



# Continuing Professional Development

## Managing your own Development

*“Learning is ongoing, you can learn from every interaction  
it is one of the true joys in life - and it’s free.”*

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the action we take to maintain, update and grow the knowledge and skills required for our professional role. As the name suggests, it is an ongoing commitment, lasting for as long as we remain within our profession. As L&D professionals, our capability is our product. If we are not knowledgeable in our subject areas or we do not know how to support and facilitate learning, then how can we help others in our organisations?

CPD is an essential investment in our career and doubly important to us if we are to role model the commitment to learning and development we expect from others. Taking CPD and keeping an appropriate record of it is a strong recommendation to the membership of ITOL however it is often a requirement of most other professional bodies.

In ITOL we treat our members as mature fellow professionals whom we trust. We believe that recognizing the need for CPD would be common to us all, however the content and amount of development will be unique to each individual. We are not here to police the profession nor to act as a stern head teacher, therefore we do not ‘require’ but ‘recommend’



The fact that we are in this profession suggests that we are already enthusiastic learners. CPD requires us to focus a part of our learning specifically on areas that are related to our profession – but L&D is a very wide field, and there are few things we can learn that do not contribute in some way to

our abilities to help other people with their learning.



- What motivates you to learn?
- What was the last learning activity you undertook?
- How did this contribute to your capabilities?

The benefits of developing ourselves are boundless not just for us but also for our learners, the organisations we work in or with, and the L&D team or function we are a part of. Just to refresh our mind, some of them are:

#### **Benefits for you:**

- enhanced reputation and job satisfaction;
- increased confidence and self esteem;
- improved career prospects and employability;
- improved professional status;
- development is a transferable skill.

#### **Benefits for your learners:**

- better quality training;
- up-to-date advice and information;
- training that employs new approaches and methods;
- training that better meets needs;
- greater confidence in the training provided for your organisation.

#### **Benefits to your L&D function:**

- enhanced reputation;
- more likely to be seen as credible and reliable and to become a trusted partner in the business;
- more influence with key stakeholders;
- a more exciting learning environment and opportunities to learn from each other.

**Benefits to the organisation:**

- staff who can do the job;
- more likely to achieve evolving organisational goals;
- managers can be confident that staff skill levels are compliant and up-to-date with requirements;
- improved employee engagement;
- enhanced external reputation.

Undertaking continuing professional development is not just about setting personal development objectives and fulfilling these, it is also about reflecting on our learning and applying it to our working life. We should also record our learning activities and reflections to capture our progression as learners and also to demonstrate our commitment to CPD to other parties.

The concept of CPD reflects both the Training cycle and the Learning cycle. It follows the Training cycle in that we need to identify our learning needs, find learning to meet these needs, access the learning and then evaluate how well our learning needs have been met – and then start again!

CPD also follows the Learning Cycle in that it requires us to reflect on our experiences, find new ideas and ways of doing things, and experiment with our new ideas – and then start again reflecting on our new experience.

**Key features of CPD:**

- 🔑 CPD includes an element of planning and an element of recording and reflecting. You may already have a ‘development plan’ at work or you may want to devise your own.
- 🔑 Planning your CPD is important to ensure that you take a strategic approach to your professional

development and include everything needed to meet your professional requirements. You might link your development plan to a performance review cycle at work, or it might be something you do on an annual, or more frequent, basis.

-  You will need to set some objectives for your development so that you can measure your progress towards, and eventual achievement of, your objectives.
-  You should review your progress towards objectives regularly and ensure you stay 'on track', particularly for learning objectives that are compliance or qualification related.
-  As well as planning your CPD you should also record and reflect on your CPD and consider how you will make use of your learning. If you can get into the habit of recording your reflections as you go along it will be easier and more useful to you.
-  The way you record your CPD reflections is up to you although ITOL provide some suggested formats and templates to our members.
-  There are likely to be learning activities and learning experiences that you have not planned but which are relevant to your overall development and that you want to include in your CPD record. That is fine it is your record to use as is most useful to you.
-  You may need to make your CPD record available to other parties occasionally, but it is usually acceptable to provide a reduced or summary version if you are uncomfortable about revealing

the full document.

In our experience, different people like different formats of CPD plans and Records and there is no 'one size fits all'. Most seem to opt for a table style of document although other styles are becoming popular for example mind maps etc. ITOL provide a complete range of CPD documentation along with other items to support you in the process.

## Choosing Development Activities

There will be a number of practical factors impacting on your choice of development activity, including: costs; availability; time. However beyond these issues we need to consider a balance of learning across a number of other competing factors.

**maintenance V development needs:-** What you need to keep refreshed and up-to-date against what will be new areas of learning for you.

**specialist subjects V training skills/knowledge:-** If you train in a particular subject area you will need to maintain your technical abilities and knowledge, as well as developing your skills and knowledge as a trainer.

**performance requirements V personal aspirations:-** As well as the learning you have to undertake for your job and professional requirements, you may also have personal aspirations or long term plans you want to prepare for.



## Different Learning Methods

Even if you have a preferred way of learning, it is important to engage with different approaches. Challenge yourself! Opt for a highly participative learning activity, even though you would normally choose to learn through research or reading. If work-related development needs to be very logic and reasoning based you should consider balancing this by taking some more 'creative and artistic' development activities.

There is a vast amount of established learning content out there but we also need to be aware of some of the latest developments that can enhance our career prospects. New ideas relating to learning are emerging from all kinds of fields including neuroscience (*how the brain works*), psychology (*how people behave*) and technology, new models of learning communities and ongoing developments in virtual learning environments are all worth exploring.

Sometimes it does us good to do some light-hearted development that may appear to have little professional connection but could just 'light a spark' of a future learning direction, or at least be a good stress reliever. Who knows what attending a 'juggling skills workshop' could lead to – you'll never know 'til you try!



As an L&D practitioner you will be very aware of the many formal types of learning activity available to you, however to refresh your memory here are some for you to consider for your CPD.

- attending a training event
- attending a conference or exhibition
- reading books, articles or blogs
- job shadowing
- academic learning
- IT enabled learning
- reflecting on work events
- being coached
- having a mentor
- taking part in a project
- action learning sets
- attending networking events.

Before undertaking any of these activities, ask yourself ‘what is my objective for doing this, what do I want to learn?’

Having completed the activity, ask yourself ‘What did I learn and how will I use it?’

Finally, remember that undertaking your CPD is itself a development activity. Writing down your goals and planning how you will address them will give you a much greater chance of achieving them. Recording and reflecting on your development activities will consolidate and enhance the learning you get from them. Your CPD Record is a symbol of your commitment to your own learning and something you can be very proud of.