

Developing your talent



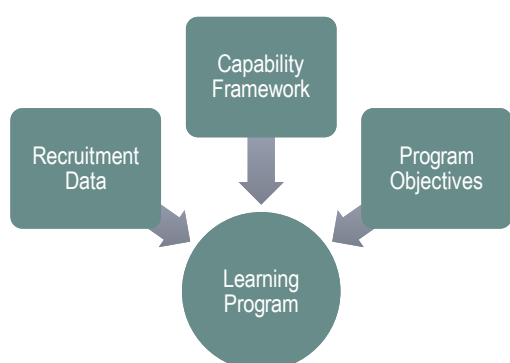
The very nature of calling it a 'program' often means that your new hires will expect you to focus on their learning and development.

The development program you design will vary depending on your organisation as well as several other factors, including:

- Location/s (centralised or dispersed)
- Size of your cohort
- Disciplines & technical needs
- Maturity level (of program and of participants)
- Any existing capability requirements
- Budget and resources to support
- Technology available
- Internal or external learning model
- Recruitment processes used.

Regardless, your focus should mostly be on providing relevant on-the-job experiences and interactions that support any formal learning you deliver. A number of organisations follow the [70/20/10 model](#) of learning, however your organisation may have a specific framework or model that you use.

A good approach is a combination of 'core' learning that all participants must undertake, and an



'optional' suite of learning activities that allow for different needs. This way there is consistency in behaviours/capabilities the organisation needs, but also acknowledges that they are individuals with different learning goals (i.e. they will arrive at your organisation with a wide range of existing capabilities).

One way you can work this out is by using the information you collected during your recruitment process. Particularly if you used online assessments, you can use this data to provide a snapshot of your cohort, the capabilities they are already excelling at and the

capabilities that they need to develop further. A good assessment provider will include reports that present this information for you at the touch of a button.

It is recommended that you review your development program for each cohort (not necessarily a complete overhaul, just a few tweaks). Each cohort can be different despite using the same recruitment practices. You can have unique challenges within each group, so if you allow for some flexibility and can look at your program offering regularly then it is worth it.

How much formal training do they need to do? As mentioned already, you should always make sure that most of the learning is occurring on the job, this is where they will thrive! This doesn't necessarily mean a structured rotation program but could include exposure to different projects or job-shadowing opportunities. After this, ensure your program has opportunities to learn through other people (either through networking, committees or mentors etc.) and then formal development programs should only form a small component of their overall learning. As a guide, most programs usually have between five and ten formal training sessions in a year.

Leaders are also an important part of your program, particularly in ensuring that learning is prioritised and embedded. As part of your development program you should consider including some form of orientation program for leaders so that they understand the importance of the role they play and how they can best support new talent in the business. One idea is to set up a leader network so that they can

learn from each other and support each other. The leaders play a fundamental role in the success of your program so make sure you set them up for success as well.

Once you know what development you are going to include in your program, the next step is to work out where best in their program journey the development needs to occur. Does it need to be included as part of orientation? Or, do they need to get their feet under the desk for a while first before the learning will make sense? Remember not to overload them with too much information up front, give them a chance to learn as they go over the first few weeks. If they do rotations as part of their program, think about how the development program will support this on-the-job learning (e.g. they could do blocks of training between rotations).

A sophisticated development program will include a feedback process, not only for participants, but also for you. For you, you want to know from participants whether the learning is adding value and from their leaders you want to know that the learning is contributing to better on-the-job performance. For the participants, you want to ensure they are receiving regular feedback from their leaders to help them put what they have learnt into practice.

If your organisation has a formal performance management process in place, see if you can get access to your cohort data and look at how they are performing and if there are any gaps. You may also like to set up some interviews with leaders to get more detailed feedback. Same if your organisation does an employee engagement survey.

Regardless of whether you are using an external provider or internal resources for your formal learning program, make sure you schedule regular catchups. The facilitators who work with your cohort will be able to provide you with some great insights, for example, how engaged they are, punctuality, whether pre-reading/actions have been completed etc. External providers may even be able to give you some insights into what learning they are doing with other organisations and what would work well for your cohort. This information (including the feedback mentioned above) provides a great snapshot of how the development program is tracking.

Lastly, your program participants will build expectations based on what they have been told, read or heard about your organisation and what it offers. So, make sure your attraction strategy matches what you are delivering in the development program. Be open and transparent about what they will receive as part of the development program so that expectations can be managed.

At orientation, try running a session specifically around expectations. It helps to recalibrate expectations, but also gives them the tools to manage scenarios that they will face throughout the development program (e.g. they need to take responsibility for their learning....it doesn't just happen). As an idea, ask participants to discuss in an open forum what expectations they have about themselves, their leaders and the program. It can lead to some interesting points of view but allows you to correct anything up front and put them on the right path to success.

In the end, the main goal of your development program should be to create a cohort of high performing individuals who take ownership for their own development/learning. After all, this is what will help them to be successful once the support of the program ends and they progress within your organisation.

