



## Stretch Assignments as an Opportunity to Develop Employees

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### Career Planning for Managers

#### What is a stretch assignment?

A stretch assignment is a project or task given to an employee that is currently beyond their level of knowledge or skill. Its purpose is to “stretch” an employee developmentally by placing him/her in a challenging position in order to learn and grow.

#### Why use stretch assignments with employees?

- Provide learning opportunities for employees while ensuring that necessary work is accomplished
- Can be used in place of or as a complement to formal employee training
- Boost engagement levels among employees
- Give employees an opportunity to “learn through doing”
- Help identify potential leaders or strengthen a current leader’s abilities
- Demonstrate an employee’s capability when moving to the next level
- Provide a possible internal candidate for an open position

#### How can stretch assignments be sized appropriately?

Stretch assignments should be used to gently push employees forward in the learning process. It shouldn’t be too challenging or too easy. If an assigned task is too difficult for the employee, the supervisor risks frustration or burnout on the part of the employee. On the other hand, if a task is too easy or routine the employee may become bored. To help an employee move forward with such an assignment, it may also be beneficial to allow them to team up with a coworker.

#### Resources and Links

- [What is a Stretch Assignment?](#)
- [Stretch Assignments: Stepping Up Accelerates Development](#)
- [Stretch Assignments for High Potential Employees](#)
- [Leading Rookie Talent: A Sizing Guide for Stretch Assignments](#)