



Supporting Employees as They Continue Their Education

Career Planning for Managers

Why should I encourage my direct reports to go back to school?

Encouraging employees to continue their education doesn't just have great results for the organization and for the employee. It can help you as a manager develop your team and create a cycle of giving back. When your direct reports are happy, they'll be more likely to want to make you happy.

It will bring expertise and help keep the department on top of emerging knowledge
Staying up to date on developments, new best practices and creative possibilities is always the best way to stay relevant. Industries are not static and experience growth just like anything else. By encouraging direct reports to get a better understanding of their industry or to add onto what they already know by supplementing it with something else, you're investing in the long-term growth and sustainability of your whole department.

It will foster employee creativity and collaboration

Networking is an inherent opportunity for those in school or attending workshops and conferences. It's proven a great way to enhance intel about hands on understanding of new tools and approaches in an industry. By encouraging your direct reports to utilize these opportunities, you're telling them to bring back useful information. If they're able to pick on the skill of networking well, they may be interested in acting as the resident collaborator with other departments and help with more cross-departmental troubleshooting and analysis.

It can help improve internal hiring possibilities

By encouraging all your direct reports to develop skills further or even develop new ones, you can create a workforce that's more capable of satisfying the department's needs and goals. The long-term results mean that employee competency increases and satisfaction goes up thus productivity and efficiency as well.

Ways to support employees who choose to continue their education:

Send them to workshops and conferences

This is the easiest way to get your feet wet and results in a quick turn around. It's less of a time commitment and produces less of a disruption on a day-to-day basis. Do your research on funding opportunities though. Direct reports may not be able to pay to attend these out of pocket or may expect for the company to handle it. Knowing and clarifying whether there are

any available funds, resources or reimbursement plans available beforehand can save unmet expectations and misunderstandings.

Encourage them to do a little at a time

If you and your direct report are interested in developing more expertise but don't have the time for a 2-year program or longer, taking one class at a time and building off that can be a good in-between. If your direct report is interested in a longer time commitment but you're not ready to jump into changing your department culture and way of doing things just yet, this can be a nice and slow first step.

Be open to their changing needs as they explore degree or certificate programs

For long-term results, degree and certificate programs equip direct reports with substantial knowledge and resources. It can bring in a whole new understanding to the department in the long run. Big results, however, require big change. Your direct reports may approach you about using flex-time or telecommuting more to offset the stress of working, going to school and in some cases raising a family. Being flexible when it comes to trying new techniques to manage direct reports can not only result in the degree but also increased trust, reliability and productivity.

Be a resource, read up on their options

Do your best to help them understand our Educational Assistance program. University of Missouri employees are eligible for a heavily reduced tuition and supplemental fee waiver (75%) after they complete their 6 month probationary period. [Here's](#) the University of Missouri's program policy for more information on how it works, eligibility and conditions. *Reading up on college credit for life experience is also helpful.* There are various testing programs that give college credit based on experience gained outside of the classroom. This can end up shortening the length of time it takes for your direct reports to get back into the office if it's important to you, as well as the amount of time it takes to exercise what they're learning. Not all certificates and degree programs accept these credits though, so make sure to relay that and encourage them to do their own research. [This article](#) goes over several programs, how they work and provides links to their websites so you can see for yourself if they are provided and accepted on your campus.

Be a role model and invest in it yourself

Test out this process on yourself first if you want too. See what the challenges and benefits are first hand so you can be an even better resource to your direct reports when they approach you about it. If they see you investing your career growth, they'll be more likely to follow suit and more onboard with developing that kind of workplace culture.

References and Links

Articles:

- [Employee Development: Supporting Lifelong Learning](#)
- [The Pros and Cons of Providing Employee Continuing Education](#)
- [Continuing Education Programs Benefits Employees and Employers](#)
- [New Research: Continuing Education Increases Income and Efficiency](#)

Videos:

- myLearn Lifelong Learning: Patricia Woertz

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