A focused application of the 70-20-10 model and specific work assignments will create a dynamic development culture.

Driving Targeted and Robust Development

BY RANDALL HARRIS AND PAUL TERRY

As you reflect back on your career, think about some pivotal points in time where you developed new skills and knowledge, where real and lasting development took root. What enabled you to build these new competencies? What were the primary means by which you acquired important new capabilities?

When we ask employees within our client organizations these questions, we frequently hear them describe a specific project or work assignment that required real-time learning or the application of new or untested skills, supported by coaching and feedback from others. Yet when we ask to look at their current development plan, what we see listed most often is a series of training programs, and the absence of work assignments and other on-the-job development strategies.
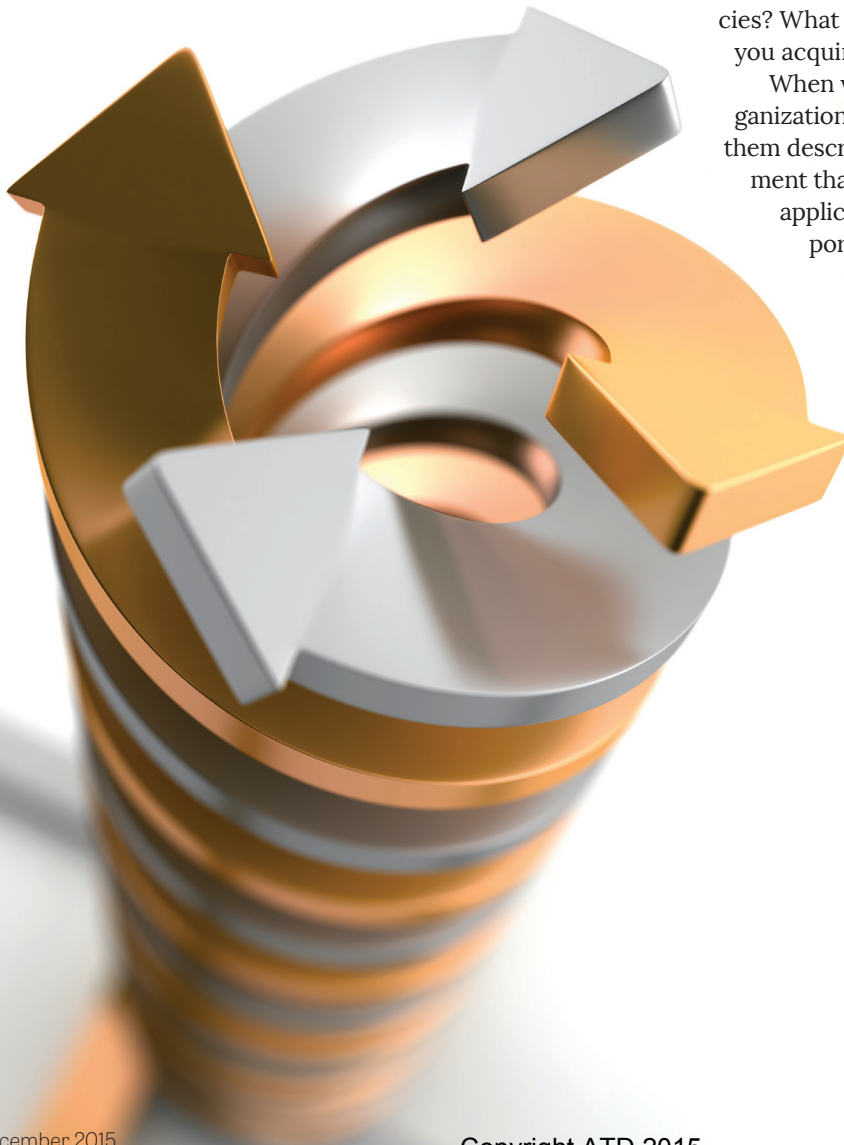
While there is no question that formal learning opportunities can be beneficial for development, there are many options to enhance job effectiveness and to accelerate skill acquisition. The 70-20-10 development framework, based on research by thought leaders at the Center for Creative Leadership, provides an excellent context for understanding the various ways that employees can drive their ongoing development.

In the framework, the 70 percent of experiential learning occurs through on-the-job experiences and development efforts—projects such as stretch assignments and goals, job shadowing, and rotational assignments. The 20 percent of social learning—feedback and coaching—takes place via networking or 360-degree feedback. And the 10 percent of formal learning, through either structured or self-directed training, occurs via conferences or reading work-related periodicals.

Based on our work, we believe there is a significant opportunity for organizations to build more dynamic development cultures through a more focused application of the 70-20-10 framework.

Multiple development approaches

The premise of the 70-20-10 framework is that development plans are greatly enhanced and more impactful when they incorporate a variety of approaches, with emphasis on experiential learning, which can take place in several ways. Some skills are best introduced and cultivated through self-directed and formal learning programs, while others are best mastered through practical, hands-on experience. We also benefit by receiving ongoing coaching and feedback from others.

The key is to think about develop-ment as an integrated set of mutually reinforcing activities. Whether the development plan is exactly proportioned 70-20-10 is less important to meaningful development than ensuring that all components are incorporated.

Application in development planning

To begin applying the 70-20-10 development framework for your employee, first look at her specific development needs, interests, and priorities.

Often, employee development planning is defined by an annual corporate calendar, with development discussions designed to identify the employee's development priorities kick-starting the process for the new year. To make them most effective, ensure that your employee development plans follow these simple SAM guidelines:

- specific—focuses on the development of skills, behaviors, and knowledge areas
- actionable—defines the specific actions that will be taken
- measurable—progress is observable over a period of time (frequency and consistency of competency demonstration and increased scope, complexity, and impact of contribution).

Help your employee consider two questions:

- In what specific areas do I want to develop?
- How will I go about developing in these areas?

After the employee has clarified what to focus on, the discussion naturally shifts to how the employee will acquire, demonstrate, and deepen her capabilities. Focusing a large portion of the plan on actionable, on-the-job development strategies (70 percent) accelerates skill building.

As already mentioned, while both formal and informal training (the 10 percent) and ongoing feedback, coaching, and mentoring (the 20 percent) are important and impactful, the most powerful and sustained development takes place through active learning within the context of one's current role. Job assignments turn out to be a powerful means to drive development.

> PROVIDING NEW JOB ASSIGNMENTS WILL HELP YOUR EMPLOYEE FEEL A CONTINUED SENSE OF CHALLENGE AND MOTIVATION.

A targeted job assignment is an assignment of "real work," which serves an additional purpose: to provide an employee with the opportunity to learn and develop specific skills or knowledge through the execution of the assignment itself.

Job assignments that drive development and that have a clearly defined business purpose have significant organizational benefits, as valuable outcomes and increased productivity can result. More broadly speaking, focusing on tangible development can enhance employee motivation, engagement, and performance.

Once there is an understanding about what a good development plan looks like, it is much easier to build. As a manager, following up throughout the year will help support your employee's progress; new job assignments targeting current or emerging development priorities can be added as appropriate, particularly as the employee demonstrates increased capabilities. Providing new job assignments will help your employee feel a continued sense of challenge and motivation.

Selecting assignments

Defining specific development goals is a starting point. Working with the SAM guidelines, you can see in the example below that the *how* defines the specific development actions your employee will undertake.

Suppose your employee's development goal (the *what*) is to "increase my understanding about changes in the U.S. healthcare landscape and the specific implications for our function's work."

The *how* might look like the following, with the 70-20-10 framework application listed immediately after:

- Job shadow Danielle Smith, healthcare landscape team leader. Gain a deeper understanding of the team's role and the support it provides to our function; build relationships with her team. (Q1-Q2) (feedback/social)
- Continue individualized study: healthcare reform, policy formulation, budget implications. (ongoing) (formal)
- Attend two conference sessions on healthcare reform, health economics, or healthcare policy at national meetings. (Q3) (formal)
- Job assignment: Develop an eight-hour healthcare-policy training program for our function and other applicable departments. (Q4) (on-the-job/experiential)

Creating specific job-family libraries of work assignments can assist with this process. Working with a department's subject matter experts, you can efficiently develop a comprehensive set of targeted job assignments unique to the competencies identified as most critical for the department's performance and effectiveness. Both managers and employees can reference these libraries during the annual develop-

ment planning cycle and integrate or modify selected job assignments for maximum impact specific to the employee's development priorities. Using this approach, you can continually add job assignments to the library each year.

The most impactful development occurs on the job, while a person is performing work tasks. For the work to be developmental, it needs to be approached strategically, considering what the employee needs to develop and how best to design the work to meet these goals.

Training and education definitely have a place in robust development plans, but don't miss the opportu-

nity to use daily work as an important source of development. A little creativity can go a long way in turning a routine work assignment into a tangible and robust development experience.

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