

# **Self-Development Toolkit**

***10 Strategies & 10 Tools to  
Help You Improve Your  
Performance***

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## **Self-Development Toolkit**

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Organizations that have purchased the 20/20<sup>®</sup> Insight GOLD performance feedback survey system have permission to copy and give this PDF file to all recipients of 20/20 Insight feedback as a follow-up self-development resource.

Also, managers who attend the Vital Learning “Developing and Coaching Others” training course have permission to copy and give this PDF file to their direct reports for self-development purposes.

All users of the Self-Development Toolkit have permission to make copies of the ten tools for their personal use. This permission is defined at the bottom of each tool.

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## CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| What You Can Do to Advance Your Career .....                                   | 4  |
| Strategy #1: Ask for Feedback .....  | 7  |
| Tool #1 - From Feedback to Focus .....   | 8  |
| Strategy #2: Accept Feedback Graciously .....                                  | 9  |
| Tool #2 - Follow-up Feedback .....   | 10 |
| Strategy #3: Analyze Your Strengths and Opportunities for<br>Development ..... | 11 |
| Tool #3 - Performance Analysis .....   | 12 |
| Strategy #4: Set Goals and Have a Plan .....                                   | 13 |
| Tool #4 - Self-Development Plan .....  | 14 |
| Strategy #5: Make the Most of Training .....                                   | 15 |
| Tool #5 - How to Make Learning Stick .....                                     | 16 |
| Strategy #6: Ask for Coaching .....  | 17 |
| Tool #6 - Tips for Coaching in the Workplace .....                             | 18 |
| Strategy #7: Establish a Learning Support Group .....                          | 19 |
| Tool #7 - Your Learning Support Group .....                                    | 20 |
| Strategy #8: Apply New Skills on the Job .....                                 | 21 |
| Tool #8 - Success Tracker .....  | 22 |
| Strategy #9: Learn from Experience in the Workplace .....                      | 23 |
| Tool #9 - The Learning Moment .....  | 24 |
| Strategy #10: Persist in Spite of Setbacks .....                               | 25 |
| Tool #10 - Self-Encouragement Tips .....                                       | 26 |
| Supplemental Tool #1 - Strength Analysis .....                                 | 27 |
| Supplemental Tool #2 - Self-Development Recommendations .....                  | 28 |
| Supplemental Tool #3 - 10 Strategies for Improving Your Performance            | 31 |

## What You Can Do to Advance Your Career

How capable are you? How effective do you want to be?

The traditional mindset is that training will improve your skills. This is an excellent way to learn about new skills, but training is never enough to master a skill or to ingrain it as a natural, routine aspect of your behavior. By far, most of the learning happens after formal instruction is over.

If you've ever attended formal training, you know this is true. You may have agreed with what you were learning, and you may have felt the trainers were excellent. But you didn't suddenly begin doing things differently back in the workplace. If you're like most people, the new skills felt awkward at first, and they didn't always work well for you. If so, you probably returned to doing things the old way.

There's a simple explanation for this. Behavior patterns are, by definition, actions that you do without having to think about how to do them. You're comfortable doing things this way, whether or not they're always effective. This is because your brain has established a special network of brain cells to do that job. The behavior pattern is comfortable and automatic.

An ingrained skill is like walking, running or riding a bicycle. Once the brain cells are physically connected, the only thing that breaks up these connections are old age, injury or death. This is why old habits are so hard to break.

It's possible to replace the old patterns with new ones, but it's a lot like building a brand new interstate highway next to an old country road. It takes a lot of construction. And it takes months of practical application on the job before a new skill becomes comfortable. But if you do the work, the newly ingrained patterns will become your new routine. And they'll be virtually permanent.

If you're one of the millions of fans who follow the career of golfer Tiger Woods, you may remember that 2004 wasn't one of his best years. Even though he had already achieved greatness at an early age, at the beginning of the season Tiger made a number of changes in his swing. The changes were designed to make the world's best golf swing even better. But then Tiger struggled all year, winning only one tournament and finishing fourth in total winnings.

However, at the end of that year his game came together for him, and he won two post-season tournaments back-to-back. In 2005 he won his fourth Masters. He placed second in the U.S. Open and won the British Open, leading the field from start to finish. He finished the year with six victories, ranked first in the world with about \$10 million in winnings. In 2006 he repeated this pace of winning, dominating the PGA tour.

The point is that *excellent instruction is only the beginning*. Tiger Woods hits golf balls all day long nearly every day. And yet, he had to invest an entire year of persistent effort before he ingrained the new patterns that improved his game. Another point is that Tiger couldn't have made this effort without a

strong internal motivation to change. His desire to have the best possible swing, to compete, to win the major championships and to be the best golfer in the world are what kept him at the practice tee. And he had coaching. It's common knowledge that he has invested as much as a million dollars a year for a swing coach who will keep him on track.

Clearly, you need to work on improving your skills well beyond the classroom. Like Tiger Woods and everyone who wants to succeed at a higher level, what you need is for your professional development to become a routine aspect of your work.

This booklet contains tools and strategies you can use for your self-development. Yes, you're in charge of your own professional development...not your boss, and not the training department. In fact, you've always been in complete control of what you learned or didn't learn.

Throughout life, you probably learned a lot from others: parents, teachers, trainers, coaches, advisors and friends. But none of these people could make you learn. When you did learn from them, it was always because you wanted to. And when you weren't interested in what they had to say or what they were showing you, not much learning happened.

Learning is something you do for yourself. And you've been teaching yourself things all your life. Sure, you may have had help. But basically you taught yourself to walk, to talk and every important skill you have. As you learned to play the piano or to swim, for example, you practiced the skills until they became natural. You made the effort because you wanted to. That's why you didn't quit.

In the world of work, you're still in charge of whether you learn or not. Although your organization may offer you opportunities and resources, you control the end result: whether you get better at what you do—or not. *When it comes to developing yourself and advancing in your career, you have to take the initiative and do most of the work yourself.*

If you're an ambitious, success-oriented individual, you're already motivated to advance in your career. You know that improving your abilities will enable you to:

- Prepare yourself to be more competitive in the job market.
- Achieve financial goals for yourself and your family.
- Be recognized as a professional—someone who takes pride in the quality of your work and seeks to improve and perform at the highest level possible.
- Contribute more to your team's mission and its success.

Successful people don't wait for good things to happen. They make them happen. They actively work on being the kind of person who gets noticed, rewarded, promoted or hired at the next level. Accepting that you have to take the lead in improving your capabilities is the first step.

## How to use the Self-Development Toolkit

This booklet was written to support you during the ongoing process of self-development. While your organization may involve you in excellent programs, *most of the learning will take place after these programs*. So it's up to you whether your performance actually improves. The Self-Development Toolkit explains 10 strategies and gives you 10 tools (plus 3 supplemental tools) that will help you become an even more effective, professional person at work. Each strategy encourages you to use one of the tools. You have permission to make copies of the forms for your own personal use.

To grow stronger in your job, you need to know what to improve. Feedback is the essential first step, whether it comes from 20/20 Insight multi-source feedback, your boss or a co-worker.

Strategies 1, 2 and 3 will help you accept and make use of this feedback. Strategy 4 will help you create a plan for building on strengths and improving areas of need.

Strategies 5, 6 and 7 will help you make the most of training, get coaching and put your development plan into action.

Strategy 8 and 9 will help you ingrain the new skills at work during the months ahead. Strategy 10 explains how to use self-encouragement to stick with your plan during this critical period of reinforcement.

In short, the strategies and tools are a collection of the best insights and practices about learning that have been introduced during the past 40 years. If you use them, you'll experience the benefits. Remember – you're in charge!

From time to time I mention 20/20 Insight GOLD, which is a customizable performance feedback system. You may have been given the Self-Development Toolkit as a part of this program. While formal, multi-source feedback can be a revealing first step towards self-development, there are other ways to get feedback. The 10 strategies and 10 tools will work well for you even if you haven't yet benefited from 20/20 Insight.

I wish you success!