

Your Career Advisor

How to Promote Your Own Career Growth

By Dianna Booher

Too many people work hard at their jobs and not hard enough at their careers. That's a problem because jobs come and go, but careers control your future.

Those looking to move up in the job world must be constantly reinventing themselves, determining what skills they possess, acquiring those they need, and broadening their career goals.

Human resource professionals agree that executives consider the following skills and attitudes among the most important in promoting career growth:

Communicate Your Ideas and Intentions Orally

Most executives consider this the most valued skill. Your speaking ability either generates confidence or doubt about your work. Others only "see" what you're able to communicate to them. In addition to relaying needed information, speaking skills are crucial because they prevent your work, and its value, from going unnoticed. What you say is who you are.

Communicate Your Ideas and Intentions in Writing

If speaking is the most prized skill, writing runs a close second. Clear, concise and well-written documents have high impact and staying power. As listeners become bombarded with phone calls and face-to-face interruptions, written messages can be read, reviewed, verified and contemplated for later use.

Good writing means not only good content, but also an appropriate style. The employee who can think clearly and logically and communicate that in written form is in high demand.

Access and Analyze Information and Resources Effectively

Keeping informed on facts and trends in your business is critical to career advancement. Today the question is not "Do you

know X?" but "Do you know how to find out about X?" The real skill is in knowing how to access the latest information quickly, assess its usefulness logically and act on it promptly.

People are racing down the information highway. If you're not up to speed or commandeering the right vehicle, you're likely to get run over. In the age of skepticism, facts and stats drive the world.

Manage Resources Wisely

Whether it's your time, money, energy, skills, files or staff, you have to stay organized. Good organization depends on clear thinking, consistent decision-making and decisive action.

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Mismanage your time and you lose business today and opportunities tomorrow. Mismanage your data (the total body of information doubles every seven years) and you become uninformed and obsolete. Mismanage your employees and you risk being inefficient and ineffective, if not losing your top performers to better run companies. Managing your resources is managing your career.

Increase Your Network Net Worth

To be successful, you personally have to nurture your networks. As a manager, you have to build consensus up and down the food chain with stakeholders. You need your networks to:

- Gather intelligence to make better decisions.
- Recruit people to come to work for you.

- Be innovative.
- Bring in ideas from outside conferences.
- Bring in business.
- Create a favorable impression of your organization in the community.

This core competency has been labeled several things: connectivity, building coalitions, horizontal integration, social acumen or relationship capital. Whatever you call it, be sure to consider its value to your career.

Place a Premium on Staff Development

While money and machines may move industries, it's people who handle the money and machines that move industries. Whether you're selling lemonade on the street corner or wheeling and dealing on Madison Avenue, you'll find that business is a contact sport.

Knowing how to meet, relate to, develop, motivate and empower those you work with will determine where you fit on the organizational food chain. Business may be getting bigger and more technical, but it will always remain personal.

Organizations have decided that they're no longer paying for face time; they're paying for results. As long as you have the prerequisite skills, attitudes, and traits, you can turn a wayward job into a successful career. ■

Dianna Booher works with organizations to increase their productivity and effectiveness through better oral, written, interpersonal and cross-functional communication. She is the author of Booher's Rules of Business Grammar: 101 Fast and Easy Ways to Correct the Most Common Errors and The Voice of Authority: 10 Communication Strategies Every Leader Needs to Know. Booher's communication training firm, Booher Consultants, Inc., is based in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex and serves many Fortune 500 clients. She can be contacted at 817-318-6000 or Booher.com