

**Individual Development Plans:**

**Capitalizing the Human Element**

**Advanced Management Program**

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**Introduction.** Understanding the purpose of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and the elements necessary for their successful implementation is the topic of this paper. Today's organizations have identified metrics to measure performance and to ensure they are progressing toward their strategic objectives. These metrics are commonly grouped into four categories, two of which specifically identify human resources as an element that requires development in order to be successful.

Training is one significant aspect of personnel development. Employee training provides an organization with the qualified workforce necessary to successfully meet its mission and prepare the organization for strategic change. It provides employees the necessary skills to meet current job requirements as well as preparing them for future professional growth and promotion.

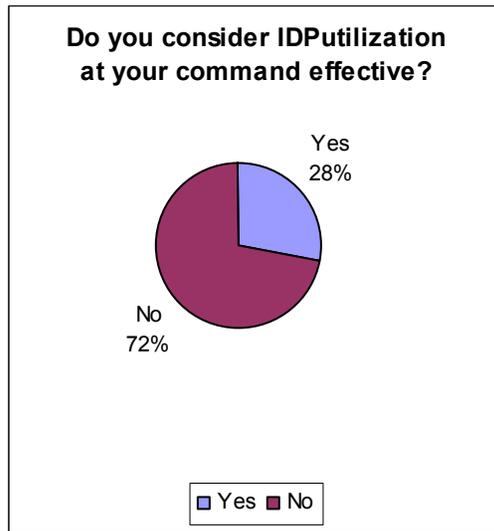
DoD has experienced eleven consecutive years of downsizing with 50% of the remaining civilian workforce eligible for retirement by 2005. As such, personnel development for those remaining members of the workforce and new hires must be strictly reinforced. Personnel development is critical to DoD's successful future. There is documented evidence that use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) within a significant number of DoD activities is ineffective. In addition, there is a strong perception by many individuals that IDPs have become no more than just an administrative action rather than a well-designed course of action to be followed in order to prepare DoD for its future challenges.

**Background.** One method employed within DoD to identify and schedule training requirements for personnel development is the use of IDPs. DoD Administrative Instruction No. 40 defines them as:

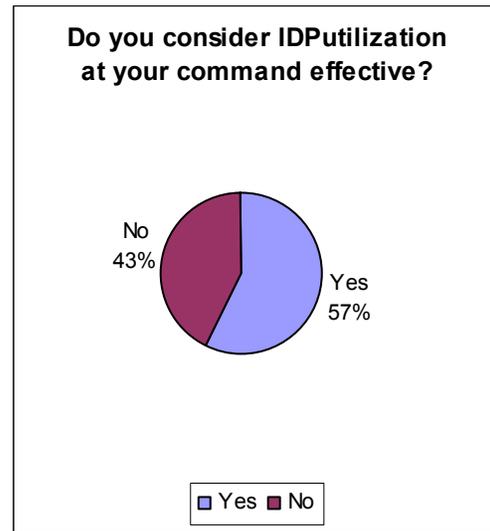
“IDPs are documented training plans that are established to address deficiencies and to develop individual employee potential. The IDP is primarily used to improve satisfactory performance or to deal with poor performance. It is used to set the employee’s short range (1-2 years) and long range (3-5 years) goals that relate to the present and possible future needs of the organization. The IDP dovetails employee career considerations with the needs of the organization and the performance appraisal process. The goal is to improve the overall effectiveness of the organization by enhancing individual performance.”

Although organizations within DoD understand that training of employees is integral to their effectiveness and have directed that IDPs be the means to administer to this aspect of personnel development, organizations have ineffective programs.

Ineffectiveness is identified either overtly as evidenced by a finding during a command assessment or can be inferred from the opinions of employees involved in the IDP process. A survey of the Advanced Management Program (AMP) February 2002 class members (Attachment A) posed the question: Do you consider IDP utilization at your activity to be effective? When answering from the perspective of the individual’s utilization of his/her IDP, 72% of the respondents believed that IDP use in their organization was ineffective (see Figure 1, next page). From their perspective as a supervisor, 43% indicated that they viewed their activity’s use of IDPs as ineffective (see Figure 2, next page).



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

Ineffective IDPs whether overt by not using them or inferred from employee opinion, can lead to organization problems on many fronts. Ineffective training programs prevent maintaining a qualified workforce, limit the professional growth within an organization and can lead to the inability of an organization to retain quality employees. In addition, limited training can prevent an organization from achieving strategic objectives and lessen its ability to adapt to the environment that has been characterized by increasing change.

**Governing Regulations and Benefits.** Why do activities use IDPs? A variety of legislation has been passed into Federal law that requires a federal agency to monitor its training activities. These laws provide federal agencies with specific direction on the levels of supervision, control, and review of training activities within their agency. Title

5 U.S.C Section 4103 (1958), also known as the Government Employees Training Act (GETA), is the government wide authority for training the Federal workforce. Under GETA, planning for training is required for the federal workforce as well as maintaining training information such as training plans, training expenses, and training assessments.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 focuses on the improvement of the effectiveness and public accountability of federal programs in meeting their objectives and providing the results. Additionally, an annual review of the organizational, occupational and individual needs for employee training is required by the heads of agency under Executive Order Number 11348 Section (1967). This executive order reinforced the GETA by requiring “the establishment and operation of progressive and efficient training programs, thereby improving public service, increasing efficiency and economy, building and retaining a workforce of skilled and efficient employees, and installing and using the best modern practices and techniques in the conduct of government’s business.”

Activities utilize IDPs for planning training for their employees not only because they are required by regulation but also because they will provide specific benefits to both the command and individual. Some of these benefits are:

1. *IDPs support individual growth within the organization.* This covers both professional and personal growth. It promotes continuous, self-directed learning among the workforce. Under an effective IDP process, people excel in their current positions and design career plans to facilitate lateral or vertical movement within DoD. The IDP is a means to give direction, support, and build the success of each individual. Each individual is provided the opportunity to accomplish developmental goals. Personal interaction with one’s supervisor is essential to the development of an IDP. Employees are encouraged to take an active role in planning and executing their IDP to achieve personal success. It serves as a collaborative and signed agreement that establishes the structure for

future communication, feedback, monitoring of training, and the foundation to develop command-wide metrics.

2. *IDPs support organizational growth.* It provides the organization with a snapshot of the right mix of professional and personal skills required to meet current and future challenges. This allows the organization to be better equipped to adapt to change and attract new talent. IDP information provides the foundation for various performance metrics. This organizational growth will lead to higher retention rates, motivated personnel, and developmental opportunities within the organization.

3. *IDPs serve as a planning tool.* As a planning tool, IDPs set training priorities and identify current and future requirements and skill sets. Effective IDPs focuses employees and supervisors on the expected outcome, assigns responsibility and designates accountability. Detailed planning allows DoD to operate in a dynamic environment and implement best business practices based on doing the job better, faster, and more effectively; a direct result of employee development and education.

4. *IDPs serve as a budget tool.* The IDP requirements (inclusive of training and/or associated travel costs) should be a command priority, should be a routine element of the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) process, and should be monitored. Consolidation of IDP requirements will provide budget efficiencies and allows for equitable distribution of training dollars.

**Elements of an Effective IDP System.** If used properly, IDPs can be an effective training tool for the employee, the supervisor and the organization. There are numerous elements of an IDP system that contribute to its effectiveness, and six of these elements have been identified as essential for the system to be effective within an organization. The six key elements are: Requirements Definition, Resources, Management Support, Communications, Process for IDPs and a Career Counselor. There is no set sequential order in which these elements need to be implemented, however, the Requirements Definition must be identified before any of the other key elements can truly contribute to effectiveness.

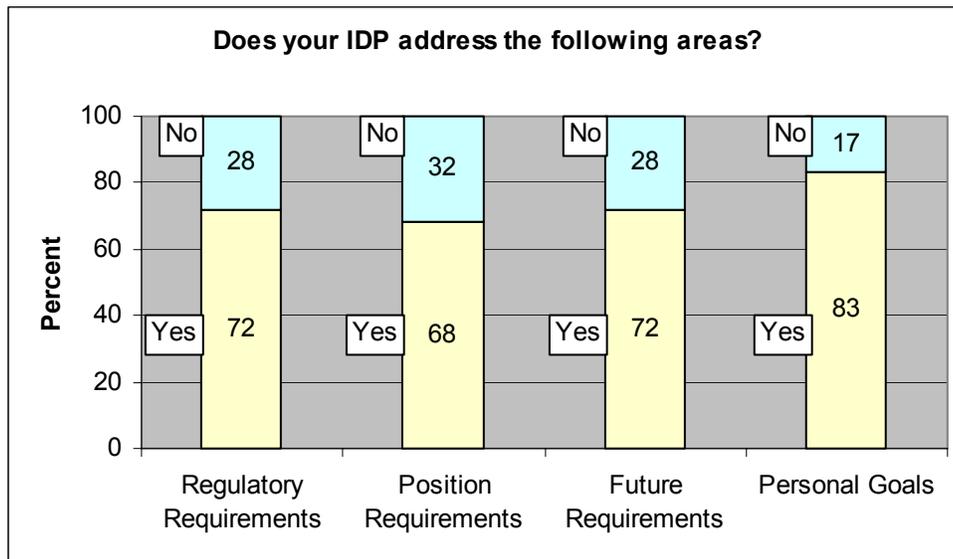


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### Requirements Definition

Each IDP must have a clear definition of the organization's current goals, its future vision and requirements for the vision. With this strategic vision, clear individual requirements can be defined providing a clear objective and purpose for the IDP within the organization. It helps to define the employee's role within an organization. As seen in Figure (3) below, only 68% of survey respondents felt their IDPs addressed regulatory, position and future requirements.

With this definition clearly articulated in the IDP, the organization can determine and assess the competencies, experience and capabilities required by an employee to meet the organization's goals and capabilities. The requirements may be defined by regulation or the activity's strategic direction. This information can be gathered from various resources such as past IDPs (if past IDPs were utilized effectively), a Career Counselor and from another organizations with similar types of goals and objectives.



**Figure 3**

From this information, the organization can identify which competencies, experiences and capabilities the employee does not possess. A clear requirements definition on the IDP is critical since it is the starting point of the IDP process.

Funding

Another key element for an effective IDP is funding. The appropriate funding must be allocated and available. The funding for training identified in the IDPs is the actual training dollars and travel costs that will be incurred. Figure (4), below, indicates that 60% of survey respondents stated inadequate funding was the cause for not being able to follow their training plan.

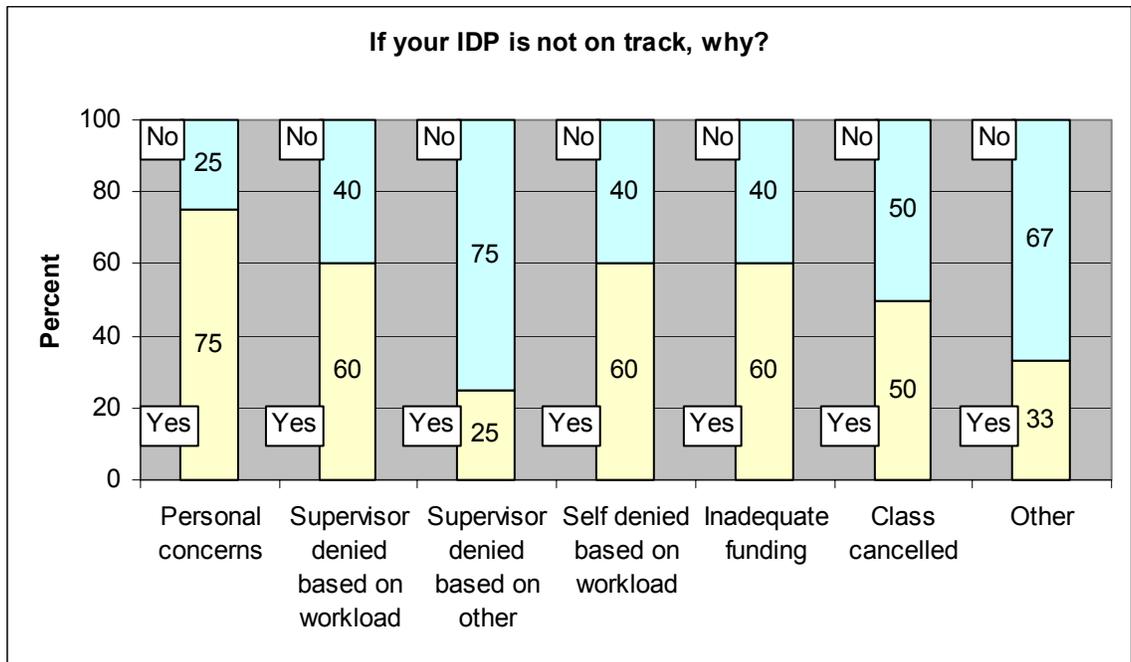


Figure 4

The IDP requirements must be linked to the POM process. To be a true strategic planning tool, funding must be programmed based on future needs as identified by the IDPs, not simply past allocations.

### Management Support

Strong management support for the IDP system must come from the executive level down to the first line supervisor within an organization. It serves as a commitment from management to ensure that IDPs will be implemented throughout the organization. This commitment is not “lip service”. Management must provide the time for the current workforce to attend training as outlined in the IDP. There must be enforcement of the IDPs by management to ensure that every employee attends the training listed on the IDP unless there are extenuating circumstances (family emergency or mission crisis). Sixty percent of survey respondents indicated training was denied by their supervisor because of workload (Figure 4). Management must monitor the IDP through performance metrics that show if training has been effective and actually meets the requirements identified. The number of employees that completed training and their incorporation of the training for their job should also be included in the performance metrics. The development and use of these metrics will also establish accountability. Management must also recognize an employee when a training course is completed.

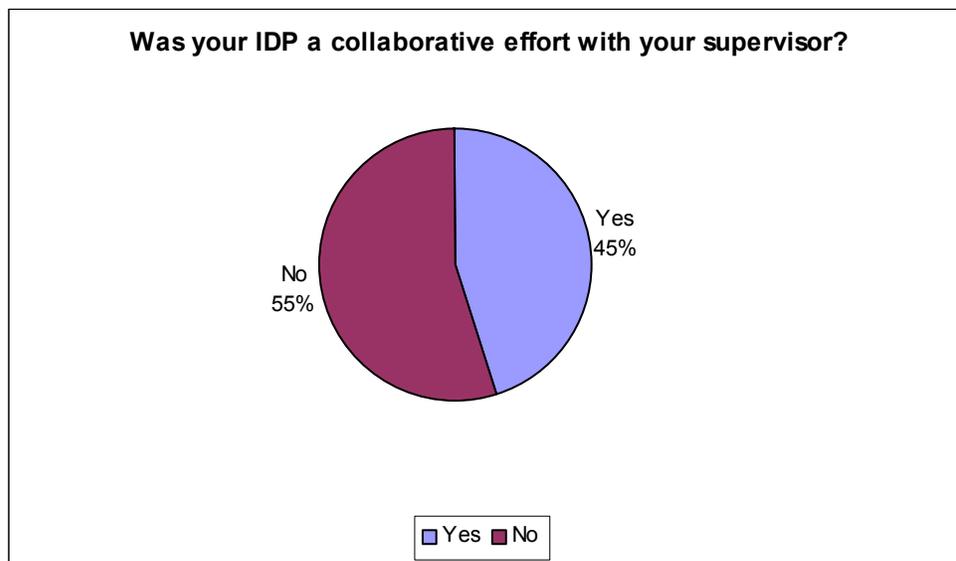
### Communications

Communications between the employee, supervisor and the organization is critical. The IDP composition, its purpose and objective must be communicated and understood by both the employee and their supervisor. Communication promotes buy-in from the

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employee and the supervisor of the clearly defined requirements of the organization as stated in the IDP. There must be collaboration between employee and supervisor during the development, implementation and evaluation of the IDP. Fifty-five percent of survey respondents indicated their IDP process was not a collaborative effort (Figure 5).

Without the collaboration, apathy from both the employee and supervisor towards IDPs will exist. Misunderstanding and misperceptions of the IDP system within the organization will be minimized if they are clearly communicated.



**Figure 5**

### Process For IDPs

There must be a process for IDPs identified in the organization that covers their development, execution and evaluation. The IDP planning process would include the identification of what documents are utilized to complete an IDP, how to complete the IDP form, when the IDP should be completed within an agency, the timeframe of

employee completing the IDP and meeting with supervisor, timeframe for modifying the IDP and signing of IDP by both employee and supervisor. Forty percent of survey respondents have never developed an IDP in their career (Figure 6). An evaluation process is needed upon completion of the training that is identified in the IDP.



**Figure 6**

This would include what and when to meet with supervisor regarding the training completed and implementation of skills/methods learned.

### Career Counselor

The last key element to ensure effective IDPs is having a career counselor identified and fully integrated within the organization. The career counselor will be able to assist management and employees in identifying training courses that would match with their required core competencies to meet the requirements defined on the IDPs. The

career counselor can also assist employees with their career planning which will be reflected in their IDPs. A clear need for career counselors to be involved in the IDP process is indicated by 32% of respondents with IDPs that did not include their position requirements (Figure 3).

**Recommendation.** Personnel development is key to successful organizations. The DoD workforce has experienced much change over the past 11 years and significant change is expected in the near future due to demographics and the changing environment in which it operates. Planning for this change is critical and it is through personnel development that DoD can more smoothly transition. A successful training program is essential for this development and IDPs are the tools we use to administer training requirements. Activities must ensure that the six key elements identified for a successful IDP system are addressed and implemented in order to meet their missions and strategic goals.

## **SURVEY ON USE AND VALUE OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS (IDPs)**

### **Demographic Data**

Are you filling a DAWIA (Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act) acquisition designated position: Please circle 9 YES or 22 NO

Active Military Service: Years 19 Months 0

Civil Service: Years 19 Months 4

Note: Received no response from 1 individual.

Of your years of civil service, what percent was covered by IDPs?

7 0 – 25%   3 26-50%   1 51 – 75%   2 76 – 100%

Note: Received no response from 1 individual.

No response from 1 individual that was included in the Civil Service poll directly above.

### **Attachment A**



### Part I: Individual Experience with IDPs

The last time I developed an IDP was:

- \_12\_ the past 12 months  
 \_2\_ 12 to 24 months ago  
 \_4\_ 2 or more years ago  
 \_12\_ never (If never, then please go to Part II)

Note: 1 person did not respond

The following questions apply to your most recent IDP		YES	NO
1	Do you feel your IDP is current?	13	5
2	In assembling your IDP, was it a <i>collaborative effort</i> between you and your supervisor? (i.e. not just signed by your supervisor)	9	11
3	Does your IDP address:		
	Regulatory requirements?	13	5
	Immediate position requirements (not regulatory)?	13	6
	Future required capabilities of position/department/command or career field other than personal goals/desires?	13	5
	Personal goals/desires?	15	3
4	Do you feel you are on track with completing the events/opportunities identified in your latest IDP?	11	8
	<b>If you answered NO to question # 4, the reason was due to:</b>		
	Personal/family concerns	3	1
	Supervisor denied based on current tasking	3	2
	Supervisor denied based on reason other than tasking	1	3
	Self denial based on current tasking	3	2
	Funding not made available	3	2
	Class, course or opportunity cancelled	2	2
Other (please identify)	1	2	
5	Do you consider IDP utilization for yourself to be effective?	11	8
6	Do you consider IDP utilization at your activity to be effective?	6	13

#### Attachment A

## Part II: Supervisory Experience with IDPs

The last time I developed IDPs with my employees was:

- 14   within the past 12 months
- 3   12 to 24 months ago
- 2   2 or more years ago
- 7   never (If never, then please go to Part II)

Note: 5 did not respond

The following questions apply to your most recent IDP		YES	NO
1	Do you feel their IDPs are current?	15	5
2	In assembling their IDPs, were they a <i>collaborative effort</i> between you and your employees? (i.e. not just directed by you or a second line supervisor)	16	3
3	Do their IDPs address:		
	Regulatory requirements?	13	6
	Immediate position requirements (not regulatory)?	16	4
	Future required capabilities of position/department/command or career field other than personal goals/desires?	16	3
	Personal goals/desires?	19	0
4	Do you feel they are on track with completing the events/opportunities identified in their latest IDPs?	15	6
	<b>If you answered NO to question # 4, the reason was due to:</b>		
	Personal/family concerns	2	2
	Supervisor denied based on current tasking	0	3
	Supervisor denied based on reason other than tasking	0	3
	Self denial based on current tasking	3	1
	Funding not made available	4	1
	Class, course or opportunity cancelled	4	0
	Other (please identify)	1	2
5	Do you consider IDP utilization for your employees to be effective?	16	4
6	Do you consider IDP utilization at your activity to be effective?	13	10

### Attachment A