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The other annual work plan, Part 1

Walter E. Johnson, Frank Ruelas and Anne Van Dusen

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The other annual work plan, Part 1

- » A Personal Development Plan (PDP) is as important as a compliance work plan.
- » PDPs are not static, but should be updated continuously throughout the year.
- » Developing a PDP is not as challenging as it may seem.
- » Documenting goals and assigning deadlines by increments is a popular approach.
- » Research states that documented goals are more achievable than undocumented goals.

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This is the first article of a three-part series devoted to a Personal Development Plan.

Every year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General (OIG) shares its annual Work Plan. The OIG Work Plan becomes available to the public during the fourth quarter of the calendar year, which is the first quarter of the government's fiscal year. At the time the OIG Work Plan is released, many corporations are developing their strategic plans and finalizing their budgets for the upcoming year. Many ethics and compliance officers (ECOs) in the healthcare sector use the OIG Work Plan as a benchmark or baseline for their organization's work plan for their compliance and ethics programs. As this strategic and financial planning process occurs, which allows for organizations

to identify and respond to industry trends, it is easy for ECOs to defer their Personal Development Plans (PDPs), given their attention to the review of the OIG's Work Plan and its identification of focus areas that the OIG plans to develop throughout the year. In doing so, ECOs also overlook the opportunity to use the OIG Work Plan as an annual reminder to focus on their PDPs, which they may then apply throughout the upcoming year.

Deferring a PDP may be the result of competing priorities faced by ECOs. However, given a PDP's potential to enable ECOs to assess and identify areas of self-improvement and development, they should consider the development of a written PDP as a priority equal to that of their annual review of the OIG Work Plan. In other words, the review of the OIG's Work Plan and the development of a PDP are not competing priorities, but rather they are a single priority consisting of two complementary work products.

The OIG's Fiscal Year 2017 Work Plan states, "Work planning is an ongoing and



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evolving process, and the Work Plan is updated throughout the year.”¹ Similarly, the same approach should apply to the drafting of a PDP. The OIG Work Plan also notes what items were completed, revised, and removed from the previous Work Plan and includes new items that have been started or planned for the upcoming year.² This speaks to the continuity and fluidity of the OIG’s approach in managing its Work Plan. This also represents an effective way that new practitioners seeking to achieve results personally and professionally and those who are experienced within their roles as ECOs may wish to approach the development of their respective PDPs.

Getting started

For many, the thought of developing a PDP that is similar in length to the OIG Work Plan can be daunting. This is perfectly reasonable when one considers the scope of the OIG’s activities. The OIG’s Work Plan is developed using what appears to be a very simple and effective approach. The OIG Work Plan essentially describes what activities the OIG is planning to accomplish in the upcoming year. In addition (and this may be the most important aspect of its approach in the development of its Work Plan) the OIG provides the basis or reasons why the OIG has identified those activities in its Work Plan. When one realizes the scope of the OIG’s role and the variety of functions it performs, it is not surprising that an ECO may feel the development of a PDP is an aggressive undertaking that may also appear somewhat intimidating. The good news is this does not have to be the case.

By understanding that, similar to the OIG’s Work Plan, an ECO’s PDP is developed to identify the scope and breadth of those activities specific to the ECO that he/she wishes to accomplish in the upcoming year, the ECO then realizes that the PDP is developed on a scale comparable to that of the OIG’s Work

Plan. For some, the PDP may be more abbreviated, whereas for others, the PDP may be more comprehensive and detailed. It goes back to the simple and effective formula of identifying what one expects to accomplish and, perhaps more critically, it answers the question as to why these objectives are important to the ECO.

Consider that the OIG Work Plan is categorized into five different areas. Similarly, a PDP may also be categorized into different areas. Possible categories to consider in the development of a PDP may include the areas of professional, personal, physical, spiritual, and financial development. Depending on personal preference, there can be fewer categories, such as having personal and professional as the major categories with physical, spiritual, financial, and social goals being subcategories. The key here is that though the model or framework of a PDP may be similar to that of other PDPs developed by other ECOs, each PDP is unique to the ECO to whom it applies.

Establishing goals

For ECOs, establishing and maintaining an effective compliance program that detects and minimizes risk is a primary objective. Developing new ideas and implementing tasks to achieve the objective is a continuous activity. ECOs, as well as entry- and mid-level E&C practitioners, should have a vision for their PDP and how it contributes to further developing the ECO’s fit within the organization. Most importantly, ECOs should apply a personal vision to assist with achieving a work-life balance. It may be a good idea to develop vision statements so that a PDP can be developed that is consistent with the ECO’s vision statement while also helping to achieve a productive and manageable work-life balance. By maintaining balance, the stress levels should decrease and efficiency with establishing boundaries should increase, which in turn contributes to the effective development of a PDP.

There may be many approaches in developing a PDP, but Jim Rohn’s recommendation for developing personal objectives may be one that ECOs should consider.³ Rohn recommended writing a list of 50 things and, for readers requiring assistance, he offered the following questions:

- ▶ What do I want?
- ▶ What do I want to do?
- ▶ What do I want to see?
- ▶ What do I want to be?
- ▶ What do I want to have?
- ▶ Where do I want to go?
- ▶ What do I want to share?

After generating the list, ECOs should review the list and determine whether it will take 1 year, 3 years, 5 years, or 10 years to accomplish each item. Write the number 1, 3, 5, or 10 beside each item listed. After completing this task, select the four goals from each time period that have the highest priority. The final list should have 16 items. Here is an abridged example:

- ▶ Improve negotiation skills – 1 year
- ▶ Attend a regional compliance conference – 1 year
- ▶ Walk during lunch twice a week – 1 year
- ▶ Improve public speaking – 1 year
- ▶ Improve efficiency in Microsoft Project – 1 year
- ▶ Attend a national compliance conference – 3 years
- ▶ Earn a graduate certificate in corporate compliance – 5 years
- ▶ Write a book – 10 years

Conclusion

By establishing a PDP, ECOs can anticipate accomplishing more with written goals than unwritten goals. This is supported by a study by Gail Matthews that found that

those who wrote down their goals accomplished significantly more than those who did not write them down.⁴ ©

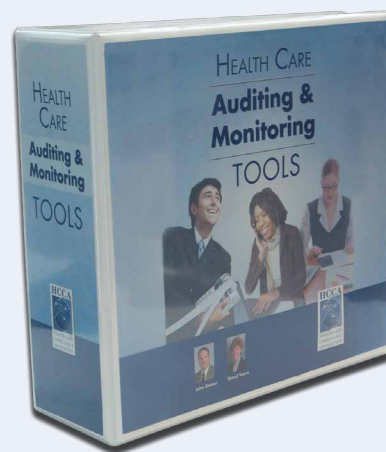
Walter E. Johnson contributed to this article in his personal capacity. The views expressed are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Kforce Government Solutions, Inc.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Inspector General: OIG Work Plan, Fiscal Year 2017. Available at <http://bit.ly/2j2IUoB>
2. Idem.
3. Jim Rohn: *The Art of Exceptional Living*. March 1, 2003. Simon and Schuster Audio/Nightingale Conant.
4. Ashley Feinstein: “Why You Should Be Writing Down Your Goals” *Forbes*, April 8, 2015. Available at <http://bit.ly/2jbEeHa>

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