

BECOMING A GAME CHANGER

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The Career Professor
Unleash Your Potential

Take Your Career to the Next Level

You landed your first job out of college and did pretty well for yourself... **So now what?** Too often people get caught up in daily tasks and responsibilities and neglect to utilize their strongest skills. It takes a leadership mindset to avoid getting trapped in the “corporate hamster wheel”, break out of the cycle, and be recognized as a game changer that will truly make an impact.

Your strengths are your most valuable and unique traits - those traits that make you stand out from the crowd and allow you to invest in your biggest asset: **your career**.

Whether your goal is to climb the corporate ladder, learn the skills to open your own business, or contribute to a small business, these eight tips will help you up your game and grow a more successful career.

1 Become a Company Detective

Managers are extremely busy with big picture projects so sometimes they are not aware of problems that affect the efficiency of the day to day workflow. **Take the initiative!** By listening to colleagues you'll find some hidden challenges that may be caused by an underlying issue that is worth investigating.

Management is *always* looking for ways to increase productivity - while they come up with new strategies you can keep your eyes open for ways to improve existing issues, resulting in better efficiency and more revenue.

2 Be a Problem Solver, Not Just a Problem “Pointer-Outer”

When you identify certain issues in the work place, take action. Watch how much more visible you become when you bring solutions to the table rather than pure criticisms towards the current process or procedures. This creates awareness of the issue as well as an ideal opportunity to show your strengths and resolve an issue without adding more directly to your manager's project list.

Managers are there to support their team, so shouldn't their team support them? Leaving everything up to your manager to “figure-out” is not the answer. Remember, even if you make a mistake or if your solution isn't perfect initially, taking initiative is noticed.



3 Seek a Mentor

Just because someone is successful does not mean they are a great teacher of success.

What do professional athletes, actors, and many successful CEO's, business leaders, and successful entrepreneurs have in common? They all have coaches. Surround yourself with those who are in the position you are working towards, or someone who has helped others accomplish what you are seeking to accomplish. Mentors are great resources of information, they help you stay accountable of your goals, and encourage you to consistently move out of your comfort zone.

Just because someone is successful does not mean they are a great teacher of success. There are many athletic coaches who never had the tremendous success BUT helped others achieve that success. If a student wants to improve their skills in a sport, art, etc., they could observe from someone who does the activity well. However, the coach who taught that athlete, artist, etc., may be the more valuable teacher in the end.

4 Continue to Learn

Take every opportunity available for professional development - never stop learning. Attend conferences, networking events, seminars, and webinars. Sharing information is one of the many differences between a boss and leader; and if you have your sights on moving within the company, leaders are always in high demand.

Practice and implement what you have learned and become an expert. Tap into great resources, such as “PULSE”, that allow you to customize the industries and categories that interest you so relevant articles and trending news are added to your news feed live.

5 Keep Your Emotions in Check

The only way to hit a curve ball is to practice hitting curve balls. While this can be difficult, it is a skill that will help not only with your professional standing, but also with your life in general.

When presented with a sensitive situation, avoid making any rash decisions or responding to emails or voicemails in the heat of the moment. Sometimes a walk around the block or getting out of the office is a great way to clear the head and gain a new perspective on things. During this waiting period, take some time to become aware of what is happening and why it has triggered a negative response. Office-peer dynamics can be complex, rising above the chatter and gossip takes a strong leadership mindset. Being an example proves that you are the best candidate to move up the ranks.

“Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it.”

—Charles Swindoll

6 Resolve Conflicts Professionally

Keeping your emotions in check is the first step in mastering conflicts in a professional manner. In an ideal world, projects would run smoothly, deadlines would be easy to achieve, and everyone would get along. However, that's not always the case and we are sometimes faced with circumstances beyond our control.

Email, instant messaging and texting make communication quick and is appropriate for the right situation, but sometimes it's too easy to compose a reply email in the heat of the moment. Doing so may damage your relationship with the recipient, but also your professional reputation. This is something that should be avoided at all costs. Think before you hit that send button.

Seeking the advice of your direct manager or an impartial colleague can help garner perspective, but jumping rank is not a smart move. If the situation involves your manager and you absolutely must go higher, let your manager know that this is what you intend to do. Get their guidance on the best way to handle these situations. Don't go to your manager or the higher up with an attitude. Be prepared with what you have done, your plans, and seek advice that way.

7 Remember, Actions Speak Louder than Words

Whether you are Catholic or not, I'm sure you have heard of Mother Teresa. She didn't just talk about the sick and the orphans, she did something about it. She didn't wait for her superiors to tell her what to do, she found a way and got it done.

We all have the ability to talk and complain. The most successful people take action - **Success Follows Action**.



8 Understand the Traits of a Leader

Take Ownership – Integrity is a trait strong leaders possess.

Everyone makes mistakes, a leader own up to their mistakes without making excuses or falsely placing blame to make themselves look better. In the work place not only can mistakes happen, but sometimes you may not know what to do.

If a leader doesn't know the answer to a question or the best way to tackle a problem, they ask for help. It is very easy to get caught up in saving the day, but leaders look to others to help them learn and grow. Most of all, great leaders are people of their word. If commitments are made, they are kept. Integrity is the best way to gain trust and respect in all areas of life. Be extremely careful about the commitments you make as you will be judged on your follow through.

Passion, Dedication, and Selflessness

Finding and demonstrating passion in your work, whether it be your career or a volunteer effort, will inspire others to achieve their full potential. When one finds their passion, they become dedicated to feeding that passion and growing. The residual effect of passion and dedication is often selflessness. It becomes very hard to have passion and dedication without sharing it. Great leaders become their team's leading cheerleader. Their selfless nature and positive attitude can become viral. Try teaching someone to be successful as you are and you'll learn in the process! Teaching someone only enhances your skill level and shows that you have the bigger goal in your mind and not just an “it's all about me” attitude.

Communication and Being Approachable

By keeping managers, colleagues and clients up to date shows dedication and respect. Communication is a two way street. If others feel that you are unapproachable, there is a great risk for communication breakdown. Be open to others communicating with you.

Bob Moawad described leadership best: “The aim of the great leader is not to get people to think more highly of the leader. It's to make people think more highly of themselves”. The difference you make as a leader may not be overtly apparent. One word or gesture can make a difference at work, home or out in the world.

By becoming a great problem solver, keeping your cool when tensions run hot and honing your leadership skills, you can make yourself the best candidate for the next stage of your career.