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# Project YOU – Part II

## Personal Development Plan Guide

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Created by Lyndsay Swinton for [Management For The Rest Of Us](#)

In conjunction with Project YOU Part I – [Goal Setting Guide](#)

If you would like to provide this guide as a download from your own website, please contact  
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## So just what is ‘personal development’?

If your **personal resources**

don't match

your **goals** and **ambitions,**

it's time for some...

**personal development**

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## About the author Lyndsay Swinton



Lyndsay Swinton is an experienced **people manager** and **team leader**. She has earned her spurs in a variety of management environments, from factory floor to tech teams.

Having graduated with a **first class honours** engineering degree from **Strathclyde University** in Glasgow, Scotland, Lyndsay completed the **Guinness Graduate Training Scheme**, designed to get green graduates up to speed fast. Several years, and two blue chip companies later, Lyndsay has gained wide practical experience of people management and motivation.

Grass roots experience was earned managing **The Body Shop** production floor, study was done at top colleges including **Ashridge** and **Uncommon Knowledge**, and most recently experience gained working in a complex matrix environment, crossing international boundaries in **American Express**.

Lyndsay has **received formal recognition for her leadership abilities**, ranked highly against her peers at annual appraisals and most importantly regularly receives **glowing feedback from her team** about her human approach to management. Much of her learning comes from having made her **fair share of mistakes** and being on the receiving end of some very poor management.

She loves to help others **fulfill their potential**, and gains no greater satisfaction than seeing a team member surprise themselves with their abilities.

## Solid foundations

This guide is based on proven personal development processes used in large organizations, adapted to suit you on an individual level. It is to be used in conjunction with the Project YOU [Goal Setting process](#).

### How to use this guide

1. Make sure you have **completed** Project YOU part I – the [Goal setting guide](#)
2. Set aside 20 minutes and settle down with a drink of something **nice**. 😊  
(If you have already done the goal setting guide you will notice a theme appearing here.)
3. Read through the whole guide and then
  - a. Develop the **focus** of your personal development
  - b. Use the planning template to make your aims **concrete**
  - c. Learn about how and when to **review** and **implement** your plan.

## Making dreams into reality

Most of us have dreams or ambitions, or at least **used** to! Successful people translate those dreams into **reality**. How **do** they do that?

It is accepted that writing down sound **goals** helps you cross over from dreams to reality. So what do you do if you maybe lack a **skill** or are a little **under-confident** about achieving something?

That's where personal development planning comes in.

OK, so what is 'Personal Development Planning' then? Like so many buzz-words, it's easy to lose sight of the **real** meaning. Lets look at what the individual words mean:

**Personal** – individual, own, special

It's common for people to get into the "personal" part and seek to better **understand** themselves, their motivations, **why** they are **where** they are. We all like to think about ourselves and indeed there are a plethora of counsellors and psychologists happy to help you on that journey of self discovery. The 'cut to the chase' question here is: "Do I want to know **why**, or do I want to **develop**?" Time is short – choose one and move forward.

## **Development** – growth, improvement, advancement

As the saying goes, you don't drive your car by looking in the rear view mirror, so why take that approach with your life? **Development** comes through knowing what you want to **learn** or change, what you need to **do** to achieve that and how you will **know** when you have arrived.

## **Planning** – structured preparation, ground-work, scheduling

And finally "planning", the not-so-glamorous part that most people do **anything** to avoid. This is the nitty gritty of booking that **course**, making an appointment to see that **specialist** or completing some other **task** that will improve the quality of your life. Why do we avoid it, when the **benefits** are so great?

It's common for people to have a 'mental block' when it comes to solving problems about **themselves**. Give them a room to decorate, a work project to complete or someone else's problem to solve and they are **great**.

What is usually missing is the **objectivity** and emotional **detachment** to transfer those skills for use on yourself. This guide will help you gain that...

## The 10,000 foot view

This is how the Project You Personal Development process goes together. Reading this will give you a map of the process:

1. Do some groundwork to create a **focus** for your personal development.
2. Create a **draft** development plan by following the seven step process later in the planner.
3. **Revise** the draft plan into a **final** development plan.
4. **Implement** the plan with assistance from the resources you identified.
5. **Evaluate** your progress and **revise** your plan as needed.

Now we'll go into these 5 phases in a bit more detail...

## Phase 1 – What's Your Focus?

### Where are you going?

After completing the [Goal Setting Guide](#) you may have started this process with something **specific** in mind, or as a more **general** personal development process. Either way, now is the time to consider where you are headed. What is it that you want to **achieve**?

In large organizations and companies, the personal development process is usually linked to **goals** because this makes personal development easier.

Goals are “**what**” you have to do, and it’s “**how**” you go about achieving them that we’re focusing on here. For example, if one of your personal goals is to raise **healthy**, happy children on a fixed **budget**, it will be useful to keep this goal in mind when you look at your personal development needs. You may be



doing well on the **children** front while your **bank statement** is telling you that you have some 'improvement opportunities' 😊.

Buying those educational books helped your kids with their homework, but they could have come from the library instead of the pricey book-store. So, in this case your personal development **focus** would be on **financial management**!

### **New skills or old?**

Generally your development areas will fall into two categories; building on **existing** strengths and developing **new** skills or competencies. In the previous example, your **strength** was helping your children and your **gap** was your financial management ability. You want to continue bringing up your children in the same way, and do something different financially so you meet your monthly budget.

build on **existing** skills and  
**develop new** skills or competencies

### **Where are you now?**

Before you start any kind of project, you must know where you are starting **from**. This will become the "baseline" from where you measure your **progress**. A clear awareness of where you are now will facilitate your development.

What kind of **external** feedback do you get? Your friends, family, work colleagues and other people you contact regularly are all affected by your behaviour and will have views about your skills. Some external feedback will be more objective and **useful** than others, and not all will be

glowing! Now is the time to take stock of any feedback you have had and put it to good use.

**Note:** Good feedback is always **specific**, clear and non-critical. “You always say stupid things” is not feedback, it is criticism and does not deserve airtime.

## Asking for feedback

If you are struggling to think of any feedback, consider **asking** for some. This may be a **scary** thing to do, but you can make it **easier** by asking for feedback using one of the following templates:

**What am I good at?**

**What else am I good at?**

**What could I be better at?**

Ask the person to tell you **two** things you are **good** at and **one** thing you could be **more** effective at. With the one thing you could be better at, get them to be very specific about it and how they would prefer you to go about it.

For example instead of “*you don’t listen*”, get them to give you a specific example when your not listening caused a problem, what that problem was and how you could have handled it differently.

## Keeping it in proportion

Taking feedback doesn’t have to be painful, although it can appear **challenging** at first. **Everyone** can improve themselves in one way or another, and having faults does **not** mean you are ‘a bad person’. This is why feedback has to be **specific** – about one behaviour or action – and **not** about the individual as a **person**.

The free [self confidence course](http://www.self-confidence.co.uk) (www.self-confidence.co.uk) from Uncommon Knowledge can help if you have difficulties with this.

### Checking accuracy, finding a theme

The **number** of examples you get will give you a clue as to the extent of the problem (and perhaps more accurately how important it is to that person). It is also worth checking feedback with other people, as one person's opinion can be inaccurate and based on personal **biases**. External corroboration is essential before you take it seriously. You are looking for a **theme**.

**What should I STOP doing?**

**What should I START doing?**

**What should I CONTINUE doing?**

Another feedback model is to ask for what you should "**Stop, Start** and **Continue**". This will capture:

- i) what you are doing that you should stop
- ii) what you are not doing that you should start
- iii) what you are doing that works.

Using external feedback is valuable as it helps you build a fuller picture of how your behaviour is perceived. Even those with good self-awareness benefit from some external feedback!

### Using feedback

So how do you put this information to use?

1. Make a list of what **you** think are your **strengths** and **development opportunities** (the politically correct term for weaknesses!)
2. Below that, list the feedback you have from **other people** about your strengths and development opportunities. The more honest and thorough you are, the more likely you are to succeed with your development plan.

- 3.** Check if there any **patterns** or **themes** in the feedback. These will provide you with some clues about your **focus** areas.

| <b>Feedback Source</b>  | <b>Strength</b>   | <b>Development Need</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| e.g. from;<br>Your partner<br>Your boss<br>Your trusted friend<br>Your colleague(s)<br>Yourself | List by each feedback source, the areas in which you have a strength. These will be the things you are “good” at or the things you should “continue” to do<br>e.g.<br>Attention to detail<br>Subject matter expertise<br>Creative | List by each feedback source, the areas in which you have a development need. These will be the things you could be “better” at or the things you should “start” doing.<br>e.g.<br>Active listening at home<br>Presentation skills at work<br>Being a role model for the kids. |

## Focus areas

The speed at which you progress toward your goals will depend on where you are starting **from** and the **effort** you make. To make sure you **do** make progress, select a maximum of **three** areas to focus on for your personal development activities. If goal achievement is a long way off, you may even choose to focus on one area at a time before moving onto the next.

When deciding what your personal development focus areas will be, consider;

- ❑ Will this help me achieve my short term goals (3-6 months)?
- ❑ Will this help me achieve my long term goals (6-18 months and beyond)?

In the previous example, one focus area may be to sort out your finances by creating a budget and sticking to it, helping you achieve a **short term goal** of getting your finances on track.

Another focus area may be to enrol on a college course to gain some qualifications, supporting a **longer term goal** of getting a better paid job. The crucial point is about **timing** and building things up in the **right order**.

## Phase 2 – Using the Project YOU planning template

Now you need to read through the steps below, take a good look at the completed [example plans](#) at the end of the guide, and then get busy on your own plan!

### Step 1 – Focus areas

Now you are ready to use the Project YOU Personal Development Planning [Template](#). First fill in your focus area(s) - remember the maximum is 3 areas.

### Step 2 – Where are you now?

Fill in the “now” column for each focus area. This is a brief summary of where you are now, and will be a mixture of feedback from other people and your own thoughts.

For example, if your focus area is presentation skills, then it may be that your “now” statements are “blush, feel faint, stumble over words”.

### Step 3 – Will be?

If you went to bed tonight and woke up with your problem **solved**, what would that be like? Write your answer down as your “will be” statement.

This is a brief summary of where you **will be** when you have **achieved** your goal. These statements need to be phrased positively.

For example, instead of “not feeling bad after presentations”, write “feel content I’ve done the best job I can”. If you are actively looking for signs of feeling bad after a presentation, you can bet that you will find them, even if it was your best presentation ever!

To make changes you need to focus on what you **want**, not on what you don’t want!

### Step 4 – How known?

This is the distance marker that measures how far along the path you have come.

There is a close link between this and “Where are you headed”, so there may be some repetition between the two areas. To keep it simple, the “how known” column is there to help you measure your **progress**.

To explain a little more; some things are easy to **quantify**, e.g. your financial skills can be measured by your monthly bank balance. However other things

can be a bit less **concrete**. For example, how do you measure improvements in your confidence? A trick to use is to create your own scale.

**Top Tip** - If your “Where are you now” is that you feel 0/10 confident when doing public speaking where 0 is low and 10 is high, then your **measure** may be your self-assigned “score” each time you present.

Ultimately, you may only want to move from 0 to 3 or all the way from 0 to 8 or 9 – that is your decision; the key thing is that you have broken down the task into something that is **achievable** and **measurable**.

You are **much** more likely to succeed when you break down the improvements into **achievable chunks**. So, you may get to 1/10 after your next presentation – you’ve still got some way to go but you’re going in the right direction. This will provide you with satisfaction and optimism for further improvement. It also counters the ever-dangerous ‘all or nothing’ thinking.

Unrealistic expectations (e.g. being instantly great at presenting) set us up for failure and then we beat ourselves up when we don’t meet them.

Continuing the example, if your **focus area** is presentation skills, then your “will be” or “how known” statements may be “other people tell me I look confident, I hear my voice being calm and clear whilst answering questions”.

A way to make this **easier** is to use “see”, “hear” or “feel” statements. Take some time to think this through and elaborate on the detail – this is an **excellent** way of increasing your success rate.

## Presentation Humiliation

A personal example relates to my own presenting skills, or rather **lack** of them! Like a lot of graduates, my business skills upon leaving university were way behind my academic ability. The corporate graduate training scheme I was on, luckily, included a communication skills course, with the main focus on presentation skills. I was pretty bad – bright red, talking too fast, fidgeting and flapping my hands around. And to make things worse, all of this was captured on video!

This felt like presentation **boot camp**, but the tutors wisely helped me to break up my improvement efforts and focus on **one** thing at a time. At the next presentation, I had to hold my hands together and to speak very slowly. It was still a fairly grim presentation however my audience were not exhausted and more importantly I was a lot calmer after the event.

My skills and confidence were **gradually** built up in this way to the point 6 months later, I was able to present on behalf of the company to over 200 people. And they even laughed at my jokes! 😊

## Step 5 – Activities and resources

This step is for you to identify **what you need to do** to get where you want to be. This is the time to get creative. There will be a wide range of activities and resources out there, ready and waiting to take you in the right direction. It may be a mix of self-study, learning from others, formal training and “on the job” experiences. You will know best what suits you, your lifestyle, and your budget!



## Step 6 – When?

You have gone to great lengths to figure out what you should **focus** on, what your **goals** are and how you are going to **achieve** them. But when?

Be **realistic** about your time commitments and make some **adjustments** to the plan (or to your life!) if necessary. Treat your personal development as a serious **commitment** and give it the **priority** it deserves.

Plan time in your diary for specific activities as you would a regular appointment. If you must make changes, re-schedule for a later date. Also, schedule some dates to **review** your plan and **check** your progress.

## Step 7 – Reward?

You may like to include a series of **rewards** as you make progress and achieve mini-goals. It can be as simple as a special coffee and cake after you make that critical presentation. For some people, the improvement is reward enough and no extra incentives are required, but I think small rewards are a good idea.

## Phase 3 - Review the Project YOU Development Plan

When you have finished creating your draft Project YOU Development Plan, leave it alone for about **1 week** and then **review** it.

During the week you will have been unconsciously mulling it over, and testing to see if it is right for you. After the “rest” period, take some time to look at the plan and make any changes. Was the draft plan too **ambitious**, not **hard** enough, too **focused** on one thing, too **vague**?

You can keep the plan private and do the review yourself, but you may find you benefit from sharing it with someone else. In large companies or organizations, the development plan is normally discussed with a direct supervisor or leader.

People who find it hard to be **objective** about themselves or need **external motivation** may find it a benefit to enlist a person to support them. Maybe you lack some skills and know someone who wouldn't mind giving you the benefit of their experience? The great thing about using the Project YOU process is that you can make this decision for yourself and your choice is not influenced by work politics.

### How to choose a mentor

Here are some guidelines on how to choose an appropriate helper;

- ❑ They are **already** good at what you are trying to develop – a potential “role model”.
- ❑ You **trust** them.
- ❑ They are a good **coach** and can give you constructive feedback.
- ❑ They have the **time**!

You may want to consider using a professional to fill this role for you. There are life coaches, career guidance officers, therapists, and counsellors to name a few, and you can see them in person, talk over the telephone or even online. Before you hand any money over, contact them and **interview them** to establish whether they will be right for you – you want someone who can focus on **outcomes** and **actions**, not reasons and explanations! Or you can consider using [my coaching services](#) ! 😊

## Phase 4 - Implement the Development Plan

OK! You have **planned** the work, now **work** the plan! OK, in non-management speak, you have invested a good amount of **time** and **effort** in planning your development. You may be wondering about the **value** of this whole process, when you have completed three phases and haven't started **doing** anything yet. Be assured that all **well-managed** projects work in this way, and personal development is no exception.

**Top Tip** - Do a **mini-review** each time you do something that takes you out of your comfort zone. Think about 2 things you did well, and one thing you could do better next time. The "thing you could do better" will be your primary focus for improvement the next time you do it.

## Phase 5 – Review progress

In large organizations or companies, a formal **review** of your development plan is usually done every **6 months**, with maybe one or two **informal** reviews in between.

It's important to take a look at the **bigger picture** in order to see your progress more **clearly** so it is not obscured by daily ups and downs. I think one of the best feelings is to look back over three or six months effort and to see how **far** you have come.

You may have set up some kind of reward associated with the big review or each mini-review. Have fun and **celebrate** your successes, however small. In the long run, it is **perseverance** that counts, not **speed**.

Reviewing your progress is much like phase 1 where you checked out your starting point. You may want to consider getting feedback from the **same** people to check how effective they think your efforts have been.

Checking your progress allows you to reflect on what is **working** and what is not, so you can **adjust** your actions or change course if you are not achieving what you want. You may discover that you need to work on **more** things than you thought or that it is taking **longer** than expected to reach your goals – that's okay. The best project managers take account of such variations and amend their plans accordingly.

## In Summary

Developing your own personal development plan and following through on it is one of the most **satisfying** things you can do. The feeling that you have completed something worthwhile it builds your self confidence and boosts your self-esteem in addition to the goals you have achieved!

It *can* be hard at times, but then nothing **worthwhile** comes without work. The key to the whole process is to take it **one** step at a time. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed, it is simply a sign that you are taking on too much. Take it **slowly** but **surely** and you will reap the rewards.

The best of luck to you in your personal development!

**Warm Regards**

**Lyndsay Swinton**

Lyndsay can be contacted online in the Workplace Psychology at

[UncommonForum.com](http://UncommonForum.com)

## **Personal Coaching**

If you are interested in having Lyndsay help you with your goal setting and personal development, you can contact her at: [lyndsay.swinton@mftrou.com](mailto:lyndsay.swinton@mftrou.com)

See below for a sample personal development plan and template.

## Sample Personal Development Plan

from the example in the Project YOU [Goal Setting Guide](#)

| Focus Area              | Where now   | Will be?  | How known?  | Activity   | Resource  | Timing | Reward           |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|--------|------------------|
| Creating Training Plan  | Could be better   | Training regularly<br>Injury free                                 | Will achieve marathon goal  | Research on the internet and local library               | Local athletics club  | By Aug |                  |
| Following Training Plan | Nervous running at night<br>Don't stick to training plan. | Running in any condition or time.<br>Feel good am following plan. | Stick to training schedule in winter<br>Will achieve race time goals        | Self confidence email course                             | <a href="http://www.self-confidence.co.uk/">http://www.self-confidence.co.uk/</a> | By Sep | New running kit. |
| Diet                    | Not sure if diet is good.<br>Eat a lot of chocolate.      | Confident I am following a good diet                              | At target weight<br>Have energy to train<br>Speak knowledgeably about diet. | See dietician and get expert advice<br>Restock cupboards | Local health clinic<br>My partner   | By Oct |                  |

## Personal Development Plan Template

You can print this template or copy it to prepare your own plan.

| Focus Area | Now | Will Be? | How known? | Activity | Resource | Timing | Reward |
|------------|-----|----------|------------|----------|----------|--------|--------|
|            |     |          |            |          |          |        |        |
|            |     |          |            |          |          |        |        |
|            |     |          |            |          |          |        |        |