



# Give your subordinates opportunities that will **foster their skill development**

## The challenge

Training is often the first solution considered to help people grow. Yet, this is only one option among many others. In fact, on the job experience is the main source of skill development... provided that this experience takes place in conditions conducive to learning.

## On the job learning opportunities

The most profitable experiences, in terms of learning, are the ones which confront people to a new or challenging situation, in an environment which supports them to succeed in coping with it and draw lessons from it:

<b>ASSIGN NEW CHALLENGES</b> Confronting your subordinate with new difficulties will lead him/her to develop new skills. Take care to remain available to provide support when required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Gradually widen the responsibilities</b> of your subordinate. E.g.: Entrust him/her with additional responsibilities, delegate a task that you took charge of previously, etc.</li><li>• Entrust him/her with <b>short-term assignments</b>. They are an opportunity to discover unfamiliar domains, at lesser risk. E.g.: Taking the lead on a project, replacing an absent colleague, mentoring a trainee to start taking on management responsibilities, etc.</li><li>• Suggest he/she represents your department in <b>cross-disciplinary teams</b>. E.g.: Involve him/her in a product development project to enhance his/her understanding of customer needs.</li></ul>
<b>EXPOSE TO A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS</b> Give your employee the opportunity to discover different environments, which will encourage him/her to question his/her convictions and way of working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confront him/her with <b>how other company units work</b>, so as to discover different reflexes from those in his/her department. E.g.: Suggest he/she attends meetings in other units, makes a presentation to the board, carries out a mission at a supplier's or in another department, interfaces with another department, etc.</li><li>• Suggest ways to get a better <b>understanding of the external environment</b>. E.g.: Suggest he/she becomes a member of a professional group.</li><li>• Open up his/her mind to <b>different ideas</b>. E.g.: Appoint him/her to attend a seminar on the latest advances in the field and communicate what he/she learned to his/her colleagues.</li></ul>
<b>BRING IN AN OBSERVER</b> In the heat of the action, it is often difficult to have a lucid view of one's way of working. Dialogue with an objective observer may be very beneficial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bring in someone <b>from outside the company</b> – technical expert or coach – to analyze the situation and discuss it with your subordinate: he/she will feel less threatened than if the criticism comes from above.</li><li>• Encourage him/her to find a <b>mentor</b> within the company: someone more experienced will be able to provide a beneficial objective view.</li><li>• Place him/her in the situation of <b>being observed</b>. E.g.: Accompany him/her to a meeting or customer appointment and then share your appreciation of his/her behavior; invite him/her to systematically ask for feedback from a colleague participating in the same cross-functional team, etc.</li></ul>
<b>PROVIDE CONCRETE HELP</b> When an employee does not fully master a skill, seize every opportunity to give advice and methods, that he/she will be able to use in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In your daily work together, do not hesitate to provide <b>advice</b> on his/her way of analyzing a problem, structuring his/her work, preparing for a delicate meeting, solving a difficulty, etc.</li><li>• After a project, take the time to give him/her <b>feedback</b> on the lessons to be learned for the future.</li><li>• Give him/her the opportunity <b>to work in tandem</b> with an experienced person who will provide help with inadequately mastered skills.</li></ul>