



Creating a Professional Development Team

Now that we're in a new IMA fiscal year, it's time for all of us to determine what kind of professional development we're going to pursue and get started on it as soon as possible.

July marks the start of a new fiscal year for IMA®! As we begin this new year, it's a great time for you as a member to think about how IMA can make a significant impact on your overall professional development. It's also a good time to think about something we perhaps don't devote enough time to in our daily working life: creating and managing our own *personal* professional development plan. This type of plan can help us see the big picture as well as the finer aspects of our career path.

Professional development plans come in many shapes and sizes. For example, if we work in a company with a formal human resources (HR) function, the plan may be simply a series of courses or "check-offs" that we're required to complete annually. If we work in a small or mid-sized organization, we may not be guided by a formal HR process; rather, we may be adjusting our own development to the pressing and more emergent needs of our employer.

If we're certified professionals, we may view our professional development in terms of completing the required continuing education hours to renew our certification. If we're self-employed, we may tie our development to what's attractive to our current or prospective clients.

Whether or not we let our HR department, organization, certification, or clients largely influence our professional development plan, it helps to take a step back and consider a more comprehensive, personalized approach. A short- and long-term professional development plan can be a useful tool. How do you go about creating one? The following questions may give you a good start:

- ◆ What are my immediate career concerns?
- ◆ Where do I want to be in one year, five years, 10 years?
- ◆ What risks does my career currently face?
- ◆ If I had to leave my current employment situation, what would I want to do next?
- ◆ What gaps exist in my technical abilities?
- ◆ Do I have the right certifications or advanced degrees?
- ◆ What conferences or technical training should I consider?

- ◆ What gaps exist in my professional network?
- ◆ Do I need a mentor? Should I be a mentor?
- ◆ Am I leveraging opportunities for face-to-face and online professional networking?
- ◆ How can I develop my leadership skills?
- ◆ What publications or books are on my professional reading list?

As you ponder the above questions, put your thoughts in writing, and consider sharing them with a peer, mentor, supervisor, or others in your professional support network.

I hope that when you make your plan, you find that IMA plays an important role in helping you get where you want to go. IMA provides many platforms for career management—from your early career to later career and beyond—from certification and networking opportunities to leadership training and educational offerings.

I encourage you as a member to explore an IMA resource you may be unfamiliar with. Never listened to a webinar? Give it a try. Never taken a self-study professional development course? Check them

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out on the IMA website at www.imanet.org. Haven't ever attended your local chapter meeting? Plan a visit soon. Aren't a member of *LinkUp IMA*? Take a look at the 100+ groups already formed in our online community, and join one or two (or more). You may be surprised—and I hope impressed—with what IMA can do for you.

I welcome your comments at srichtermeier@imanet.org. **SF**