

THEMES FOUND IN ALL EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

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A photograph of a curved concrete staircase with a white handrail, set against a light-colored stone wall. The staircase is the central focus, curving from the bottom left towards the top right. The wall is made of large, light-colored stone blocks. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the textures of the concrete and stone.

01

Foreword from Ben



FOREWORD FROM BEN

You know what? Employees have a lot more in common that you realize. Even in coaching top execs and CEOs, I've been amazed at how much similarity there is in what they need from a coaching and mentoring perspective. Everyone wants to feel special and unique, and how we get our needs met in our work life is often quite personal, but at the core, the needs and areas of development are often shared across professionals.

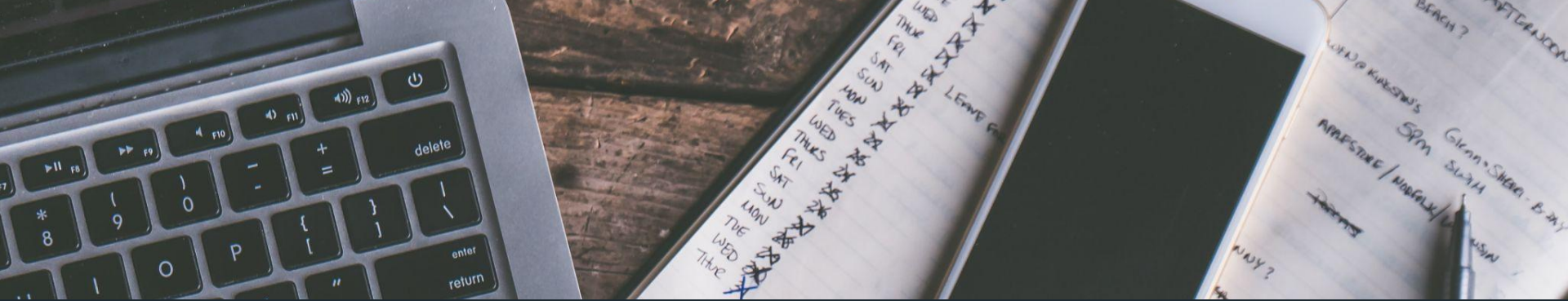
Think of what most employees need developmentally as a Venn diagram with a giant overlap between the circles.

-Ben Brooks, PILOT Founder and CEO



02

**Consider the
Conference Registration
Package**



CONSIDER THE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION PACKAGE

Imagine you were planning a conference for 200 people. You would put together conference packets with the understanding that there would be basic things that each attendee would need: discount codes for area hotels, a map of the venue, a name tag on a lanyard, a schedule of all the sessions, information about each presenter, a pen and paper, a list of nearby restaurants.

Imagine if instead you tried to create 200 welcome packets individualized to each attendee's needs and wants. In order to put together the packet for the first attendee, you would have to collect a remarkable amount of information about her.

You would leave out hotel information, because you would know she planned to stay with her sister. You'd make sure her schedule listed only the sessions for which she was registered. The map would highlight the locations of the events she would be most interested in. The pad of paper would be her favorite color. You would include a list of restaurant recommendations curated to her particular preferences and dietary needs.

CONSIDER THE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION PACKAGE

This level of personalization is often glamorized, but imagine doing that 199 more times. It would be an exhausting and expensive undertaking. It would also be completely unnecessary. We've all been getting the same conference package for years, and we've all been happy to keep the parts we want and chuck the rest in the recycling bin.

But, over-personalization is the approach that so many HR leaders take to employee development. It's easy to get caught up in the idea that each employee is 100% unique and in need of individualized development plans.

It's a misconception that if you could just identify each employee's personalized list of developmental needs, you could supercharge their growth. In reality, no organization can afford to create and execute on bespoke employee development plans for each staff member. Moreover, most employees actually have very similar development needs and the highest ROI comes from serving those needs.

In most areas, HR leaders know better than to try to meet every employee's needs individually. That is why each employee doesn't have their own personalized benefits package, specialized IT equipment, or performance review process.

“That would be an operational nightmare, and would likely result in many employees not getting what they really need,” explained PILOT Founder & CEO Ben Brooks. “If each employee had to individually make a case for what they wanted or needed, who would be told yes? Who would be told no? How the heck could you execute against that?”



03

Questions for HR Leaders to Ask Themselves



QUESTIONS FOR HR LEADERS TO ASK THEMSELVES

It's time for HR leaders to step back and reevaluate this ad-hoc approach to employee development. If you are trying to develop your employees at scale, it's time to ask yourself: *How well are we delivering on employee growth and development? How do we make sure our employee development program empowers leadership at every level? Are our programs inclusive, remote-friendly, and flexible?*

You also need to determine what role you'd like your employees to play in their own career development. As Senior Research Analyst Heather Gilmartin Adams [explained recently](#):

“We must shift to a mindset of enabling, not providing. Forward-thinking Learning & Development organisations are focusing on empowering and enabling employees to develop, not on providing all development opportunities themselves.”



QUESTIONS FOR HR LEADERS TO ASK THEMSELVES

This will need to be a collaborative approach. When employees lack structure or direction, they may gravitate towards “edutainment”. But if you dig deep and have real conversations with your employees about who they want to be and what kind of impact they want to have on the organization, you can redirect them toward the fundamentals.

Fundamentals are not always glamorous. But, spending time on the basics can lead to incredible growth for both an organization and its employees. It is alluring for employees, managers, and HR to think there must be something new and magical that will make everything click.

Not true! The key lies in going back to the essentials.



A photograph of a modern, curved concrete staircase with a white handrail, set against a light-colored wall. The staircase is the central focus, curving away from the viewer. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the texture of the concrete.

04

Developing Universal Capabilities for All Employees



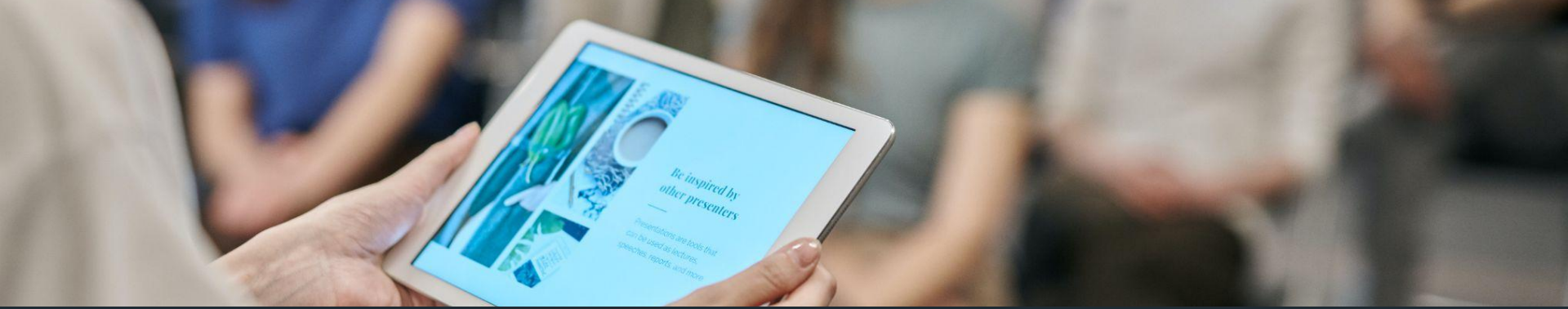
DEVELOPING UNIVERSAL CAPABILITIES FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

Spend a minute jotting down what you think the fundamentals are. Let go of the idea that the list will vary depending on job description or department. This is not about making sure that everyone working with analytics learns to use pivot tables or about sending your entire comms department to a web writing workshop. Most organizations have technical skills training figured out.

You will know that you have a list of fundamentals when *everyone* in your organization could work on developing these capabilities and walk away a better employee.

If you want employees who are self-directed, actively shape their own experience at work, and feel great about their careers, here are four key things everyone who works for you should always be developing. These competencies are evergreen, universal, and worth investing in:

- 01 Self-reflection:** The ability to inform personal growth through introspection and self-awareness.
- 02 Soliciting feedback:** The ability to actively seek outside perspectives and insights to improve both self and situational awareness.
- 03 Self-advocacy:** The ability to find and use one's voice to state to oneself and to others what you want and need.
- 04 Taking action:** The ability to initiate, follow through, and be accountable once one has determined and declared their goals.



DEVELOPING UNIVERSAL CAPABILITIES FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

What would it be like for your organization if each of your employees were continually investing in these capabilities?

“Organizations that get this right have a huge competitive advantage,” explains Brooks. “Employees shift from an entitlement mindset to an inquisitive one. Managers challenge employees directly and help them become better versions of themselves. Everyone in the organization overcomes their learned helplessness, realizing each individual has a great deal of impact on their own satisfaction and success at work.”

A photograph of a modern, curved concrete staircase with a white handrail. The staircase is set against a light-colored, textured wall. The steps are wide and shallow, and the handrail is a simple, curved white bar. The overall aesthetic is clean and architectural.

05

Five Real Ways to Create Employee Development for Everyone



FIVE REAL WAYS TO CREATE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT FOR EVERYONE

Deciding to shift away from an unscalable and ineffective case-by-case approach towards a focus on the fundamentals is a good start. But it can be challenging to take on this new approach.

Here are some things you can do today that will steer you away from impossible-to-scale bespoke employee development toward creating a single program that truly works for everyone.

- 01** Provide programs that can consistently meet the needs of large populations of employees at a price that makes development sustainable.
- 02** Help managers focus on a select few developmental areas within a framework of core growth competencies for most employees. Offer freedom within that framework.
- 03** Eliminate the need for a giant menu; define fewer offerings, that cover a broader base of developmental needs.
- 04** Deploy programs that bring employees together for a shared experience and that instill common competencies into your organization.
- 05** Demystify career development by breaking it down to observable behaviors and core competencies, with less focus on promotions.



FIVE REAL WAYS TO CREATE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT FOR EVERYONE

One of the benefits of taking this 5-step approach to employee development is that you have a lot of agility when it comes to connecting it to other key programs and competencies. It also allows you to make changes in a way that facilitate clear measurement and repeatability. If you are delivering the same program to everyone, it is much easier to tweak that one program in a way that works best for everyone. rather than having to pull apart and reassemble dozens of individual programs.

As Max Freedman [writes in Business News Daily](#),

“Build your program so that it's easy to switch things up if your employees don't engage with a training session or reach your goals. A successful employee training and development program can adapt.”

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06

**Big Changes, Big
Rewards**

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BIG CHANGES, BIG REWARDS

Going back to fundamentals might feel like a daunting reset for your organization's approach to employee development, but it's absolutely worth it. HR leaders will be able to reach further down into their organizations to engage employees who are often neglected, such as entry-level employees, diverse employees, and non-customer facing employees. This will massively shift the perception of employees regarding their growth and career opportunities.

For your managers, it will become easier and more efficient to develop employees. Conversely, for those employees, this approach will help them feel more successful by giving them a role in which they can

succeed. They will come away with crucial skills that will help them advance in their careers, while feeling more satisfied in their current roles.

The benefits to your organization as a whole will be transformative. A return to fundamentals will be the key element in shifting the organization's culture to one of citizenship and responsibility.

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07

**Last Word from
Ben**

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LAST WORD FROM BEN

Across organizations, there is a widely shared desire to develop employees, yet we're largely failing in this area, even in organizations with large L&D budgets. It doesn't have to be this way, and in order for things to change we'll need to shed old paradigms and approaches. The future of work is self-directed and our organizations must prepare managers and employees. PILOT is here to help make meaningful career development inclusive and easy for everyone.

-Ben Brooks, PILOT Founder and CEO



A photograph of two women sitting at a table, looking at a laptop. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow t-shirt and has her hair pulled back. The woman on the right is wearing a black t-shirt, glasses, and large hoop earrings. They appear to be in a collaborative work environment. The word 'PILOT' is overlaid in white text on the left side of the image.

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Learn how to send your employees through PILOT's development program.

[BOOK A DEMO](#)