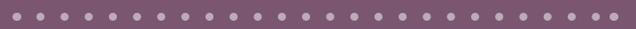




Information and Communications Technology Council Conseil des technologies de l'information et des communications

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Understanding, Managing and Achieving Professional Objectives



When starting at a new job you want to get on track with learning and developing your skills and being successful in the company.

Here are some tips on how to better understand, manage and achieve professional objectives in the Canadian ICT workplace.

Understanding – Orientation and Communication

During orientation, you and your manager will review your job responsibilities and set goals for the coming months or year.

As you may have already learned, being proactive and taking the initiative is expected of employees in the Canadian workplace – this is particularly important when it comes to your career.

- For example, if you held a more senior position before coming to Canada and are interested in returning to leadership, be sure to make your manager aware of your relevant experience so he or she can take it into consideration when discussing your long-term goals.
- Ask what kind of training you are entitled to and about other opportunities to learn and grow.

Managing – Performance Review and Career Development Plan

A performance review will usually consider your successes and challenges for a particular time period, compared to the goals identified during orientation.

- Ask your manager for a blank copy of the review so you know what information will be most helpful to share when you meet.
- During the review, your manager will want to discuss what you have achieved during the period, how it was achieved, and what impact the outcome had for the company. Some managers will ask you to prepare this summary in advance and submit it to them before the performance review meeting.

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For ICT employers, communication skills are essential to applying technical skills on the job, especially in client-facing roles – communication skills help inspire confidence in customers and build trust, which is essential in making customers happy and ensuring repeat business. Network or technical support personnel, who often deal face-to-face with clients and staff, typically require extensive coaching and training to enhance their communications skills.

ICTC. Talent for Hire: Diversifying Talent in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the ICT Sector. April 2008. P. 8.

- Be aware of your accomplishments and acknowledge them – think of specific examples of ideas you contributed or actions you took in the past few months that were helpful.
- If you are finding it very difficult to identify or articulate what you have done for the team, try asking for help from a colleague with a lot of Canadian work experience, or your mentor.

Part of the review will often be identifying areas to develop or learn, and creating a plan for you to achieve this learning during the next review period.

- Spend some time considering what you think you should be learning to get better at your job, or what skills you need but do not have for a more senior job.
- In a Canadian workplace your manager regards you as an equal partner in your success, and usually expects you to demonstrate your interest and commitment by suggesting areas for your own development and by seeking out appropriate learning opportunities.

- Very often the learning and development plans that help prepare you for more senior jobs will focus on workplace skills such as leadership, collaboration, advanced communication and business knowledge – ask for specific examples and definitions so that you know what is expected of you.

During the performance review your manager might follow a set format – a positive comment, a negative comment and finish with a positive comment.

- Pay close attention and close the review by summarizing what you understood that you are doing well and should continue, and what you need to focus on and improve. For example, “I will make an effort to speak up more in meetings, and taking the course you mentioned should help. I will keep paying attention to details; I now know that you and the clients appreciate it.”
- In Canadian workplaces, your manager expects you to participate in the process, and politely identify when you disagree. If you believe the assessment is inaccurate, you are expected to provide examples to help achieve a more balanced and accurate impression. You need to do this without becoming defensive.

If at the end of the review, you are not sure of something or are confused, write down what you do not understand, and ask your manager to clarify. Your understanding of the outcomes and expectations that arise from this performance review will set the tone and the potential successes of your work in the future. A performance review in Canada is an opportunity for both parties to discuss the employee's strengths, and identify areas of development to ensure career success within the organization. To speak factually and non-defensively about both areas is considered to be professional behaviour.

Achieving – Mentoring, Networking and Training

Following are some ways you and your manager could consider to help you achieve your goals:

- Mentoring is often cited as an essential strategy for career advancement. Individuals who are mentored have better career outcomes than those who are not, as reflected by compensation levels, promotions, career satisfaction, and commitment. Mentoring can be a formal program, with a training plan and a detailed schedule of activities, or it may be an informal coaching relationship between a new employee and a more experienced co-worker.
- Having access to networks provides employees with opportunities to acquire essential resources for career advancement, such as inside information, recommendations for promotions, access to clients, and social support.
- Almost every industry and profession has at least one networking association. Joining one provides an opportunity to get the latest information about your industry, find out how to solve problems or do your job better, put your skills and accomplishments forward to those who can help you in your career, and observe and learn from the leaders in your profession.

- Many companies pair their new hires with more experienced staff members, who are referred to as “mentors,” “coaches,” or “buddies,” depending on the organization. They are selected on a voluntary basis and are expected to provide one-on-one training and guidance to their mentees. If the organization you work at does not offer formal mentoring programs, you can ask your manager to introduce you to someone who can show you how things are done in their organization.
- Participation in a network group for employees – a group of employees sharing common interests who provide support and development opportunities for one another – can also offer visibility and provide access to potential mentors.
- Many employers support employees to enhance and advance their language and communications skills, as needed. Employers might offer time off to attend training, cover costs, or even arrange for training to be conducted in-house.
- Many employers also offer career management courses specifically geared to the needs of new Canadian employees.
- Many organizations list ‘political astuteness,’ or being able to manage the dynamics of working relationships, as an important competency for senior management roles. Several research studies have demonstrated that a high level of political astuteness is often a critical ingredient for members of under-represented groups to be able to successfully navigate traditional corporate cultures. Pick up on your organization's norms by watching those around you.

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Resources

Canadian Immigrant magazine. Networking three ways: informally, formally and digitally. By Murali Murthy, February 25, 2014.

