

Developing People While Delivering the Project

A Practical Guide for Line Managers Operating Without Spare Time

Development is not additional work beside the project; it is the way project work is allocated, reviewed and remembered.

PREPARED BY

Manu Reynolds — Director

Buildit Admin Solutions Pty Ltd | ABN 35 677 590 082

0406 066 652 | manu@builditadminsolutions.com.au | builditadminsolutions.com.au

REVISION 1.0 | AUGUST 2026 | DRAFT FOR CLIENT REVIEW

Document Status and Use

CONTROLLED USE *This is an external Buildit development resource. It is not company policy, an industrial instrument, a competency matrix, legal advice or a guarantee of promotion, remuneration or retention. Adapt it to the client's delegations, systems, privacy requirements, project controls and formal people processes.*

Purpose

A manager-side companion for converting live work into short coaching, observable development, review discipline, promotion evidence and stronger succession without creating false promises.

Audience

Line managers, contracts managers, commercial managers and project leaders.

How to Use This Manual

1. Read the relevant chapter before a live conversation, review or decision—not after the consequence has already landed.
2. Apply the method to current project work. The suite is designed to change observable behaviour, not merely increase awareness.
3. Record the decision, action, owner, evidence and review date produced by the exercise.
4. Use the related manuals where the issue crosses career, communication, judgement, leadership or stakeholder boundaries.

Contents

- 5. 1. Lead From the Middle
- 6. 2. Know What the Person Wants
- 7. 3. Use Short Coaching Conversations
- 8. 4. Allocate Work to Create Evidence
- 9. 5. Stretch Without Exploitation
- 10. 6. Delegate to Develop
- 11. 7. Review With Discipline
- 12. 8. Build Observable Promotion Evidence
- 13. 9. Give Honest Feedback and Avoid False Promises
- 14. 10. Build Sponsors and Visibility
- 15. 11. Build Succession Into Delivery
- 16. 12. Create a Sustainable Rhythm

1. Lead From the Middle

Managers translate employee ambition, project consequence and organisational constraint into honest action.

The manager may not control structure, budgets or final promotion. They do control clarity, work access, feedback, advocacy and follow-through.

A line manager is not merely the person who allocates work and signs a review. You are the main translator between the employee and the organisation. You see the work closely enough to know where the capability is real, while having enough access upward to understand what the employee cannot see.

That position creates three duties. You must assess fairly, create useful development and communicate honestly. You are not required to manufacture opportunities that do not exist, but you are responsible for preventing avoidable uncertainty from becoming resentment.

EXAMPLE - ONE QUESTION, THREE DUTIES A CA asks, "When will I be promoted?" Assessment asks whether the person is ready. Development asks what evidence is still missing. Communication asks what timing, vacancy and approval constraints exist. Answering only one of the three leaves the conversation incomplete.

Managers often influence a decision without controlling it. You may recommend a promotion but not own the vacancy. You may rate performance but not set the bonus pool. You may support a salary adjustment but not approve the budget. Credibility depends on explaining this distinction early.

Do not present influence as authority to make a conversation easier. "I will get this done" becomes a broken promise when the decision sits elsewhere. Say what you will do, who decides, what evidence is required and when the employee will receive an update.

USEFUL LANGUAGE "I support the case and will put it forward. The final decision sits with the business unit and depends on the available role and budget. I will tell you the outcome and the reasons I am permitted to share by 15 September."

2. Know What the Person Wants

Development fails when the manager assumes every person wants the same career, pace or sacrifice.

Understand direction, appetite, life constraints, contribution profile and whether the person wants growth, mastery, stability, leadership or another form of value.

Some employees want to become Commercial Director. Some want to be excellent Senior CAs and retain control over their time. Others want geographic certainty, project variety, technical depth, consulting, business ownership or simply a stable income that supports a meaningful life outside work.

Do not mistake contentment for low value or ambition for readiness. The manager's first task is to identify the destination the employee actually wants, not the destination the organisation assumes they should want.

***KEY TAKEAWAY** A career framework should increase choice, not force everyone onto the same ladder. **EMPLOYEE GUIDE ROUTE** Refer to Employee Guide Chapters 11-17, especially Chapter 12. Recommended activity: Career Portfolio Record.*

Three people can want the same title but want it on different terms. One will relocate and accept a difficult project. One wants the title only in Brisbane. One is prepared to wait but will not sacrifice evenings with young children. Those are different career strategies, not different levels of commitment.

Ask separately about destination, pace and acceptable sacrifice. A development plan that ignores any one of them may look credible on paper while being unusable in the employee's life.

***PRACTICAL TEST** "If the next role required a two-year regional project, a longer commute or a materially larger team, which parts would you accept and which would make the opportunity wrong for you?"*

3. Use Short Coaching Conversations

Five useful minutes around live work can outperform a quarterly lecture.

Ask for the decision, reasoning, consequence and next step. Give one material observation and arrange another practice opportunity.

Ten-Minute Coaching

Minute	Prompt
0–2	What are you trying to decide or achieve?
2–5	What is your reasoning and weakest assumption?
5–7	What consequence or stakeholder have you missed?
7–9	What will you do next?
9–10	What will I observe or review, and when?

4. Allocate Work to Create Evidence

Advice cannot close a capability gap that requires work the person has never been allowed to own.

Map the next-role evidence and identify live packages, meetings, reviews, negotiations and reporting responsibilities that can create it safely.

Managers often tell employees what they need without giving access to the work that would prove it. If the person needs client exposure, a final account, team leadership or a forecast, the plan must identify where that opportunity will come from and who will release or supervise it.

Opportunity allocation is one of the manager's strongest development levers. Use it deliberately and review whether the employee actually received the promised exposure.

KEY TAKEAWAY A capability gap cannot be closed by feedback alone when the evidence requires work the employee has never been allowed to own.

Development Allocation

Capability	Live work	Authority / support	Evidence / reviewer

5. Stretch Without Exploitation

A stretch assignment has purpose, authority, duration, support and review; exploitation merely adds work indefinitely.

Explain why the assignment matters, what authority accompanies it, how workload will be managed and what happens when the evidence is produced.

A stretch assignment has a defined development purpose, authority, duration, support and review. Exploitation simply adds next-level work indefinitely because the employee is capable and available. The short-term project benefit can create long-term disengagement.

Explain what the assignment is testing, what support remains with the manager and how success affects the readiness assessment. If the employee carries sustained higher-level accountability, address title and remuneration rather than endlessly relabelling the work development.

MANAGER TEST If the assignment succeeds, what changes for the employee? If the honest answer is "nothing," it is workload, not a pathway.

Operating Checks

17. Do not use development language to conceal an unfilled vacancy.
18. Remove or defer lower-value work where the stretch materially increases load.
19. Set a review point and discuss title or remuneration implications honestly.
20. Credit the employee's contribution in the forums where decisions are made.

6. Delegate to Develop

The employee must own a meaningful consequence while the manager controls the risk.

Choose direct, guided, assured or delegated allocation based on consequence and evidence. Reduce control deliberately as reliability becomes visible.

Delegation should transfer a clear outcome, sufficient authority and a review rhythm while the manager retains accountability. It is not dropping a vague problem onto a junior or dictating every step so tightly that no judgement is required.

Match the delegation to evidence level. Early exposure needs more structure; near-readiness needs room to decide. Review the reasoning and consequences, not only whether the task was completed.

EXAMPLE - THE FINAL ACCOUNT The manager gives a CA authority to lead a final-account strategy within agreed settlement parameters. The CA prepares the position, coordinates stakeholders and recommends the landing. The manager attends the final negotiation but does not take the process back.

For each piece of work, choose deliberately among four modes:

21. Do it - the manager or embedded senior takes direct ownership because speed, sensitivity or consequence dominates.
22. Lead it - the employee owns the work with active direction and checkpoints.
23. Review it - the employee completes the work and receives focused challenge before release.
24. Clarify and return it - resolve the blockage, define the standard and return ownership to the employee.

The objective is neither automatic delegation nor automatic rescue. It is to close urgent risk while preserving the best available development opportunity.

7. Review With Discipline

The manager should improve future judgement rather than repeatedly rescue the same output.

Set the brief, classify comments, explain material reasoning and require the employee to close the loop.

Good feedback identifies the behaviour, the consequence, the expected standard and the next opportunity to practise. "Be more commercial" or "show more maturity" is not usable. It forces the employee to decode the manager's private meaning.

Give enough examples to establish a pattern, not an indictment. Invite correction where the facts may be incomplete. Then agree on the observable change.

FEEDBACK MODEL "In the last two forecast reviews, you presented the movement but not the decision required. The team spent the meeting reconstructing your recommendation. At Senior CA level I expect the decision, commercial effect and requested authority first. You will lead that section next month using the one-page format."

Example — one material comment

EXAMPLE *A junior submits a claim assessment with extensive detail but no clear recommendation. The manager resists rewriting it and asks for a five-line brief covering entitlement, value, evidence gap, counterargument and recommendation. The exercise becomes a reusable decision model.*

8. Build Observable Promotion Evidence

Development becomes promotable when outcomes, scale, judgement and credible witnesses are recorded.

Agree which decisions and behaviours the next role requires, then create repeated evidence under appropriate load.

Evidence becomes stronger as it moves from claim to repeated consequence:

25. The employee says they can do it.
26. They have observed or assisted with it.
27. They completed it once with close support.
28. They completed it repeatedly with normal oversight.
29. Others rely on their judgement and they can teach or assure it.

Managers should identify the evidence level, not merely whether the topic has appeared on a CV. Exposure is not ownership, and one successful event is not yet a pattern.

KEY TAKEAWAY Promotion decisions become easier when the argument changes from "I think they are ready" to "Here are three independent situations in which they carried the next-level consequence."

A defensible submission connects the next role to evidence from several perspectives. It should cover current performance, next-level examples, stakeholder trust, development completed, remaining support, role need and the risks of promotion or delay.

Do not bury the case in adjectives. "High potential, hard working and well liked" is weaker than three short examples showing decisions, consequences and independent reliance.

PROMOTION CASE State: the role required; why now; three next-level examples; stakeholder evidence; the remaining risk and support plan; salary position; and the expected first twelve months.

Evidence Record

Next-role behaviour	Observed work / outcome	Witness	Gap / next repetition

9. Give Honest Feedback and Avoid False Promises

Clarity preserves trust even when the answer is difficult.

State current performance, readiness, opportunity and what remains outside your control. Promise only the work access, advocacy, feedback or review date you can genuinely deliver.

Employees can tolerate a difficult answer better than indefinite ambiguity. Give a current position: performing below, at or above the present role; early, developing, nearly ready or ready for the next; and whether a realistic opportunity is visible.

Avoid false precision. A readiness score is a discussion tool, not a mechanical promotion entitlement. If you use an eight-and-a-half-out-of-ten analogy, identify what the missing one-and-a-half actually represents and how it can be evidenced.

USEFUL LANGUAGE "You are performing strongly in the current role and are close to Senior CA readiness. The two gaps are independent ownership of a difficult final account and evidence that you can develop a junior without taking the work back. I can create both opportunities this quarter. I cannot yet promise a vacant role."

"Not yet" is credible only when the manager can explain the gap, provide access to close it and set a review point. Without those elements, it becomes a delay phrase that protects the organisation while consuming the employee's time.

Do not add every desirable trait to the list. Identify the two or three gaps that would materially change the decision. If the real issue is opportunity, do not invent another development program.

KEY TAKEAWAY Two honest gaps with live opportunities and a date are more useful than a page of generic competencies. EMPLOYEE GUIDE ROUTE Refer to Employee Guide Chapters 19-21. Recommended activity: 90-Day Readiness Plan.

Managers frequently over-promise because they want to keep a good person calm. The promise may concern a promotion, salary, project or review date. When it fails, the employee often concludes the manager misled them even if the manager originally acted in good faith.

Divide commitments into three categories: what you decide, what you can recommend and what sits outside your control. Promise action and communication in the second and third categories, not the outcome.

PRACTICAL RULE "I will submit the case by Friday" is a promise you can keep. "You will be promoted next month" may not be.

10. Build Sponsors and Visibility

The manager's role includes helping credible work become known beyond the immediate reporting line.

Invite the employee into relevant forums, name their contribution accurately and connect them to reviewers who can independently describe the work.

An employee whose career depends on one manager is vulnerable to project changes, politics and turnover. Give capable people useful exposure to leaders and stakeholders who can independently assess their work. Let visibility follow contribution rather than theatre.

Managers sometimes hoard talent because strong people make the project easier. That protects the local result while limiting the employee and weakening the organisation's broader succession system.

PRACTICAL ACTION Identify two credible people outside the reporting line who should experience the employee's next-level work during the next six months. EMPLOYEE GUIDE ROUTE Refer to Employee Guide Chapters 45-52. Recommended activity: Career Network and Opportunity Map.

11. Build Succession Into Delivery

A team is stronger when critical work and context can survive movement, leave and promotion.

Map critical knowledge, next-ready people, development assignments and handover risk before the project transition.

Managers need a portfolio view of the team. Record current performance, next-role readiness, ambition, critical skills, development gaps, project mobility, retention risk and succession coverage. Keep it current and separate fact from speculation.

The map is not a secret ranking of human worth. It is an allocation tool. It helps the manager match work to development, identify single points of failure and avoid discovering at review time that several people were promised the same role.

PRACTICAL ACTION For each person, complete one sentence: "They create most value through..., they want..., the next evidence required is..., and the main retention risk is..."

Succession Map

Critical role / knowledge	Current holder	Credible successor	Action / timing

12. Create a Sustainable Rhythm

Development must have a cadence small enough to survive delivery pressure.

Use regular one-on-ones, quarterly evidence reviews and annual career direction. Record employee and manager commitments and close the loop.

Career discussions should not begin at the annual review. Use short, regular conversations supported by a deeper quarterly review. The rhythm should cover current performance, next-role evidence, work access, employee priorities and any change in opportunity or retention risk.

Separate the career discussion from immediate package firefighting. If every one-on-one is consumed by work status, the employee will eventually raise their future in a moment of frustration rather than in a useful planning conversation.

SIMPLE RHYTHM Monthly: performance and friction. Quarterly: career direction and evidence. Before formal review: calibration and no surprises. After review: actions, owners and dates.

Agree what will be reviewed, what evidence is required, who owns each action and when the next discussion will occur. Between review points, both manager and employee return their attention to delivery. Career conversations should create clarity, not become an always-open negotiation.

Employee Guide cross-reference: Bounded Career Management and Stress-Test Your Value Proposition.

Development Rhythm

Cadence	Conversation	Output
Weekly / fortnightly	Live work and immediate feedback	One action or coaching point
Quarterly	Readiness and opportunity evidence	Updated plan and manager commitments
Annual	Career direction and total role value	Destination, priorities and mobility decisions

Commitments and Review

Use this page to convert the manual into a small number of observable commitments. A manual has no value if the reader cannot identify what will be done differently, where it will be practised and what evidence will prove the change.

Commitment	Practice ground	Evidence / reviewer	Review date

Related Buildit Manuals

- 30. 06 — From Doer to Reviewer
- 31. 11 — The Commercial Manager's Field Guide
- 32. 14 — Running Credible Career and Promotion Conversations
- 33. 15 — Retaining Capability in a High-Turnover Project Environment

Closing Position

Development is not additional work beside the project; it is the way project work is allocated, reviewed and remembered.

Notes
