

Teaching Tips: Teaching How to Create a Personal and Professional Development Plan

Jennifer L. Embree DNP, RN, NE-BC, CCNS, FAAN is a Clinical Associate Professor at Indiana University School of Nursing, 620 Barnhill Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202 and the Magnet Coordinator at Eskenazi Health 720 Eskenazi Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

Corresponding Author: Jennifer Embree

Address: 301 Grandma Brown Road

Mitchell, Indiana 47446

Email: [jembree8@iu.edu](mailto:jembree8@iu.edu)

Phone (812) 583-1490

---

This is the author's manuscript of the article published in final edited form as:

Embree, J. L. (2022). Teaching Nurses How to Create a Personal and Professional Development Plan. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 53(10), 438–441. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20220907-04>

### Abstract 50 words

Teaching nurses how to create a personal and professional development plan is important to help them structure measurable, obtainable personal and career goals. Creating meaningful goals and metrics for career growth nurses is critical to their development as professional nurses. As nurses learn about creating personal and professional plans, they can personalize their nursing journey. The literature supports that writing down measurable goals is helpful in achieving them. A personal and professional development plan is defined as a document that outlines personal and career goals over a specific period. If the plan is an organizational requirement, the goals may need to be aligned to the strategic initiatives that are part of the system requirements such as pillars of Human Capital Perspective, Internal Perspective, Customer Perspective or Financial Perspective (Embree, 2015).

## Teaching Tips: Creating a Personal and Professional Development Plan

### Background

Achieving growth and life-long learning is necessary for personal and professional nurse satisfaction. As we think about enhancing nurse engagement and helping nurses connect to their personal purpose, we have an opportunity for professional development education. One way to assist nurses in their growth is through creation of a personal and professional development plan. What is a personal and professional development plan? A personal and professional development plan is defined as a document that outlines personal and career SMART goals over a specific period. SMART goals are defined as specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and timely (Warshawsky & Cramer, 2019). As nurses continue their academic education, they may not also be personally developing therefore they may possess a new degree, but they may not possess the necessary talent to achieve a position that aligns with their increased knowledge and talent level. An example of a nurse needing a personal and professional development plan might be a bedside nurse who desires to achieve a leadership role. The nurse is pursuing a master's degree in nursing leadership but does not realize where gaps might be in her abilities to communicate, resolve conflict, or meet the competencies of a leadership role. A professional development specialist (PDS) can assist the nurse by teaching the nurse how to create a personal and professional development plan. The purpose of this column is to describe how PDS's can teach nurses how to create a personal and professional development plan.

### **The Process**

The first step in preparing to teach nurses how to create a professional development plan is to identify the nurse audience. See Table. Will the class be open to all nurses? Will the class be for

those nurses looking to move into a new role or stay in their current area but hone their skills? Is the class for those nurses wishing to move up the career ladder? If the class is general, then all nurses would be welcome and may find value in developing their personal and professional development plan. Having a general class would allow for increased numbers of nurses to attend. This class could also support leaders who collaborate with their nurses during their performance reviews. The nurses who have attended the class and developed personal and professional development plans would be better prepared to share goals with their leaders and open future opportunities in the organization.

Next, identify the delivery methodology of the class. Will the class be held virtually, in-person, or both in-person and online or hybrid? There are benefits to each type of class, and what kinds of teaching methods can be used in the class. Would it be helpful to survey the nurses to see how they would appreciate the class delivery method? Once the methodology is determined, space and software needs can be addressed.

Next, determine the class objectives and content. What is the expected outcome? Is it a full personal and professional development plan for each nurse? Do you expect a few goals to be developed in the class and then have plans for a two-part class to further hone goals and metrics? The class objectives and content will help drive the length of the class. This will involve identifying how you will evaluate the class. The PDS will need to determine whether you want to repeat the class as it was or make changes prior to a future class offering. How to determine value is important for the nurses and the PDS teaching the class. Will there be pre-reads prior to coming to the class? Should you have them read a short leadership article or book that might help them understand emotional intelligence, self-awareness, social awareness, social competence, relationship management and social intelligence? Should they write about leaders they admire who they would like to emulate? Should you select a reflection model for use within

the class to help them reflect about writing their goals? Should they identify what they must guard against as they think about personal growth and development?

Once content is determined, one can move on to what is needed in the personal and professional development plan. Identify the categories for the plan. Areas to consider might be objectives/areas, action strategies, timeframe, resources needed, desired outcomes, and measurement of results. These categories align with the SMART goals of specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and timely (Warshawsky & Cramer, 2019). A table below shows these categories within a sample plan that includes personal goals as well as goals within a national competency expectation.

The next item to consider is the kinds of assessments nurses can take to identify the gaps they perceive in their personal talent and their professional talent. Nurses will look to the professional development specialist to guide them in selecting assessments that can help enhance their abilities. Having researched these items prior to the class assures the PDS has suggested resources to share with the nurses. Examples of personal assessments might include the Kiersey Temperament, the DISC Assessment, Emotional Intelligence, StrengthsFinder, or the Leadership Challenge (Worden, 2013). Assessments may be offered through healthcare organizations, free online, or for a fee. This nurse could look to the AONL Nurse Manager Competencies for guidance in identifying overall strengths and opportunities personally and professionally for improvement from a national nurse manager perspective if they were thinking of moving into a leadership role. If looking at a specialty role or an advanced degree, the nurse could use specialty certification competencies or advanced role competencies to help them identify gaps in their current talent that could help with their professional development plan goals.

The AONL Competencies for Nurse Managers includes the following areas: the Science, The Art, and the Leader Within. In those categories Managing the Business is the Science, Leading the People is the Art, and Creating the Leader in Yourself is the Leader Within (2019). The Science includes financial management, human resource management, performance improvement management, technology, strategic management, and appropriate clinical practice knowledge. The Art also contains human resource leadership skills, relationship management and influencing behaviors, as well as diversity. The Leader Within category includes personal and professional accountability, career planning and personal journey disciplines (AONL, 2019). As potential nurse assessments are identified, the PDS can move on to consider who can also support the nurses in their planning.

Consider potential mentors to assist the nurse in early personal and professional development exploration. A mentor might help guide them in developing a personal and professional development plan. While nurses need mentors throughout their careers, having someone other than their leaders help them define and hone their next steps in development can be helpful to set short and long-term goals in a comfortable atmosphere where potential avenues are explored. Mentors can help nurses identify and discuss potential goals and provide additional support in the future where mentees can bounce goal ideas that may or may not be feasible. Are there mentors in the healthcare organization that have been great mentors to early career nurses? Are there retired mentors that might be willing to continue to pay it forward to help nurses grow? Are there faculty in affiliated schools of nursing who love to help nurses develop? Are their mentors in the interprofessional disciplines who are great mentors? Having a list of mentors for nurses is helpful but providing content around what makes up a great mentor and how to select mentors throughout a career could be a great topic to include in the class.

The last step is teaching the nurses how to develop personal and professional goals for their professional development plan. Will the template categories work for the nurses in the class?

Beginning by having the nurses reflect about immediate goals can help narrow down what is uppermost in the nurse's mind. The nurses can start with a few goals so that they are manageable and not overwhelming. Have the nurses share their goals, get feedback from their classmates, and revise their goals so that they meet the criteria that you have established for them. Developing goals individually, then sharing them in groups can help provide respectful feedback and provides additional input to SMART goal setting and planning. Reflecting about long-term goals can help them think through the implications of long-term and making goals that they will be able to meet but that still stretch their abilities and help them grow. What mechanisms have helped the PDS teach and engage nurses in the past? Some of those techniques may be helpful in this class as well.

## **Conclusion**

Helping nurses understand that writing personal and professional development plans is a fluid, ongoing process is important for their current and future growth. The process can be enhanced by providing sample electronic and hard copy templates for nurses to practice using can be helpful. Sharing sample personal and professional development goals can also be helpful as many people learn well by examples. Professional development specialists are well-suited to help nurses develop personal and professional development plans to guide their growth and career exploration.

## References

Embree, J. L., Swenty, C. F., & Schaar, G. (2015). A Balanced Scorecard with Strategy Map. *Journal of Nursing Care Quality, 30*(4), 352-358.

Latham, G. (2020). Goal setting: A five-step approach to behavior change. In *Organizational Collaboration* (pp. 10-20). Routledge.

Warshawsky, N., & Cramer, E. (2019). Describing nurse manager role preparation and competency: findings from a national study. *JONA: The Journal of Nursing Administration, 49*(5), 249-255.

Worden, R. (2013). The right stuff at the right time: helping emerging leaders develop a leadership foundation.

### Table Teaching Tips

1. Identify the nurse audience, all nurses, specialty nurses
2. Determine class content
3. Determine the delivery methodology of the class.
4. Develop class objectives, content, and objectives.
5. Determine developmental areas for goals
6. Identify potential nurse assessments
7. Identify potential mentors to assist nurses in early personal and career exploration
8. Reflect about immediate goals and long-term goals
9. Write short-term goals
10. Write long-term goals

#### Example Individual Personal and Professional Development Plan (IPPDP)

Name:

Leadership Mentor Name:

Vehicles of Assessment:

Goal 1:

<b>Objectives/Area/Smart Goal Spiritual/Healthy Living/Family/Social</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
<b>Enhance personal health and wellness</b>	Identify a personal trainer	1 month September 2022	Healthcare system Local Gyms	Healthier eating Regularly scheduled varied exercise	Improved health and wellness as evidenced by 5% decrease in overall Basal Metabolic Index

Goal 2:

<b>Objectives/Area/Smart Goal Image</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
---	--------------------------	-------------------	------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------

<b>Explore Business Style Code and Social Image Style Code that I want to achieve</b>	Search for items I love. Develop a Pinterest Image Board Identify what adjectives connect to my loved images Perform Kiersey Temperament	October 2022	Local Department Store Service Concierge	1 Professional Image 1 Social Image	1 Comfortable business style 1 Comfortable social image style
---	---	--------------	---	--	--

## Goal 3:

<b>Objectives/Area/Smart Goal Spiritual/Healthy Living/Family/Social</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
<b>Develop regular yoga habit</b>	Search for virtual and in-person yoga options that fit into my schedule	November 2022	Yoga expert recommendations	Regularly scheduled yoga sessions	Enhanced flexibility

## Goal 4:

<b>Objectives/Area/Smart Goal Nurse Manager Competencies AONL</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
<b>Identify 1 goal from AONL Nurse Competencies to improve conflict resolution skills</b>	Sign up for in person and virtual conflict resolution course at healthcare system	3 months	Hospital education manager Hospital learning management system	Feel competent in conflict resolution and handle conflicts	Invited to participate in activities at work that require conflict resolution skills based on others evaluating my talent in this area

## Goal 5:

<b>Objectives/Area/Smart Goal Improve writing talent</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
<b>Draft a meaningful clinical story</b>	Assess writing talent based on BSN competencies	6 months	University writing center	Write a short case study in my clinical area about	Be invited to participate in writing the Magnet

				someone I have cared for and what I have learned	Stories for my organization.
--	--	--	--	--	------------------------------

## Goal 6:

<b>Objectives/Area/Smart Goal</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
<b>Learn to do an internal professional presentation</b>					
<b>Feel comfortable presenting a case in front of my clinical peers</b>	Take a giving professional presentations workshop	3 months	Hospital Clinical Education Department	Present clinical case at unit meeting or unit shared governance council	Invited to present my work at hospital-wide councils or committees

## Goal 7:

<b>Objectives/Area</b>	<b>Action Strategies</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurement of Results</b>
<b>Explore advanced nursing career options</b>					
<b>Identify potential roles in the organization</b>	Investigate current position openings and potential colleges and universities that offer degrees for roles	1 year	Online Colleges Universities Mentor	Identify 4 potential roles to explore	Have 2 solid roles that I understand and am interested in pursuing.