

Five Ways to Turbo Charge Your Career

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Have you reached a point where you have felt your career is stagnating? There are some ways to move the needle, but they may involve moving you away from your comfort zone. Here are five solid suggestions.

Speak up. A lot of people, depending on their position on the org chart, hesitate to express their opinions. You may be one of them. Perhaps, you feel intimidated when talking to senior leaders because you don't want to mess up. Maybe by nature, you are pretty quiet or introverted. If we're describing you, set these reasons aside. Stop making excuses. Remember you were hired for what you could contribute. Speak up. It's critical to advancing your career.

Look for opportunities to voice your ideas. Some say to do it in the first ten minutes by asking a question or agreeing with what is being said. It signals you are attentive and interested. "Jack, that idea makes perfect sense. I will make the necessary calls." Or "Jack, can you elaborate on what you are expecting from those of us who are engineers?" Participate throughout the discussion to show you are engaged.

Also, you don't have to be 100% certain before voicing an opinion. It's okay to qualify your comments. "I think I read somewhere that there might be a compliance issue. Before we get too invested, let me review the regulations."

Sometimes your idea may be different from what is proposed. Again, it's fine to voice your opinion. The boss doesn't expect or respect a bobblehead. Opposing views generate discussion. If you dissent, the key thing is to do it politely. State your position as a question. "Mary, are you sure that timeline is possible, given the delays we are currently having getting the product?"

Get a mentor. Why? A mentor will teach you the ropes, provide advice, connect you to important people and guide you when you are unsure. Some companies have formal mentoring programs, and others leave it to the individual to find someone on their own. If there is an experienced, well-respected person that you admire in your company, approach the person and ask if they would be willing. Obviously, there is a time commitment on the part of a mentor, but most are willing to help someone with potential. With a good mentor, you will shortcut the time it takes you to make a name for yourself.

Learn a new skill. Complacency is never a good career move. Become committed to broadening your portfolio. Take classes. Gain additional certifications. Get an MBA.

Additionally, most of us are keenly aware there are some areas that need bolstering. Do you have low emotional intelligence, poor time management or anger control issues? Do you feel stressed? Unless you bite the bullet, these issues will continue and magnify themselves. The best advice is to address any issues that might hold you back in the future sooner rather than later.

Be a joiner. Professional organizations open doors. They provide opportunities to build a network of people who can help and endorse you. These groups can also sharpen your leadership skills. Senior leaders have very large networks. They are well-liked and respected by a vast number of people. Think about joining an association to further your career.

Serve others. Besides helping yourself, reach for opportunities to assist others. Think about being the division's liaison for United Way or building a house for Habitat for Humanity. Run or bike for a particular

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cause. Offer your services to youth programs in need of professional mentors, coaches or tutors. Broaden your horizons.

Bosses like it when their direct reports volunteer. It makes them look good. When you volunteer, you also show you want to excel and are invested in the company and the community. You might notice on LinkedIn or by reading the bios of the company's officers that your boss and other leaders in the company are involved in many outside activities. Take a hint- if they are involved, you should be involved.

To accelerate your career, you have to take charge of it. You can't expect the boss to notice what you do. Follow the suggestions listed above and you will become more visible and certainly land on the boss' radar screen.

Question: *What has helped you to advance your career? What works for you in dealing with his/her behavior? We're interested in your opinions. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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