

Society of Indexers

Continuing professional development: personal development plan

An important part of continuing professional development (CPD) is a personal development plan (PDP), to help provide a structured approach to decisions about how to plan and organize your professional development.

The majority of indexers are freelance, responsible for their own professional development, without line managers to whom they are accountable. It is important, from time to time, to take stock of the situation and focus on developing one's skills in a way that could result in more interesting, better-remunerated, more satisfying work. This will also be of benefit to the profession as a whole, by showing that its members take seriously the need to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

This is entirely voluntary, but you are urged to spend some time studying this document. You can write down your plan and fill in your achievements in a structured way, or just use the points to think about your work and concentrate your mind on ways in which you could develop your professional life in a positive way.

The following points can be used to help you draw up and implement a personal development plan that should evaluate:

1. What you do now
2. What you want to achieve
3. What actions you could take
4. What resources you will need
5. Whether it has been worthwhile

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1 What you do now

Areas to consider might include:

- The nature of the indexing work you do – e.g. type of publications, size and number of projects over a given period, level of readership
- Your priorities in a) indexing, b) other professional activities
- Your use of technology
- Your business skills
- Is there anything you want to change?

marketing, negotiating, financial management

- Delegating of tasks
- Physical working environment, including health-related issues

Awareness of changing policies and expectations of clients or other bodies that may affect you in the future

Areas to consider might include:

- Clients' expectations of professional qualifications
- Clients' technological expectations
- The changing structure of the publishing industry
- Financial issues

2 What you want to achieve

Working more effectively

Areas to consider might include:

- Reassessment of subject specialisms – currency and depth of your knowledge
- Reassessment of past projects – have you indexed subjects you could specialize in more?
- Increased knowledge of information technology (IT) for greater efficiency in your own work and in dealing with clients' needs
- Improved business-related skills – e.g.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Areas to consider might include:

- Knowledge of indexing standards and practice
- Knowledge in subject areas
- Business skills
- Use of appropriate software
- Time management

Think about a recent project that highlighted a need for new skills or a different approach

Areas to consider might include:

- What did you do and what was the outcome?
- What additional knowledge or skills would have helped?
- What would you do differently next time?

What would you like to have achieved in five years' time?

Areas to consider might include:

- Gaining further qualifications in indexing – e.g. Fellowship
- Gaining a recognized qualification in any of your specialist subject areas
- Expanding the range of services you offer – e.g. proofreading
- More involvement in the Society of Indexers – e.g. joining your local or subject group, attending conferences
- Working with more sophisticated equipment and/or software

3 Taking action

- Identify the actions you need to take and the stages involved
- Prioritize – which additional skills and knowledge do you need immediately, and which will be more useful in the long term?
- Set target dates
- Be realistic – don't try to take on more than you can cope with

4 Resources

Think about the resources that are available to help you:

- Workshops – both subject and profession-oriented
- Training courses – including distance learning
- Internet training and use
- Email discussion lists – e.g. SIDeline, subject groups
- Local groups and special interest groups of SI
- Mentoring
- Practical indexing assignment
- Conferences
- Reading and private study

5 Has it been worthwhile?

Some time after implementing your personal development plan you will need to evaluate its success. You may wish to assess the situation at any time from three months to a year after taking action. Have your actions been effective in meeting the needs you identified? Were the most efficient actions undertaken?

Areas to consider might include:

- Are you now able to deal with any problems you identified?
- Has the way you work changed?
- If so, was this for better or worse?
- Were the right needs identified?
- Was the action well planned and appropriate?
- Were your actions cost-effective?
- Can you identify a better way of addressing your training needs?
- What are the implications for your further development?

Use the space below to make notes for your own plan.