as learning experiences.
- Think positively with an attitude that anticipates success. Remind yourself that if the task were easy to solve, it would not be a challenge or an opportunity for innovation.

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