

Professional development plan.

Your professional development is not the responsibility of anyone but you.

Not your studio, not your boss. Just you.

Some studios aid the process by helping designers create professional development plans (PDP) as part of the performance review process. While it's a nice gesture, it simply isn't very useful for the vast majority of designers.

You need to understand where you want to go and plan out how to get there.

Planning.

Many successful people follow a plan for their career; this can vary from a detailed plan to a broad direction. Either way it should include clear and achievable targets with deadlines for completing different activities.

A PDP should also identify how you're going to access particular training and development. You could consider the training opportunities that exist in your studio, professional associations or local creative conferences.

Some opportunities will be formal courses, others will be a hands-on sessions provided by others. It might also mean gaining experience through experimenting in new areas of work such as virtual reality.

It's important to consider development opportunities beyond academia through professional organisations, work and voluntary experience and/or independent training providers.

And not all training has to be provided by practical courses or workshops. You might set yourself other tasks such as working through a short online course, undertaking some desk-based research, talking to qualified colleagues or setting your own targets and timetable.

It's important to remember that a PD is never 'final'.

It's not written in stone. It can—and should—be revised on regular basis. Goals shift, people change and circumstances present new challenges or opportunities. As a growing professional, you have to remain nimble.

The reality is the further out you go in goal setting and

planning, the more it becomes just a guess. You can't predict the future, and there are all kinds of outside influences that will shape your reality. A downturn in the economy, a new technology, a sick family member – all of these things can change your goals and your ability to follow through on a planned course of action.

The important thing is to simply start the process.

Once you have a plan, it can be revised. Regular review is an essential part of any PDP so, as things change, you can make adjustments. Even better—as you see change on the horizon, you can pro-actively plan for it.

Reviewing.

You should see your development plan as a dynamic document that you continue to return to and amend throughout your career and as part of your wider personal and professional development.

You can review your career, where you are and where you want to be, at many different points, such as:

- » developing in your current role
- » preparing for promotion, or
- » finding a new direction in your studio.

The key to managing your development is to review your training plan regularly (perhaps once every three months).

You may want to consider:

- » whether you have completed the training you identified
- » whether you have learnt what you hoped from the training
- » what development needs you still feel you have
- » setting priorities and deadlines for future development.

As you undertake your research you may also identify further training needs. Talk these issues over with your peers. Get their advice on opportunities to help you respond to challenges presented by your research and broader career aims.