

Continuing Professional Development Best Practice Guidance for employers



What is CPD?

Broadly, CPD (Continuing Professional Development) is any activity engaged in by a qualified professional through which they continue to develop professionally. This should maintain and enhance existing competences and help develop new knowledge and skills. CPD should not be exclusively about formal courses or qualifications (although these can be valuable elements), and may involve development in both technical and non-technical areas. It can include a wide variety of activities such as open learning, private study, work experience and more.

Why should your employees engage in CPD?

Businesses of all sizes need knowledgeable competent people. Without engaging in appropriate CPD the workforce cannot hope to maintain competence let alone develop the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to changing business and client needs, and make use of the latest technology and materials, whilst conforming to ever changing legal and regulatory requirements.

Clients want to employ professionals who not only have up-to-date technical knowledge, but also have the management skills to complete a project on time and within budget, the communication skills to understand client needs, and a range of other competences needed to provide a good service. CPD can help develop and maintain all of these.

Professional Institutions (and similar bodies) often require or encourage their members to engage in CPD. Whether or not an individual is a member of an Institution which requires and monitors CPD, a committed professional should see CPD as about the chance to maintain and build knowledge and competence for their own personal career development rather than just a chore to satisfy external requirements. CPD could, for example, add to your employees knowledge of new regulations, or help them to manage projects more effectively.

As well as enhancing technical skills CPD should also be seen as an opportunity to support your staff and help them to gain skills in less obvious areas that could help your business. For example, you could gain or enhance in-house competence in:

- Marketing;
- Communications – to enhance relationships with clients, suppliers and colleagues; .
- accounts and finance management; and
- bidding/competing for work.

CPD can be beneficial to your business in a number of ways. It may help to:

- Ensure employees, and therefore your business, are up-to-date and competitive;
- minimise the risk of professional errors and potential litigation;
- provide evidence of the professional competence of your staff;
- make your workforce more flexible, which may reduce recruitment needs;
- make your workforce and business processes more efficient;
- make your workforce and business more responsive to new developments such as technologies, legislation and market developments; and
- it may even help to improve your business' profitability and image.

CPD is important to the construction industry as a whole because it:

- helps eliminate poor performance, and associated risks to employers, clients and individuals – including health and safety risks;
- makes the workforce better placed to compete in an international market and workforce;
- should result in skills which will contribute towards a better reputation for our industry, particularly amongst clients and the potential workforce; and
- should help foster trust in the competence of colleagues within teams.

How can your business get the most from CPD?

The value of CPD is dependent upon the ability of the activity to meet the development needs of the participant, therefore, whether or not an activity is 'labelled' as CPD should not necessarily be considered as important when assessing its value. A great deal of useful CPD takes place without reference to resources or courses specifically designed/labelled as CPD.

You can provide support for your employees' CPD in a number of ways, by:

- developing company procedures which support CPD;
- providing development opportunities (particularly those that can be experienced in-house);
- assisting with resources and expertise;
- giving positive encouragement and recognition; and
- by helping staff assess their competence and development needs, perhaps through a process of formal reviews.

To identify the most appropriate CPD activities for your staff, you may choose to rely on their professional judgement and the requirements of any Professional Institutions to which they are members. However, a more proactive approach can help to ensure your staff develop and maintain the skills your business needs. One way to do this is to help your staff plan (and fund) CPD with a focus on outputs (what competences they develop) rather than inputs (such as how much time they spend engaged in CPD) which:

- give staff the competence to expand or change their roles;
- give staff the skills to work with new technologies or within new markets; and
- address any shortcomings.

To summarise, you can improve your approach to CPD by:

- adopting a cycle of review, planning, development and assessment of achievement;
- taking a more output focused approach; and
- engaging in project based CPD.

Find out more:

For further sources of guidance and details of how to improve your approach to CPD visit www.cic.org.uk/cpd

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