

HOW TO BUILD A HIGH PERFORMING CAREER



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CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER REQUIRES DETERMINATION. CULTIVATING THE RIGHT SKILLS AND ATTITUDES WILL HELP YOU MOVE UP THE RUNGS.

Whether a professional accountant, finance professional or current student, you have probably already devoted great time, effort and money to your vocational training. Having identified a suitable career in the accounting or finance sphere, you have invested considerably through tertiary studies, education and professional development. Once qualified, however, your next challenge is to secure and establish a challenging job and career. Indeed, in today's highly competitive workplace, it is imperative to actively manage your career for success.

This article briefly outlines several maxims drawn from world's best practice career management theory. Following these tips will assist you to create and maintain a meaningful, satisfying and fulfilling career.

TIPS FOR A HIGH PERFORMING CAREER

1. Explore job fit

Carefully appraise your prospective work environment/employer for person/job fit. Be acutely mindful of your preferred working environment and role.

Don't be seduced by the financial package or prestige of a firm. Three months after commencement it is the challenging work that you undertake, and the people you work with, that will dictate your job satisfaction.

2. Cultivate professional behaviour

Be strictly mindful of your professional behaviour in your business interactions. Strive to create a good first impression in your interpersonal dealings and build a good work reputation. Be professional in all interactions with colleagues, managers, staff and clients.

3. Manage your image

You can enhance the way you are perceived by colleagues, managers, staff and clients by attending to your personal 'brand'. Being



aware of your personal appearance and professional behaviour will differentiate you from others and help you make your presence felt.

4. Maintain high cognitive dexterity

It is important for high performing individuals to be mentally adept and quick thinking. As management responsibility increases, technical accounting knowledge becomes less critical. Rather, the need to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity increases with your management responsibilities.

5. Secure a mentor

Identify and develop a relationship with a professional mentor of experience, knowledge, integrity and stature. Recent research suggests the best mentors are often managers who are quite different to you - such as a different ethnicity, qualifications, or personality.

6. Maintain professional knowledge and skills

Pursue ongoing, continuous professional study and develop good academic knowledge and skills. Attend professional forums. Membership of the National Institute of Accountants is a great way to keep abreast of developments. Indeed, research findings indicate reading a broad variety of technical advances and current issues an hour before a meeting can enhance your ability to suggest creative and effective ideas.

7. Develop a strong work ethic

Work harder than your peers. Do more than is expected. Take the initiative. Look for, and accept, responsibility.

To maintain your enthusiasm, hopes and aspirations, regularly visualise what you would like to achieve in the next few years.

8. Project a positive disposition

Be positive and be enthusiastic. A positive disposition is highly regarded by recruiting managers and is recognised by leaders as a 'non-trainable' attribute. To create this impression, always ensure your back is straight when you are seated and your arms are uncrossed.

9. Network widely

Networking is a crucial aspect of career management and helps build internal relationships and credibility with decision-makers. It also assists you in establishing a profile with prospective employers and advocates, and lays the groundwork for future career transitions.

10. Manage customer/client satisfaction

Always rigorously and courteously follow up clients to ensure their satisfaction and delight with completed work, and to maintain rapport.

11. Be familiar with generational differences

Research indicates there are very clear differences in the experiences, preferences and behavioural characteristics of the different generations, which includes Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. As a high-performing individual it will be helpful to understand these generational characteristics and manage communication to avoid generational conflict, mixed messages and misunderstandings.

12. Understand economic and political trends

Stay abreast of the current economic strategies and the impact of these strategies on markets and business. **NA**

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