

personal**excellence**program

The Practice of Personal Excellence

A Radical Approach to Organizational Transformation

Every year companies spend billions of dollars on training and development, trying to help their people become more engaged, more innovative, and better leaders. Training programs excel in introducing new ideas and perspectives, delivering feedback and assessment data, and teaching basic skills. But many organizations still face a conundrum: how to inspire learning and development that is truly transformational and lasting?

Developing a person is not the same as building a product or delivering a project on time—human beings grow in organic, dynamic ways.

What is needed is a *process* for human development that actively teaches people how to learn and grow.

“I’ve taken dozens of training programs. But what PEP does is different—it teaches us how to learn!”

Munther Megdadi, Chief Architect IT, Genentech

The Challenge: Creating a Culture

In 2006, Pamela Weiss, an executive coach and founder of Appropriate Response, was teaching meditation and mindfulness to employees in Genentech’s Information Technology department. Classes were consistently full and had created a buzz within the department.

Todd Pierce, then Senior VP of the department, saw an opportunity. “We are a company dedicated to discovery and innovation,” he told Pam, “I want to create a culture of human development within my organization. Let’s build on the principles of coaching and mindfulness to create something really different.”

The challenge was clear: to translate the wisdom of meditation and mindfulness into a pragmatic set of principles and practices that would radically transform the fast-paced world of corporate technology.

PEP was developed in response to this challenge.

The PEP Process

Developing the Whole Person

PEP introduces a simple, powerful three-step development process that engages and integrates heart, mind, and body.

Step One: **Select**

Inviting Wholehearted Engagement

The PEP development process begins by asking participants to reflect and consider: what specific capacities—skills (listening, giving feedback, delegation, work-life balance) and qualities (decisiveness, calm, courage, receptivity)—do I need to cultivate in myself in order to achieve long-term excellence?

By inviting participants to select something they care deeply about, PEP *starts with heart*, igniting a personal passion that will sustain them through the ups and downs inherent in the process of human growth.

Daniel Pink, best-selling author of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, describes the unexpected results from studies on motivation. For simple tasks, the carrot-and-stick approach works just fine; workers will increase their efficiency if promised a raise or threatened with demotion. But for complex tasks that require analysis and creativity, the research consistently shows that external rewards or punishment actually *lower* performance. As Pink puts it: “There is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does.”

Tapping intrinsic motivation means giving participants the opportunity to fully engage with something meaningful—letting them step up and take charge of their own learning.

Step Two: **Observe**

Cultivating the Power of Mindful Self-Awareness

After selecting an area for personal development, PEP participants are eager to jump into quick fixes. Enthusiasm is vital, but it’s not enough. In the face of longstanding habits—patterns built into the structure of the brain as deep neural grooves—even the most heartfelt aspirations are rarely sufficient to create lasting behavior change.

PEP has brought sustained individual growth and a vibrant learning culture to my organization. Through PEP, we are now smarter, more agile, and more responsive. There is greater collaboration across functions; customer relationships have improved, employee engagement is noticeably higher, and we are better positioned to respond to change and lead technological innovation."

Todd Pierce,
Senior Vice President
and Chief Information Officer,
Genentech-Roche

The first thing participants learn to do is pause and observe themselves so they can gather timely, accurate data. This capacity is the domain of mindfulness, a practice cultivated in Buddhist meditation.

As the latest research has shown, mindfulness can actually cause the brain to grow. The *New York Times* recently reported that subjects who meditated for a half-hour a day for two months “had measurable changes in grey matter density in parts of the brain associated with memory, sense of self, empathy, and stress.” (NYT, 1/25/11)

Mindfulness is about paying attention, about observing ourselves in real time. As we pay attention, we begin to see ourselves more clearly. And, based on our clear-seeing, we are able to make wise choices—so we can respond rather than react.

This ancient practice—a technology for developing human awareness—has been passed from person to person for over 2,600 years, from India throughout Asia, and now in the West. In PEP, we apply the proven principles of mindfulness to everyday life and work.

Mindfulness is not new or New Age. What is new is bringing its power and potential to the offices and conference rooms of corporate America.



Step Three: Practice

Develop Mastery Through Embodied Practice

What allows us to move from insight—gained through mindful self-awareness—to action, the ability to engage in new behavior? In a word, *practice*. Aristotle said it this way, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

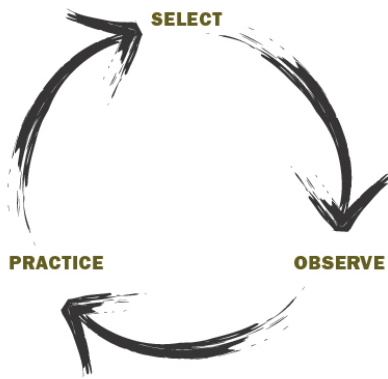
Psychologist Anders Ericsson, renowned researcher on mastery, has done numerous studies (most famously reported by Malcolm Gladwell in his influential *Outliers*) on what it took for classical musicians to excel. He found that practice and feedback were far more significant than any kind of inherent genius. Virtuosos became great by a very particular type of what he called “deliberate practice.”

Deliberate practice requires steady, consistent repetition over time, a process that can be slow, even tedious. If we expect practice to be pleasant, we are likely to give up. But if we want to develop mastery—whether in playing the violin, learning to speak powerfully in groups, or staying calm and focused under duress—we need to repeat new behaviors again and again, until they take root in the body as habit.



Several elements of the PEP program enable participants to stick with practice over time. These include tapping into the heart by inviting people to choose development topics that matter to them, cultivating the mind by introducing the practice of self-observation, engaging the body through deliberate practice, and creating support through ongoing community.

PEP is structured as a group coaching program in which participants actively share and support each other over time. When a person is given the opportunity to be authentic and to engage in real conversation rather than receiving anonymous feedback, individual development deepens and a culture of honest communication and learning begins to grow.



The PEP development process:
Select, Observe, Practice

Summary

Engagement, Self-Awareness, Mastery

PEP begins from the premise that people are whole, not broken. The aim of development is to invite individual engagement and expression rather than to fix, force, or manipulate.

The PEP process fully integrates intellectual, emotional, and somatic intelligence—head, heart, and body. It does this by actively tapping wholehearted engagement, cultivating mindful self-awareness, and developing mastery through embodied practice.

As the PEP process continues to unfold, participants discover greater clarity, creativity, and connection—with themselves, others, and the world. And as heart, head, and body come into alignment, PEP participants embrace new choices and possibilities, deepening their confidence, capacity, and sense of freedom.

In PEP, the combination of simple, effective tools, a supportive peer community, and a development process that unfolds over time has had powerful results—not only for the individual, but also for the organization.

From the Bottom to the Top

Impressive Results

When Todd Piece took over Genentech’s IT department in 2002, employee satisfaction was rock bottom, the lowest in the entire company, according to an internal survey.

Four years into the implementation of the PEP program, employee satisfaction had risen to the number two spot, company-wide—even in the wake of Genentech’s 2009 merger with Roche, an event that caused a three-fold rise in employee complaints in every other department.

In an impact study, external consultants found a “10-20 percent increase in employee satisfaction; 50 percent improvement in employee communication, collaboration, conflict management and coaching; and nearly three times the normal business impact.” (ICF’s *Coaching World*, 12/10)

Employee surveys indicate that 98 percent of the 400 people who completed PEP better understood what they need to do to be more successful at work and at home, and felt they had the skills, tools, and support to do so. In addition, 88 percent of PEP participants reported an increased sense of meaning and satisfaction at work.

External evaluators also reported a significant return on investment, estimating that PEP produced between one and a half to two dollars of benefit for every dollar invested to deliver PEP.

Recognition

In 2009, Genentech’s IT department was awarded the second *Best Place to Work*, by *ComputerWorld* magazine. The PEP program was singled out as the primary reason for this accomplishment.

In 2010, Genentech won the ICF International Prism Award for its implementation of the PEP program.

Learn More...

To find out more about Appropriate Response and the PEP program, visit www.appropriateresponse.com

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