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Packaging Yourself for Professional Success

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Feel like a cork bobbing in a stream and going wherever the current takes you? Want to take control of your career and steer yourself to destinations of your choice, but don't know how?

The quickest way to take control of your career is to use the same strategic planning steps that businesses do when positioning themselves competitively. How? Treat your career as a business and yourself as the competitive product.

Many people find themselves working day-to-day in a business environment and using only a fraction of their capabilities. Others are working hard and waiting for someone to recognize their great work. The popular notion that you graduate from college, join a company, go with the flow and hope that somebody, some day, recognizes your skills, abilities, and potential is false. No one is going to pluck you from the masses and help you rise to business stardom, unless *you* make the first move.

The following steps will prepare you to do just this by establishing the framework for creating your own personal strategic plan. These steps are specifically designed to help you sell yourself (your product) and to achieve your career goals and professional aspirations.

1. LOOK IN THE MIRROR

This first part of the process requires you to take stock of your inventory by reviewing your assets and liabilities. These are what you bring to the table, and those are areas that might need work. You'll also need to identify your differentiators, or the things that you do better than other people. Finally, it's important to obtain feedback on these key areas and have a clear understanding of the perception that others have of you.

You must define yourself as a competitive product, challenge yourself by facing any weaknesses, and commit to making necessary improvements.

2. GET TO KNOW THE COMPETITION

By identifying and evaluating your competitors, you can determine if you are fully capable of meeting the requirements for the opportunity you seek. Understanding the competition will help you to determine your advantages and shortcomings, and help you decide what actions you need to take in order to compete more effectively.

Competition is a fact of life. View it positively; embrace it; and see what you can learn from it. Strive to be your best by understanding yourself and who you are competing against.

3. IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS AND CREATE YOUR PLAN

Before you can create your personal strategic plan you must define your goals. Goals reflect what you want to accomplish to improve yourself. They will lead you to a greater sense of commitment and motivation as you pursue your aspirations. You'll translate these goals into a strategic plan by outlining the steps that will be necessary to reach each goal.

Like using a roadmap to arrive at a destination, having a clear plan in place helps to ensure you are headed in the right direction and end at a desired location using the most direct route.

4. DON'T WAIT TO GET STARTED

Strategic plans, like ideas, are effective only if you implement them. Having and implementing a personal strategic plan requires that you review and demonstrate progress. Make immediate corrections to unproductive or unsuccessful plans as soon as they become apparent. Do not procrastinate.

Implement your strategic plan and check your progress.

5. CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES

Tenacity, courage and commitment are essential to achieving your career aspirations. Focus on the positive, but be prepared to overcome obstacles. Most importantly, give yourself encouragement and rewards that will help provide motivation and pleasure as you continue to accomplish your goals.

Stay focused and be sure to celebrate and reward achievements.



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You truly can manage your career, your way. But, achieving success requires more than luck, more than hard work— it requires a plan. The strategic approach businesses use to create roadmaps for products to be successful in the marketplace work for individuals too. Applying this business concept to yourself and developing your own “personal strategic plan” will help you to define and achieve your career goals and make the most of your professional life.

Take control and be proactive. Put yourself in the driver’s seat and steer yourself toward destinations of your choice by following a strategic route that is based on your strengths and personal goals. It is hard work and you’re worth the investment!

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