



Supporting Employees as They Continue Their Education

Career Planning for Managers

Why should I encourage my direct reports to go back to school?

Encouraging employees to continue their education brings results to both them, your team, and your organization.

It will bring expertise and help keep the department stay on top of emerging knowledge.

Staying up-to-date on developments, best practices and creative possibilities is always the best way to stay relevant. Industries are not static and experience growth just like anything else. By encouraging direct reports to get a better understanding of their industry or to add onto what they already know by supplementing it with something else, you're investing in the long-term growth and sustainability of your whole department.

It will foster employee creativity and collaboration.

Networking is an inherent opportunity for those enrolled in school or attending workshops/conferences. Attending educational opportunities is also a great way to enhance hands-on understanding of new tools and approaches in the industry. By encouraging your direct reports to take advantage of these opportunities, you're equipping them to bring back useful information and connections to your team.

It can help improve internal hiring possibilities.

By encouraging your direct reports to further develop existing skills or to develop new skills, you can create a workforce that's more capable of satisfying the department's needs and goals. The long-term result is that employee competence, employee satisfaction, and employee productivity all increase.

Ways to support employees who choose to continue their education:

Send them to workshops and conferences.

This is the easiest way to get your feet wet and results in a quick turnaround. It's less of a time commitment and produces less of a disruption on a day-to-day basis. Do your research on funding opportunities though. Direct reports may not be able to pay to attend these out of pocket or may expect for the company to contribute to program costs. Knowing and clarifying

whether there are available funds, resources or reimbursement plans available beforehand can save you from the consequences of unmet expectations and misunderstandings.

Encourage them to do a little at a time.

If you and your direct report are interested in developing more expertise but don't have time for a 2-year program (or longer), consider taking one class at a time.

Be open to their changing needs as they explore degree or certificate programs.

For long-term results, degree and certificate programs equip direct reports with substantial knowledge and resources. It can bring in a whole new understanding to the department in the long run. Big results, however, require big change. Your direct reports may approach you about using flex-time or telecommuting to offset the stress of adding continuing education to their routine. Being flexible when it comes to trying new techniques to manage direct reports can not only result in the degree but also increased trust, reliability and productivity.

Be a resource, read up on their options

Do your best to help them understand our Educational Assistance program. University of Missouri employees are eligible for a heavily reduced tuition and supplemental fee waiver (75%) after they complete their 6-month probationary period. [Here's](#) the University of Missouri's program policy for more information on how it works, eligibility and conditions. *Reading up on college credit for life experience is also helpful.* There are various testing programs that give college credit based on experience gained outside of the classroom. This can end up shortening the length of time it takes for your direct reports to get back into the office if it's important to you, as well as the amount of time it takes to exercise what they're learning. Not all certificates and degree programs accept these credits though, so make sure to relay that and encourage them to do their own research. [This article](#) goes over several programs, how they work and provides links to their websites so you can see for yourself if they are provided and accepted on your campus.

Be a role model. Invest in yourself.

Test out this process on yourself, too. Develop a first-hand understanding of the challenges and benefits of continuing your education so that you can be a resource when your employees approach you with interest. If they see you investing your career growth, they'll be more likely to follow suit and support workplace culture of continuous learning.