

CPD – On the record

Recording and reflection are two of the most important stages of the CPD process – but they are also stages that can appear mystifying

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I am hoping as I prepare this article that many of you were motivated in July to make a professional development plan! Perhaps you set two or three goals that you'd like to achieve over the coming year. Now you need to keep a record to document the activities you participate in to achieve those goals. There are three approaches that you can employ for keeping a record using our CPD Online template – Professional Development Record. You can use the template to record:

- Only the activities you participate in that are related to the goals you have set in your plan,
- All the CPD activities that you participate in throughout the year, regardless of whether or not they are related to your goals, or
- All your activities using two separate templates, so that you maintain a record of all your activities but are able to identify easily those that relate to your goals.

Everyone has their own organisational style, so choose a way of keeping a record that suits your style. Once you have chosen how you will keep a record, what should that record contain?

- **Type of activity:** the date/s of the activity with a brief description.
- **Reason:** A brief explanation as to why you chose to undertake the activity. Was it a step towards achieving one of your goals? Was it something required by your company? Was it undertaken because it related to a personal interest?
- **Impact:** make a brief statement about the impact of the activity; what did you learn?
- **Actions:** finally, consider what actions you will take as a result of participating in this activity. How will you apply the knowledge acquired? Is further action necessary? For example, do you now need to learn something else or do you want to revise your professional development plan in some way?

Some months down the road you may realise that an activity has had an impact that you hadn't recognised before or that you are applying what you have learned in a new situation. Go back to your record and add these observations. By using the record this way you will be more aware of your own growth and progress and will find it easier to carry out the reflective part of the CPD process at the end of the year.

Reflection

So, last month you made a professional development plan and this month you have started to keep a professional development record. Let's fast forward to May or June next year. You will be starting to think about the final phase of your CPD year – the personal reflective statement. This is a source of dread and trepidation to most participants and, I dare say, the stumbling block that stops many people from making a CPD submission. Fear not! The personal reflective statement is much easier than you probably think.

I asked Colin Stevenson, who has reviewed the CPD submissions we have received so far and provided feedback on them, for his view on

the personal reflective statement. He said:

'This is often found to be the most difficult to write, although it is probably the most important part of the CPD submission. It is basically an honest appraisal of what has been achieved in the past year.'

The reflective statement is best written in narrative form as a true reflection of the past year and should include both facts and personal feelings. It might be described as a discussion with yourself on where you are in your career and what is to be done to further it.

As a start it might be useful to reflect upon the following questions:

- Have the objectives of the plan been achieved?
- If not, why not?
- What could I have done differently?

Further reflection should be directed towards whether long-term plans have been changed and to next year's plan. It is not unusual when appraising the past year to realise that long-term objectives have changed and this is the time to refocus upon the career objectives.

Reflection can provide a focus for the future plan and, from the experience of the past year, provide a guide to plans for the future.'

André Le Goubin writes about this in his book, *Mentoring at Sea: The 10 minute challenge*:

'When I began my degree, I couldn't readily understand the concept of reflection at all, although it was clearly considered important by the university. I explained this difficulty to my professor, and he suggested I imagine that I was sitting on top of a hill, looking down on my career. Suddenly it became clear to me as I could easily imagine that. I could explore my career to date from any angle and then understand what it means in terms of the knowledge I had gained. This was one of the most useful things I gained from my studies and the concept of reflection is something I use most days.

'The developed skill of reflection is a powerful tool for considering experiences and for gaining experiential knowledge – that is knowledge gained from experience that has been reflected upon. This skill now permeates every aspect of my life, both personal and professional. Any type of decision-making now requires a certain amount of reflection, but this does not make me any less decisive; it just helps me make better decisions.'

The simplest way to approach composing your personal reflective statement might be to consider something that anyone who has been to sea is familiar with: debriefing after drills or incidents. You consider: what went well and badly? What was planned for and what wasn't and how can it be addressed in the future? What lessons have been learned? How can what was learned be applied in the future? Think of the personal reflective statement as your personal debrief of the past year.

I hope that this article has persuaded some of you to embark on your own professional development journey over the next year. As our July article stated, you are all doing CPD. By doing it in a conscious way – setting goals, recording what you learn through the CPD activities you take part in and then reflecting at the end of the year – not only will you gain greater benefit from your CPD but so will those you work with.

Please write to me at CPD@nautinst.org with any questions, comments, suggestions or examples of how CPD has helped you. And remember that you can also use our LinkedIn group to raise CPD questions and issues. 🌊