

Moving Your Career Forward

You're in a job you like, and working hard to make it a success. Why is now the best time to think about moving your career forward? Time is on your side. You can give your career aspirations some thoughtful attention and planning without the pressure of job dissatisfaction or a job loss. It's time to assess where you are, where you want to be and how you are going to get there.

Evaluate your current situation

Start by updating your resume with any new employment experiences, skills and accomplishments. Then, evaluate your career interests and skills, and think about your satisfaction with your current situation. Use this personal career inventory as your starting point. Are there skills you would like to learn? Do you want to build your list of accomplishments? Think about steps you can take in your current position to fill in any gaps.

Create your career vision

What direction do you want to take with your career right now? Next year? In five years? As you contemplate your direction, consider:

- What motivates you
- Trends in your industry – what areas are growing and what knowledge/skills will be needed
- Transferability of your skills and experience to other industries
- Trends in the world of work that may affect your future opportunities
- What type of positions and organizations would fit your vision

Develop your plan

Next, define short- and long-term goals that will help you achieve your career vision. Short-term goals take one to three years to achieve. They are often a stop along the way to long-term goals, which generally are reachable in three to five years. A goal can be a promotion, a position at a different company, a salary level or any other specific objective.

Once you've defined your goals, write down the steps you need to achieve them. For each goal you should also assign a timeline and deadline. You can always revise your plan as time goes on.

(Please see the back for more details.)

Make it happen

Leverage the resources around you as you work toward your goals with the following tactics:

- **Find a mentor.** A mentor can provide guidance and honest feedback to help you navigate your career path. Choose someone that you respect and trust who also has a solid reputation in your industry and contacts within the industry and community. Consider a former co-worker or manager, a local business leader or a university instructor. Keep your mentor updated on your career and any tough challenges or decisions you face.
- **Network, network, network.** Simply defined, networking is making connections and building relationships with people who can help you advance your career. Networking is the best way to find a new job. It's also critical for career progress.

Keep learning

To get ahead, you need to be informed. Integrate learning opportunities into your career plan:

- **Know what's hot in workplace and skills trends.** Check job boards and job postings on a regular basis to look for patterns in the skills and characteristics most important to employers. If your skills don't match up with workplace demands, find a way to update your skills.
- **Read.** Every time you read a magazine, trade journal, newspaper website or blog, you learn something that may help your career. Use services like Google Alerts, which automatically sends you emails about any type of info you're tracking. For example, you might want to receive alerts for anything related to your current employer or a potential employer.
- **Explore new careers.** If you're in a job that you don't like, isn't paying well or doesn't align with your career goals, consider taking a temporary job or project work to develop new skills, make new contacts or try something you really want to do.
- **Learn two new skills per year.** They could be skills your manager recommends, in-demand skills or skills to develop a personal interest.

Once you've written your plan, use it to maintain your focus on the steps that will bring you closer to your career aspirations. Review your progress at least twice a year, and make needed revisions. And always remember, you have the power to make things happen.

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