

Take Charge of Your Career: How to Build Your Career Management Muscle

Are you concerned about your career progression – or lack thereof? Are you waiting for your boss, Human Resources or a career coach to tell you what to do? Are you confused as to whether or not to go back to school? Are you worried that you are not building enough long-term wealth? Are you searching for career options? Has the career you chose during college turned out to be not as much fun as you anticipated? Are your talents and competencies underutilized in your current position? Are you worried that if you leave your current employer you might be an easy layoff target in the eyes of a new employer?

These issues and more face today's career professional or executive. Unfortunately, we are not taught in high school, college or even on the job – how to grow our own careers. So we spend years listening to others, reading an article or two and then doing nothing but complaining to friends and family.

We all fail to take positive action or make mistakes in managing our careers, including me. Some of the more common career management mistakes people make include:

1. Thinking that someone else (your boss, HR or a friend) is going to manage your career progression.
2. Waiting for the right opportunity to find you.
3. Going back to school without developing a [Five-Year Career Transformation Platform™](#) and plan.
4. Assuming that if you start networking, you will be perceived as being a “phony” or will be viewed as “begging” for a job.
5. Feeling and behaving like a failure after a job loss.

Making forward progress in your career – fortunately, or unfortunately – means you have to consider yourself to be in training much like a professional or an Olympic-bound athlete. You will need to invest “training” and “practice” time and effort into developing your career management muscle.

The best approach to developing this muscle is to first decide on your short- and long-term career goals. What do you want to do next, in 18 months and in five years? Write it down and make a commitment to achieve your goals.

Next, consider yourself as a product. What are the features and benefits of your product? Why would a new employer hire you? What features do you need to upgrade or improve?

Then develop an action plan that identifies the steps you need to take in order to reach your goals. This is the time to be creative; ask others for their suggestions.

You are the only person that has a vested interest in your career satisfaction and you are the only person who can decide on and undertake a new growth-producing, wealth building, career development path!

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