Professional Development

The term *professional development* may be used about a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help individuals improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.

Continuing professional development is important because it ensures you continue to be competent in your profession. It is an ongoing process and continues throughout a professional's career.

Many employers will be upfront about what they can provide for their employees regarding professional development opportunities. It might be discussed before or during the interview process.

In some instances, these opportunities maybe given to those who have spent significant time with their business and/or company. In some cases, companies will expect a specific number of services if someone partakes in any type continuing education that they are paying for – example: you can earn your MBA, but must stay with the company three years after earning your degree. Employers see these opportunities as investments.

If professional development is something you value, but your employer does not have the funds to provide these opportunities, there are many ways for you to take this on:

- Speak with your supervisor and ask them what they have done in the past.
- Look for a competence list or library
- Consider job shadowing - ask someone if you can spend some time with them as navigate their day
- Volunteer! Think about volunteering when you consider your professional and career development plans. There are many development benefits from volunteering: networking, retaining and sharpening old skills, developing new skills
- Podcasts can be great - here’s an example of some popular ones
- Find a mentor that is willing to help you along the way (see below)
- Check out websites such as [www.themuse.com](http://www.themuse.com) to learn more about what’s available near you or online.
- Create opportunities for you and others to come together to learn from one another. Creating dialogues based on article is one way to get others involved.

Remember that it is your responsibility to advocate for yourself. You know what you need to be more efficient and successful at your job and if you are not getting what you need, you are doing a disservice to yourself by not speaking out.

Professional development takes time, so make you are willing to dedicate the time for it. Ultimately, it will help become a better person and professional.