

# Tailor-Made: Building Development Plans around Your Strengths



**HEATHER KAY**

FOUNDER OF READY, AIM → IMPACT



So, you are doing great in your job and ready for the next step. You're looking for an opportunity to grow in a safe environment and want to find the best experience. Most companies will provide you with a list of activities to choose from as you create an Individual Development Plan (IDP). But the list is typically the same – mentor someone, take a class, network – and it's a good list, but unless it's customized for you, the outcome may not be as valuable. Just like a good tailor creates an outfit that fits your needs, so should you and your manager create an IDP that fits your development needs.

How should you decide what types of experiences?

1. **What's the goal of the experience?** Are you looking to grow your skills for your current position? Future position? Are you looking to develop as a leader?
2. **How much time do you have to commit to the experience?** Can you only work on this during business hours? Can you work during the weekends? Do you have a major deliverable in the next 3 months?
3. **Does the experience tap into your Strengths?** Do the experiences follow your natural tendencies? Do they promote your success?

The CliftonStrengths philosophy has 4 Domains – Executing, Influencing, Strategic Thinking and Relationship Building. Knowing your dominant domain can help you choose appropriate development opportunities; ones based on how you work best. **By tapping into your Strengths, you will create quality activities for your growth.**

Rachel is a Customer Service Representative and is looking to learn more about the IT Role in Operations. Her dominant domain is Executing. She is someone who likes to complete tasks in a quick and meaningful way; knows how to make things happen; and focuses on a project until it is finalized.

Experiences that would work well for Rachel:

1. **Complete a certification** – attending a training session isn't enough; having a result is important.
2. **Shadow someone in Operations and complete a presentation** – shadowing is a good way to gain knowledge and understanding but having her present her learnings will solidify her knowledge and show the completion of the project.

Are there other experiences that may work? Of course. Could these work for those in other dominant domains? Yes! But the rationale or follow up may be different.

Development is something that all employees should take advantage. Finding the best opportunities is imperative. Development is not a one-size-fits-all concept and being mindful of how you work is just as important as understanding where you need to grow.