

Development reboot 2016

Its spring and a time for planting seeds and thinking about growth – both in the garden and in our professional lives. If you are frustrated by your lack of traction so far in 2016 or it's been a while since you thought about your career goals, then a quick 'development spring clean' will help you refocus on how to have more impact in the remaining 8 months of the year. Ask yourself these three questions to start the ball rolling.

1. Where is my company's development approach working for me?

You may be lucky enough to have an employer who provides some training activities that you can benefit from. That's great as far as it goes. But it shouldn't stop you from identifying what else you need that isn't covered by your employer. Look at your development plan, the quality of the feedback you receive, the career conversations you have with your manager and your career goals. If they are aligned, working and tailored to propel you to your next step, then leave well alone. If not, then how can you ramp them up a notch? Relying on your employer to meet all of your development needs is naive. Be prepared to go out and get what you really need.

2. What is 'not in play' when it comes to your leadership?

There will be aspects of your personality or character that you have deliberately filtered out of your professional persona. We all make efforts to fit in and tone down our behaviour at work, especially early in our careers. Often this is with very good reason! Fast forward a few years and this may be an area worth revisiting. What you selected out then may have a valuable application now. For example, venting your work frustrations may have been imprudent as a rookie without much first-hand experience. Tapping into strong emotions today in a deliberate and balanced manner (and with the benefit of relevant experience), may be an untapped resource. Channeling your values and beliefs in a positive way may help you be more persuasive than what you can achieve through rational debate alone.

3. What's my next leadership risk?

Sometimes what we need to propel us forward is a step into the big unknown. Being in the same role or area for too long can reduce the pace of your development as well as your options. Taking major career risks isn't something you want to be doing too frequently. However this can easily slide into never doing anything that has the potential to be a career game changer. Emma Walmsley, Chief Executive Officer of GSK Consumer Healthcare at London Business School's 'Women in Business Conference' last month, advised women to 'go global early' and get international experience under their belts sooner rather than later. Now, gaining international experience may not be the critical experience your CV is lacking, but do you know what is? Taking the time to identify those specific experiences that you need for your next leadership role is both essential and down to you. Equally, we can all be more strategic about naming opportunities that are on the horizon even if they don't have your name attached to them - yet. The simple act of articulating the experiences you need and being tuned into what's on the horizon, will help you to spot less obvious opportunities and go after them. Remember "opportunities rarely come labelled".

So three simple questions to get you thinking along some different development lines. Take the opportunity to pause, take stock, ditch what isn't working and pinpoint what you can add to your development mix. A 10% realignment can help you apply your leadership energy in a way that will deliver better returns for the rest of the year.