



Question of the Week

May 29, 2025

Question

What is an individual development plan?

ANSWER

An **individual development plan (IDP)** is a structured professional development plan created to support an employee's growth within an organization. The employee and their manager work together to outline the employee's career goals and identify specific actions (such as training or stretch assignments), timelines (such as quarterly check-ins), and resources (such as mentors or educational opportunities) needed to achieve them.

An IDP is most effective when it ties the employee's professional development to the overall growth of the organization. While IDPs can include goals and aspirations separate from the needs of the organization, they work best when they enable organizations and their employees to grow together in a way that's mutually beneficial. For instance, if your organization has a multi-year plan for overall growth, that organizational plan should inform employees' IDPs. But because needs and goals evolve, IDPs should be reviewed regularly and adjusted as needed.

IDPs can also serve as a data-collection tool. When used widely throughout an organization, they provide a picture of the knowledge, skills, and abilities employees are pursuing. That information can be valuable for assigning work, staffing, identifying new organizational growth opportunities, and succession planning.

This Q&A does not constitute legal advice and does not address state or local law.