

10 Features of a Mature Development System for Consultancies

Strong training, development and performance management in Professional Service Firms have been shown to be highly correlated to company and employee performance ([Kiiru 2011](#); [Beltrán-Martín et al. 2021](#)), innovation ([Susomrith et al. 2019](#); [Na Fu et al. 2017](#)) and commitment ([Castro-Casal et al. 2019](#)).

Below, I identify the 10 main features of a mature development system for professional service firms. This would often not be achieved until 100+ employees, but I've seen some firms of 25 people get this right, and firms of 250 who are still not there!

1. **Strategy-Aligned Capabilities Framework:**

- Develop a capabilities framework that is directly aligned with our strategic goals, ensuring that required competencies are transparent and universally understood across the organization.

2. **Defined Capability Progression:**

- Clearly articulate the progression path for each capability, ranging from foundational (Junior) to expert (Partner) level, with specific milestones and criteria for advancement.

3. **Role Clarity and Expectations:**

- Ensure that the expectations associated with each role are comprehensively documented and communicated, providing clarity to all members of the organization.

4. **Flexible Career Pathways:**

- Facilitate flexible career paths that allow individuals to tailor their career trajectory in alignment with both their personal interests and the firm's needs.

5. **Trusted Performance Review System:**

- Implement a consistent, reliable performance review process that is respected across the firm and serves as a basis for informed decision-making.

6. **Multi-Level Skills Assessment:**

- Conduct regular skills assessments at multiple levels – organizational, team/peer group, and individual – to identify and address competency gaps.

7. **Systematic Skills Development Plan:**

- Craft a systematic plan to bridge skills gaps, incorporating recruitment strategies, experiential learning, coaching, and formal training programs.

8. **Transparent Project Allocation:**

- Design project allocation processes with clear decision rights that take into account individual development needs as well as organizational goals.

9. **Embedded Coaching Culture:**

- Foster a coaching culture that is ingrained in our organizational DNA, promoting continuous on-the-job development and growth.

10. **Structured Training Programs:**

- Create detailed training curricula and annual training calendars, customized to meet the developmental requirements of each peer group within the firm. Answer the questions: who will be trained on what? When will they be trained, and by whom?