

Take Charge of Your Career

WHO'S IN CHARGE OF MANAGING YOUR CAREER? If you answered that question with a resounding, "I am", then you're certainly on the right track. However, this is one of those topics that most busy professionals don't make the time to think about often enough, and they should.

If left unchecked, your career can seem like a runaway train, taking you on a path that you hadn't planned on, and running over everything in its path along the way. With hectic schedules and the pressures of balancing family and work life, taking charge of your career can seem like a full time job.

In the past, things were much simpler. Employers were primarily responsible for managing their employees' careers. Opportunities were often pre-determined, and sometimes, even out of your control. However, over the past ten years, the corporate world has changed. You now have more opportunity than ever to take charge of your career destiny – choosing the status, salary, and work environment that are important to you. And I have some good news... it's not as complicated as it might sound. You only need a few simple pieces of advice to get started.



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KNOW YOURSELF

The first key to moving your career in the right direction is to know who you are and what makes you happy. What motivates you? What are the values essential to your job success? What kind of team do you work best with? Spend some time writing down the top ten things that are important to you in a career. Are you fulfilling at least 75 percent of that list at your current position? Ask yourself what changes you could make to get your career under control and going in the right direction. One of the best things you can do for yourself is to cultivate an atmosphere of self-awareness. The better you know yourself, the better chance you have of finding the opportunities that are right for you.

MAP OUT A PLAN

Yogi Berra, the famous football player, once said, "If you don't know where you are going, you may wind up somewhere else." Many well intentioned professionals start out with definite career goals only to find themselves ten years later, wondering what went wrong. If you want to get serious about your career, you should take the time to develop a good career map.

Ask yourself these questions: Where do I want to be in five years? Ten years from now? Take stock of your current situation and determine whether or not you'll

be able to realize your goals with your current employer. If not, what companies can you target as potential employers? As you map out your ideal future, don't be afraid to set goals that may be just beyond your reach. They will give you something to work toward and fuel the fire within. But beware...motivation can be a tricky thing. Your values may change over the course of your career and you may need to find new things to inspire you. When you were just out of college, the status of the job may have been the biggest motivating factor. As you progress through your career, you begin to realize that the chances you are going to hit the lottery are, in reality, pretty slim and your quest for financial freedom may now be the main force driving you. Other people are fueled by a challenge, or the opportunity to take part in something of value. Tap into your sources of inspiration, and your career can be more fulfilling.

STAY ON TOP OF YOUR INDUSTRY

Keep yourself educated and know the trends in the cosmetic industry. In order to keep yourself up to date, read trade journals, take professional seminars, or try to uncover hidden opportunities within your current position that are going to expand your knowledge and ripen you for that big promotion you've been seeking.

In addition to knowing what's going on in your field, you need to know how to keep up with advancing technology. For example, the software that you once used to manage projects or track expenses, may now be obsolete. Newer and more efficient ways of getting through your day are constantly being invented. Not only does this help you make time to focus on your primary responsibilities, rather than wasting time on "fluff", it also helps to keep you marketable. If this means taking a computer class, or spending some time with the gurus in your IT department, do it. It will be time well spent.

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

As Richard Hatch (winner of the first Survivor show) can attest, alliances are essential to success! Whether your career path leads you to seek fresh opportunities with a new employer, or keeps you in the same company for 30 years, alliances are important to everyone. Align yourself with people who are able to dispense sound advice, share good ideas and provide helpful information. Find a mentor who has traveled the road, and has achieved the success you are seeking. Knowledgeable people can make your journey smoother by providing tips and ideas that aid in your quest for success.

MAINTAIN BALANCE

People sometimes lose sight of the forest for the trees. Remember that career satisfaction is only one part of a fulfilling life. Things like family, friendship, and time for yourself are equally important. Rather than looking for career advancement, or new opportunities, some people find they need to take control of their career for a different reason. They've lost the healthy balance between the professional and personal parts of their lives.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE

The final, and most important piece of information that anyone seeking to regain control of his or her career must follow is to be proactive, not reactive. Achieving long-term success isn't easy. It takes dedication and a keen sense of direction and purpose. You may take a detour from your career plan every now and then but it's always possible to get things back on track, gain control over your future, and create your own destiny.