



## REAL WORLD 101

# GETTING AHEAD

### **JOB**

A job can be defined as a specific agreement with an employer to perform assigned tasks for pay. It is a work situation taken for the purpose of earning wages in exchange for the completion of a task or series of tasks. It is a specified duty or responsibility. A job frequently is temporary in nature and the word seldom implies a long-term commitment to a given type of work. A job rarely requires a long training period for mastery of the work assigned.

### **CAREER**

A career can be defined as one's progress through life, or one's advancement or achievement in a particular vocation. It is a work experience that you elect to pursue during a significant period of time in life. A career involves a long-term commitment to a given occupational activity. A career requires a significant level of formal education, training, and background for satisfactorily performing in the work area. Having a career implies that you have prepared for and are building expertise and experience in a particular field. Your career determines what kinds of work you will do. It serves as a frame of reference for the kinds of jobs you will seek, qualify for and accept. It is also the context in which you will continue to develop new skills and insights. It is worthwhile activity to which you devote your time, energy, resources and emotions. Your career is your life's work, your profession, your vocation, your "calling."

### **WORK REFLECTIONS**

"You can't eat for eight hours a day, nor drink for eight hours a day, nor make love for eight hours a day. All you can do for eight hours is work. Which is the reason why people make themselves and everybody else so miserable and unhappy."

-WILLIAM FAULKNER

"Take this job and shove it!"

-JOHNNY PAYCHECK / Country Music Singer

Ross: "What's the big deal? I don't see what you're getting so stressed about. It's only a job."

Rachel: "Only a job?! Are you kidding? This is the first time in my life I'm actually doing something I care about! This is the first time in my life I'm actually doing something I'm good at!"

-NBC's *Friends* Television Series

### **THE VIRTUE OF WORK**

"In emphasizing the importance of seeking meaningful work and acknowledging dignity in all work, it is natural to also promote the virtue of working hard. It is a logical extension of the concept of worthwhile work to celebrate diligence in labor, a strong work ethic, and an industrious attitude. If we feel a true connectedness to the work we perform, we can experience great satisfaction in doing hard work."

- MICHAEL LEBEAU / Career Counselor

"*What are you going to be when you grow up? What is your work in the world going to be? What will be your works?* These are not fundamentally questions about jobs and pay, but questions about life. Work is applied effort; it is whatever we put ourselves into, whatever we expend our energy on for the sake of accomplishing or achieving something. Work in this fundamental sense is not what we do *for* a living but what we do *with* our living."

- WILLIAM BENNETT / *The Book of Virtues*

"I wish to preach not the doctrine of ignoble ease but the doctrine of the strenuous life; the life of toil and effort; of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes not to the one who desires mere easy peace but to the one who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph."

-THEODORE ROOSEVELT / *In Praise of the Strenuous Life*

"Work is applied effort toward some end. The most satisfying work involves directing our efforts toward achieving ends that we ourselves endorse as worthy expressions of our talent and character."

- WILLIAM BENNETT / *The Book of Virtues*

"Happiness, as Aristotle long ago pointed out, resides in activity, both physical and mental. It resides in doing things that one can take pride in doing well, and hence that one can *enjoy* doing. It is a great mistake to identify enjoyment with mere amusement or relaxation or entertainment. Life's greatest joys are not what one does *apart from* the work of one's life, but *with* the work of one's life. Those who have missed the joy of work, of a job well done, have missed something very important."

- WILLIAM BENNETT / *The Book of Virtues*



## ON THE JOB

"Success is not defined exclusively in economic terms but includes the opportunity to express your innate talents and abilities, to be creatively engaged, to feel as though you are making a meaningful difference, and to integrate your spiritual values with the everyday business of working and making a living."

-LAURENCE BOLDT / Author of *How To Find The Work You Love*

"We offer up a third of our lives to work -- more time than we give to any other single activity except sleep -- and our feelings about it are woven into our image of ourselves and others. Work -- some form of sustained, disciplined activity -- is necessary for human happiness."

-MICHAEL SPRING / *The American Way of Working*

"When you have a job, it is important to do your best to keep it and to seek opportunities for growth... Few things are more important than your own career and life satisfaction... It is important to take charge of your career and your life by periodically evaluating where you have been, where you are, and where you are going."

-HECKLINGER & BLACK / *Training for Life*



## JOB KEEPING SKILLS

"Start with a solid education. And then specialize in something. There won't be much demand for generalists with no particular skills, nothing special to offer. At the same time, be flexible. Be open to change. Also, communication skills are a must, getting ideas across clearly."

-KIPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER

"Education will be a lifetime process. More emphasis will be placed on entrepreneurship. Pay will be tied more to performance."

-KIPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER

"The new economy favors people with qualities like self-motivation, initiative, flexibility, ability to work with a team, and the capacity to learn and adapt to change."

-LAURENCE BOLDT / *How To Find The Work You Love*

## WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES

The changing workplace demands a change in the skills workers will now need to develop. A new set of expectations are now associated with the new world of work... Learning Skills... Basic Reading, Writing, Computation, & Cognitive Reasoning Skills... Interpersonal Skills... Creative Thinking & Problem Solving Skills... Leadership & Envisioning Skills... Self Development & Self-Management Skills.

Once you have successfully sought and obtained a good job, how do you now successfully hold onto your job? What important job keeping skills do you now need? How do you prepare to meet the challenges of your new job? How do you maintain your effectiveness on the job? How do you increase your opportunities for advancement? How do you improve your overall job status? How do you continue to develop your skills? How do you reach your career goals? What specific strategies can you employ that will enhance your job performance and job satisfaction?

## JOB PERFORMANCE

What skills do employers value? What attitudes, traits and characteristics would most employers like their employees to have?

Competence	Ability to do the job well
Initiative	Working on your own without constant direction or supervision
Dependability	Being there when you are needed
Reliability	Getting the job done
Efficiency	Being accurate and capable
Loyalty	Being faithful, trustworthy and honest
Maturity	Behaving as an adult, being stable and even-tempered, maintaining composure
Communication	Ability to express oneself clearly & concisely through speaking and writing
Problem-Solving	Ability to address issues, generate options, settle uncertainties, make decisions
Cheerfulness	Being pleasant, optimistic, and agreeable
Helpfulness	Willing to pitch in, serve, or assist with a sense of urgency
Teamwork	Working together with others, being cooperative and unselfish
Perseverance	Determination and patience in carrying on with a tedious project
Responsibility	Taking care of your duties and being accountable
Creativity	Being original, resourceful, imaginative, and innovative
Enthusiasm	Being energetic, positive, and self-motivated about your work
Adaptability	Ability to adjust to new situations and be flexible



## JOB GROWTH

Professional development... getting ahead in your job... improving your skills... enhancing your job performance... expanding your opportunities...

What are some ways you can contribute to your job growth? Here are some suggestions...

Be aware of changes and new developments in your organization. Document your accomplishments. Take on additional responsibilities and assignments. Take some risks. Think like a manager. Continue your learning, training and education. Find a mentor. Continue to build your network of contacts. Be positive, cooperative and supportive in your interactions with others. Be open to criticism and suggestions. Stay updated by reading professional literature and attending conferences.

Also, ask yourself... Am I punctual? productive? focused? cost-conscious? cooperative? results-oriented?

Do I save the company money? offer solutions to problems? take pride in my work? set goals? see value in what I'm doing? manage conflict in a mature and timely manner? refuse to be involved in office politics and company gossip?

## WORKERS' EXPECTATIONS

On what basis do individuals choose organizations? Here is a compilation of an individual's expectations of what the organization is about and what it has to offer...

A sense of meaning or purpose in the job... Personal development opportunities... Amount of interesting work... The challenge in work... Empowered responsibility in the job... Recognition and approval for good work... The status and prestige in the job... The friendliness of the people and congeniality of the work group... The amount of structure in the environment... The amount of security in the job... Advancement opportunities... The amount and frequency of feedback and evaluation... Salary.

## BLOCKS TO SUCCESS

**EXTERNAL** - External blocks originate from outside factors. Sometimes your progress, growth and satisfaction are impeded by factors over which you have no control. There may be little you can do about your job dissatisfaction when you have to overcome such things as office politics and organizational inconsistencies. Perhaps the organization has certain financial limitations. Perhaps the organization you work for provides no opportunities for additional training or upward mobility. Perhaps your values and the values of the organization are incompatible. These are things you cannot change.

**INTERNAL** - Internal blocks originate from your own attitudes and actions, and result in poor performance. Your progress and satisfaction are oftentimes impeded by factors that are completely within your control. Excessive absences... Frequently coming to work late... Irresponsibility... Lack of initiative... Disloyalty and dishonesty... Being negative... Causing trouble... Not being adaptable... Carelessness... Unwillingness to follow rules... Laziness... Too much attention to outside interests and concerns.



## JOB MAINTENANCE

"When you have a job, it is important to do your best to keep it and to seek opportunities for growth... Few things are more important than your own career and life satisfaction... It is important to take charge of your career and your life by periodically evaluating where you have been, where you are, and where you are going."

-HECKLINGER & BLACK / *Training for Life*

"The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross and which to burn."

-DAVID RUSSELL

After you have been on the job for awhile, it is wise to examine your level of satisfaction. By looking closely at specific aspects of your work, you can isolate areas with which you are unhappy and work to improve them. This may be more satisfying than simply giving up on your job and looking for a new one. Your objective is to weigh the negatives against the positives. A total job-keeping and job-revitalization program demands that you undertake a careful analysis of your present job. It is not unusual for us to become disenchanted with our jobs as we fall into a routine and lose sight of some of the potential challenges in our work. Change for the sake of change can lead to career blunder. To avoid this problem, you may wish to evaluate your present situation, identify some possible options, and then make some tentative plans to improve your situation. In examining your job satisfaction, consider your job environment, your people contacts, the job itself, and your own expectations.

Everyone works in order to achieve certain rewards. In assessing your job satisfaction, it is important to consider what type of rewards you need for your job to be fulfilling. Extrinsic rewards come from outside or external sources that you generally do not control: pay, raises, promotion, praise, fringe benefits, letters of commendation, positive job evaluations, bonuses, paid leave. Intrinsic rewards come from within you and are based on your own internal attitude toward success: personal growth, pride in your work, self-respect, feeling of accomplishment, meeting a challenge, achieving goals, solving a problem, self-expression, developing new skills.

## **CAREER GAP**

"Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love, but only with distaste, it is better that you leave your work and sit by the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy."

-KAHLIL GIBRAN / *The Prophet*

"Do you know people who dislike their jobs yet continue to work each day in hope that somehow they will find something better? Whose main source of satisfaction comes from their leisure activities and not from their work? Who are very dissatisfied with their jobs and frequently call in sick to avoid going to work? Who keep changing their academic major in search of one that really suits them? Who ignore their lack of enthusiasm for an academic subject and plow on, determined to get a degree in that field anyway? If so, then you know people whose choice of job or choice of academic major is incompatible with their personality style."

-BORCHARD, KELLY & WEAVER / *Your Career: Choices & Changes*

## **TRENDS & REALITIES**

People are changing jobs more now than ever before  
More college graduates are now entering the job market  
More jobs will require skills in computer and media technology  
The economy is becoming more global, more international  
The workplace is becoming more diverse  
Fewer job opportunities exist in larger corporations  
Many new job opportunities now exist in small businesses  
Service sector jobs are growing more rapidly  
Most jobs are still not advertised

## **WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD**

"Things are not like they used to be. Our economy has changed so rapidly that, for most of us, our concepts about how to plan our careers, and how to find a job, are completely out of date."

-J. MICHAEL FARR

"Things are not like they used to be. Our economy has changed so rapidly that, for most of us, our concepts about how to plan our careers, and how to find a job, are completely out of date. The average person will change jobs far more frequently than their parents. They will also change careers far more often than in the past."

-J. MICHAEL FARR

"Almost everybody will have many careers... 1 in 5 people now change jobs every year. 1 in 10 people change careers or occupations every year... The average person entering the job market can expect almost no security from their employer... Security will have to come almost entirely from the individual... and through self-improvement... Every career-oriented person will have to have many educations... There will be no such thing as a career... There will be many careers in many firms at many locations. The most important thing to prepare yourself for is to change... and to take total responsibility for your continuing education... your own retirement... health care... and life insurance."

-DR. DAVID BIRCH

"Every year, three new technologies emerge as four old technologies become obsolete."

-KIPPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER

"Millions of American workers today earn a living in occupations that did not exist at the beginning of the 20th Century. Job destruction is occurring in such occupations as railroad employees, telegraph operators, cobblers, switchboard operators and farm workers. Job creation is occurring in such occupations as airline pilots and mechanics, medical technicians, engineers, computer programmers, professional athletes, tv and radio announcers and optometrists."

-MICHAEL COX & RICHARD ALM

"Corporate America is no longer the bastion of security it was in the past... Job seekers have to be entrepreneurial."

-BOB WEINSTEIN

"Because business has become increasingly more competitive, companies must do their homework as never before in looking for prospective employees. Every single job applicant must be evaluated not only in terms of technical know-how, but also in terms of how he or she will fit into the culture of the organization."

-KENNETH & SHERYL DAWSON

## FAULTY COGNITIONS

Some individuals are mistaken in their view of career development. Regarding their career, they possess maladaptive thinking or a faulty deductive-thinking process...

There is only one vocation in the world that is right for me.  
Until I find my perfect vocational choice, I will not be satisfied.  
Someone else can discover the vocation suitable for me.  
I must be an expert or very successful in the field of my work.  
I can't do anything that doesn't fit my talents.  
My vocation should satisfy the important people in my life.  
Entering a vocation will solve all my problems.  
I must sense intuitively that the vocation is right for me.  
Choosing a vocation is a one-time act.



## THE CHANGING WORKPLACE

"People will have to take more responsibility for their careers... assessing their strengths and weaknesses, planning schooling and job paths. The days are gone when just about anyone could step into a lifetime job with regular pay raises, promotions and a good pension at retirement. They will have to be skilled in something that the market needs. Those without something to offer will have a hard time making a living.

Constant upgrading and retraining will be needed by most workers. They'll have to understand the entire business, not just their own jobs. There will be more outsourcing. Temps, part-timers and contract workers will be added as needed, complementing a smaller number of fulltime, long-term company employees.

This means less job security for many workers and often less loyalty. Most employers want to provide security, but they can't be more generous than the marketplace allows. That's why honing a skill is so important. If your job becomes unnecessary, it won't be enough to be a hard worker. You'll need a marketable skill that you can take from company to company. Those who work on sharpening their talents will do all right. In a downturn, managers will try hard to hang on to their best employees. If skilled workers lose their jobs, they'll be the first hired elsewhere.

Ability to work as part of a team will be essential to success as companies rely on their people to go beyond their narrow specialties.

Technology will revolutionize the workplace in the years ahead. Millions of people will work from their homes, dealing with co-workers, customers and suppliers by computer.

Productivity advances will occur. Using new technology, an Alabama plant makes more steel with 3000 workers than it did 30 years ago with 30,000 workers.

The US will create nearly 14 million jobs through 2020, a slower pace from the previous decade.

The Hispanic share of the workplace will increase 25%. Asians, around 50%. African American will stay about the same. Minorities will keep moving up the corporate ladder. Managers who know how to deal with a diverse workplace will have an edge. Lots of opportunities for women, who now own a third of all US firms and will hold about half of all jobs."

-KIPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER / WASHINGTON DC 1996

## **POSITIVE UNCERTAINTY**

Due to significant changes in the workplace, the worker of the future will necessarily be more self-reliant. The worker of the future will need to be a "self-developing person," "one who uses personal agency," or "one who can adapt to change." The worker of the future will need to be resilient, and adopt an attitude of "positive uncertainty," thereby shedding obsolete beliefs and narrow views of the past in order to develop a future sense.

Consider the profile of such a future worker and note how it reflects basic shifts in thinking and newly evolved modes of action... Does not feel entitled... Assumes responsibility for the future... Assumes a lifelong learning responsibility... Dismisses obsolete beliefs about work... Does not take any job for granted... Assumes that personal involvement is key to success... Depends on own initiative... Views the future with vision and imagination... Has little fear of change... Can deal with uncertainty and ambiguity... Believes creativity is a basic requirement... Believes good interpersonal relations is an employee's responsibility... Is completely receptive to new ideas... Assumes that there are few guarantees for the future... Assumes that the organization does not owe anyone a career... Cooperates with teams of workers and supervisors... Develops methods to improve effectiveness of job assignment... Exhibits high levels of resourcefulness and imagination... Takes advantage of opportunities to develop skills and increase learning... Develops overview and knowledge of work environment and company purpose... Demonstrates how things can be improved... And assumes total responsibility for career development.



## **FLEXIBLE CAREER**

To meet the challenges of the future workplace, careers must be flexible and adaptable, subject to constant change, able to adjust to any new task or situation. Flexible careers are fast becoming the careers of the future and the careers of workers who, being future-oriented, do not define themselves too narrowly.

Utilizing the flexible career model, we see that a career is managed by the person, not the organization. The worker is self-reliant. The worker, assuming him or herself to be self-employed, takes full responsibility for his or her own career development and professional advancement. In the workplace of the future we are all "contract workers." Since a career is a lifelong series of changes and continuous learning, career development is more focused on learning.

As organizations become more dynamic, less static, there is an increasing need for a flexible workforce. Many more positions will be temporary. In fact, the mindset of the self-reliant worker of the future is to approach all jobs as though they were temporary. The number of jobs a person works in a lifetime is increasing. Consequently, the individual is less committed to the company and more committed to his or her career. The career follows the individual from company to company.

Under the new model, the company is less committed to the individual. Employers feel less responsibility for and less loyalty to employees. Job security is no longer an external element but an internal element. Therefore, job security and career advancement are the responsibility of the individual not the organization. In the workplace of the future, advancement is not synonymous with upward mobility. Transition is a desired movement, an opportunity to grow and develop, but it may not always be vertical. Lateral moves are not seen as negative. Gone are the days of climbing the corporate ladder. The old model "career ladder" is replaced by the new model "career lattice."

## **GET NOTICED / GET AHEAD**

You show up to work on time every day, meet your deadlines, and are on good terms with your boss—and yet, you've had the same mid-level title for years. Why does it seem like your peers are climbing the corporate ladder while you're stuck on the same rung? Because snagging a promotion requires more than meeting the minimum requirements for your job (even if you're meeting them well). Below are nine ways to go the extra mile at work—and reap the rewards.

### 1. SAY YES.

Your boss will only trust you to take on more responsibility if you show him or her that you can handle it. Do so by eagerly accepting any assignments that are offered and volunteering for additional projects. Once your boss sees that you're able to stay calm and confident under the increased pressure of a heavier workload, he or she will know you're ready to take the next step in your career.

### 2. AVOID THE DRAMA.

Every workplace has its cliques, but the employees who advance to managerial positions are the ones who know to stay above the fray. It may be tempting to vent to a coworker about office frustrations or pass along that juicy story you heard about a colleague, but saving your opinions for a non-work friend could save your future with the company.



### 3. BE FRIENDLY.

Avoiding drama is different from being stand-offish. You don't need to hit up every office happy hour and team excursion, but creating a sense of camaraderie with your coworkers is important. You want to garner a reputation for being likable and trustworthy, which you do by being friendly, polite, and tactful with everyone from the receptionist to the CEO.

### 4. BE PROACTIVE.

You can't expect a promotion to drop into your lap. Instead, spend time thinking about the bigger picture and strategizing what you can do to help the company achieve its long-term goals. Write up your thoughts and present them to your boss.



### 5. INCREASE YOUR FACE TIME.

While a flexible schedule and the ability to work remotely are perks many employees enjoy, it's important to strike a balance. For many managers, out of sight is out of mind—and when a new opportunity becomes available, you want your name to be the first one that pops into your boss's head.

### 6. KEEP YOUR EXCUSES TO YOURSELF.

Mistakes happen—be it a late arrival, missed meeting, or typo in an important report—and your boss knows this. When you mess up, acknowledge that you were in the wrong, apologize, and offer a quick explanation for your error (“I slept through my alarm this morning,” or “I was working late and had trouble focusing”). Do not point the finger at someone else or wallow in your personal troubles—your boss doesn't want to hear your excuses, and making them will only succeed in tarnishing your own reputation.

### 7. LEARN HOW TO TAKE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK—AND IMPLEMENT IT.

Similar to admitting when you make a mistake, in order to get ahead you must learn how to humbly receive feedback. Keep in mind that your manager is pointing out areas that need improvement because he or she wants you to succeed. Accept criticism graciously (“Thank you so much for letting me know; I'll work on that”), and then make the desired change. Marked improvement will be noted, but so will stagnation: Don't let your boss think you chose to ignore her comments or that you're unable to grow.

## 8. SEEK OUT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Usually, the next position up the ladder requires more or different skills than your current position. Take every chance you can to pick up these abilities, be it by volunteering for challenging projects or signing up for continuing education classes. Keep track of these efforts so you are prepared to show your boss the action you've taken to ensure you're qualified for the next step.

## 9. SPEAK UP.

Many employees think their work speaks for itself; that if they put their heads down and churn out solid work they will be rewarded for it. Unfortunately, this belief just isn't true. While shoddy work will certainly be noticed, good work rarely makes a splash. Make your supervisor aware of your achievements by making clear the positive effect your projects have had on the company's bigger picture. (Did that proposal you wrote lead to a new client? Did the social media channel you helm help increase revenue?) Make a list of these triumphs and discuss them at your next performance review.

[Mental Floss]



## RULES FOR GETTING AHEAD IN YOUR CAREER

Many of the job seekers—and even employees—I talk to are stuck in their careers right now. Why? They're playing an old set of rules. They are struggling to find jobs or to get ahead in their current ones because they haven't noticed that the economy and global workforce have changed, and they haven't adapted.

Corporations want to do more with fewer resources. They are looking for entrepreneurial-minded workers who can move business forward. They are looking for the best talent at the lowest price, which means job seekers and employees alike are competing with professionals from all over the world.

These days, just doing your job isn't enough—you have to constantly expand your role, learn new skills, and grow your network if you want to stay relevant. Regardless of your current occupation, the following five rules will help you survive and thrive in this new world of work.

### 1. Always Be Open to New Opportunities

A decade ago, you could graduate from college and have a secure job for life. But these days, you could get laid off on a moment's notice, your team could be outsourced, or your company merged or acquired.

That means, you always need to be looking for new opportunities (as well as building a strong online presence so that you'll attract them, too). This is not to say that you should be job-hopping all the time—my rule of thumb is to stay in one role for at least a year, unless you're presented with an opportunity you can't refuse. But a new Careerbuilder study shows that 74% of workers are either actively searching for a new job or open to a new opportunity. If you want to get ahead in your career, don't close yourself off.

### 2. Have a Consulting Mindset

We're living in what I call "ROI Nation" right now, where companies aren't willing to take risks hiring people. They want to be 100% confident they are hiring someone who can get the job done flawlessly and add value to the company.

So if you're a job-seeker, you need to prove your worth, and the best way to do this is to act like a consultant. Instead of just applying for a job, make a presentation on how you can add more value to the company. Come with a case study to show that you've improved sales of your last client or company by 50% or that you helped increase efficiencies that led to a decrease of costs by 70%. If your salary is \$40,000, then deliver \$70,000 worth of value to justify it. Don't just tell a company that you'll add value—show it.

### 3. Be Able to Change and Adapt

Be prepared for your job situation to change constantly. I know so many people who were finance or marketing majors in college and who now have a completely different career. Even if you're certain of your career path, you could find yourself with a new manager and need to adapt to his or her leadership style on short notice. Or, if you own a company, you might find your business model changes over time based on demand and on how your customers are using your products and services.

You can best position yourself for these changes by understanding your core strengths and gaining skills that can be used across various business functions and roles. Being able to roll with the punches will be key to your long-term success.

### 4. Learn the Skills of Today and Tomorrow

This next rule is emphasized in a recent New York Times article: Workers are working nonstop to stay relevant in their careers. And you should be, too. Read the WSJ or other major newspapers, and get a sense of what the market is looking for. Then, "skill up" accordingly.

There are many ways to acquire new skills, whether you prefer online training modules, YouTube educational videos, open source courses (such as MIT's), books, or finding expert mentors online. It's also important to read up on industry news daily, so you're aware of relevant events and can sound intelligent in meetings and in job interviews.

### 5. Surround Yourself with the Right People

You need to build a strong network for several reasons. First, if you're around the right people, you will become smarter and more confident about your career. Second, if you get laid off, you'll have a network to help guide you to new opportunities—finding a job by submitting a resume doesn't usually work because you're just one resume in a stack of thousands. Your network can help you cut through the clutter and get noticed.

Finally, you appear to be more valuable when you're around other ambitious and intelligent people. Surround yourself with people who will build you and your career up, not bring you down.

[Dan Schawbel/The Muse]



## TIPS TO EXCEL IN YOUR CAREER

Are you keeping these tips for success in mind at work?

Once you graduate from college and land a job, your next immediate concern is how to succeed in your career. Because the world has become so competitive, doing well in your job and moving forward with your career is more important now than ever. Career advancement and recognition are on every professional's list of goals. But what sets the exceptional professionals apart? The answer is simply willingness and a strong desire to perform well. Once you have the willingness and the right mindset, you can begin climbing the ladder. Here are the top 10 career success secrets on how to excel at work.

Take initiative.

Today's career requirements are highly developed and require much more than someone who won't take risks. In today's competitive career landscape, employers are looking for individuals who can bring fresh ideas to the table and take initiative, start new projects, pitch new solutions and create new opportunities for the business.

Be your own evaluator.

One of the best ways to achieve career success is to keep assessing your performance. Don't wait for your annual appraisal – do it yourself. An ideal way to do this would be to identify quantifiable goals and set a timeline for achieving them. Start with setting short-term goals when you're new to a job. Create a detailed plan to achieve these goals. Break the tasks down into weekly or even daily tasks and fill out a small form at the end of the week to assess where you're headed and whether you need to change your strategy. You can even show your own performance report to your managers at some point to show how you've progressed. This will show that you understand the importance of constant self-evaluation and improvement.

Be ready to learn.

To excel in your career, you have to be willing to learn. No matter what university you graduated from or what grades you had, professional life will be very different from college. Be prepared to have a million questions pop up every day regarding what you're doing. It might take you days to get a hang of your duties at your new job, so show management that you are coachable, paying attention and always willing to learn new things.



Anticipate needs.

To succeed in your new job and achieve career success, you will have to be well aware of what your manager needs. Stay a step ahead of your boss by asking yourself, "If I were my boss, what would I want done next?" By making sure you get things efficiently done in time, and take the initiative to do them yourself, you will be showing a positive, go-getter attitude to higher management.

Communicate well.

Communication is key to an employee's and an organization's success. If your manager has to ask you for a status report, you're not doing everything you could be doing. The idea is to proactively communicate and let them know when a task is done, and move on to what needs to be done next.



Set goals to achieve.

Remember you're not being paid for 'working hard' or 'staying busy.' At the end of the day, what matters to your employer is how you're contributing to fulfilling the company's goals and mission, both short term and long term. Therefore, keep in mind that you're being paid to deliver on clearly defined goals that significantly impact the company's performance and overall mission and vision. This goal-oriented mindset will help you achieve career success, no matter where you are on the corporate ladder.

Show, don't tell.

The value of action is far greater than that of mere words. Use this as a principle in your dealings at the office. Instead of bragging about all the things you can do, and then never actually delivering, you ought to show management what you are capable of.

Gain trust.

This is one of the most important tips for success you need to ensure success when you start a new job. Think of it this way: the quicker you earn your boss' trust, the sooner they'll have less to worry about and hence more free time to focus their attention on other pressing matters. If your boss finds you trustworthy, they'll delegate tasks to you. Make sure you meet your deadlines and keep your promises. It's critical, especially early on in your relationship with your boss, that you fulfill every commitment you make, no matter how difficult it may seem.

Create solutions.

Everyone can turn their problems into their manager's problems. Be the solution provider, not the problem creator. Great employees solve problems. If you don't have the authority to give the final verdict on a problem relevant to your work or department, then make sure you offer solutions to your boss and try to help as much as you can, wholeheartedly.

Be compassionate.

Being a good employee requires compassion and understanding that your manager, and fellow employees are doing their best. Throwing a tantrum is not going to do anyone any good, neither will constantly complaining about how much work you're doing. At the end of the day, everyone is doing their fair share of the work they're getting paid for.

Many of these traits and behaviors that can help you excel in your career are also found in great leaders. By keeping these 10 career success secrets in mind, you can put yourself on the path to true greatness and achieve your ultimate career goals.

[Kim Lee]



## GETTING PROMOTED

Getting a promotion takes more than just doing your job well. To move up the ladder to the next step in your career, you have to prove to decision makers and leadership that you are ready and deserving enough to take on more responsibility. This takes consistently working your best, staying dedicated to your work, and much more. If you're sick of being passed up for promotions, check out these eight habits of employees that get promoted. Make small changes as necessary if you're ready to take the next step in your career.

### 1. Set and Communicate Career Goals | Be goal-oriented

Before the start of the year, sit down with your boss to set and discuss your professional career goals. Be open about where you see yourself 6-months or a year. A good boss will help you achieve these goals by giving you opportunities to grow and provide support to keep you on track.

"In many cases, he or she truly does want to see you achieve your goals. As a manager myself, I constantly ask my employees 'Where do you see yourself in five years?'—because if there's a way I can help them along, I'll do it. Whether that means putting in a good word for them in a different department at my current company or assigning them special projects that will help them build new skill sets for a different role, I want to help," says Katie Douthwaite Wolf, The Muse contributor.

The key, says Wolf, is to avoid announcing plans to "jump ship or that you want to take over your boss's position." Instead, think bigger and broader and come ready to discuss the ways you think your boss can help.

## 2. Always Be a Team Player | Be collaborative

Employers don't like when employees are focused on "I" rather than "we." They want team players who are committed to helping the greater good of the team, which ultimately benefits the company:

"A good employee volunteers his or her efforts before even being asked. They volunteer for more tasks and responsibility, and not just because of immediate reward," according to the guide, *How to be Promotable*. "This type of employees simply goes above and beyond and will be the first thought of when promotions are being decided."



## 3. Make Yourself Indispensable | Be irreplaceable

How can you make yourself an indispensable member of your team? One way is to become the go-to person for something specific, like designing dynamic sales decks to dealing with challenging customers. People in positions like this are not only sought after by coworkers, but also seen by leadership because they naturally stand out as someone people are always looking for.

## 4. Keep Learning | Take initiative

Show your boss that you're committed to continuously improving and developing your skills by finding learning opportunities, both within the office and outside of it. This doesn't mean you need to get your Masters or PhD, unless that's relevant to your job. Instead, enroll in one webinar each month, use your own money to attend conferences, or ask to be put on projects outside of your department. This shows that you're serious about your career, and aren't waiting for someone else to get you where you want to go.



## 5. Document Your Success | Advocate for yourself

When asking for a promotion, leadership is going to want to know what kind of value you bring to the business. Rather trying to think back at all you've accomplished, build a "working" portfolio throughout the year. After you've completed an important project or performed a record sales month, document it. When noting your successes, focus on the most important details:

"Keep a record of everything you do that enhances the company's bottom line, that puts the company or your department in a good light, that is creative and innovative, and that shows your loyalty and commitment to the organization," says Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

This tracking shows that you've been successful and improved the company, and are invested in the work you're doing.

## 6. Don't Be Afraid to Take Charge | Show leadership potential

Do you display passion, trustworthiness, decisiveness and confidence? Possessing these types of leadership skills is essential for getting promoted. After all, the first step in being a leader is acting like one. Don't get involved in office politics or develop bad habits, like being late or missing deadlines. Leaders need to be great role models for the employees they manage and work with, and without these skills, it will be hard to get a management promotion.

## 7. Network with the Right People | Stay connected

Take advantage of every networking opportunity you have, even if it's a small get together with new co-workers at lunch. Networking with others within your organization and otherwise will allow you to get to know the people who can provide support now and in the future. It's also a chance to promote yourself and your skills as well. You can reap similar benefits by getting involved with groups in your organization, like those who help plan events or keep the office stocked.

## 8. Be an engaged employee | Get involved

Being engaged goes beyond paying attention or taking notes in meetings—both of which are also important. It means being an active member of your organization, attending every optional “Lunch and Learn” event, or coming up with new ideas for sharing successes in the workplace. This shows your commitment to the company and the success of your co-workers.

## Get Promoted This Year

Getting promoted is not an easy task—it takes time, learning and dedication to yourself and the business. Successfully manage your own career path by using these eight tips—you might just get that promotion you've been hoping for.

[Glassdoor]