

Two Essential Strategies for Career Success

By Jennifer Selby Long

The final two essential strategies for career success are:

- Resist the urge to contract, and expand instead
- Prioritize your development, even if it can't be to previous levels

Resist the urge to contract, and expand instead...

Hunkering down is the instinctive response when you're under the gun, but it's a big mistake, especially if you work in a staff function.

Many talented people believe that the quality of their work will speak for them, and to a point that is true, but it may not be speaking the right language to the right people.

Now is no time to stay heads-down. You need to articulate your value in terms of the results you contribute to the company. You personally need to communicate this, not rely on others to do it for you.

I have seen many, many situations in which talented employees were let go because they were so quiet about their contributions that even their bosses hardly noticed them. It was only after these talented employees were let go that anyone realized the results they were contributing to the success of the company. Knowing they were now appreciated was little comfort to them at that point.

Regardless of your current role, volunteer to take on additional responsibilities that allow you to work with more people. It's not just about doing excellent work anymore. It's about doing excellent work with and for as many people as you can, so that your utility to the organization is recognized by as many decision-makers as possible.

If you are in a staff function, volunteer for additional projects that are "close to the cash register" such as supporting the sales team. The teams generating the revenue are so essential to the business that it pays to be near them if you're not actually on them.

A second good choice would be to join or support the organizations that make the products or deliver the services your company sells.

Try to avoid being an overhead function supporting an overhead function (HR supporting Finance, for example) but if this is your current job, you can counterbalance some of the distance from the cash register by volunteering for projects outside of your core group.

Prioritize your development, even if it can't be to previous levels...

Talented people thrive on development, both professional and personal. However, you're not likely to have as much of your own cash for development as you did three years ago, and your employer is not likely to fund it as much, if at all. For all of the talk about how people and their talents are the most important asset to a business, there's still very little action to support the words – just ask those “important assets!”

While companies are still investing in leadership development, it's reserved for an ever-smaller percentage of managers who have been identified as high potential future leaders for their organizations.

Other types of job training and development are receiving less, if any, funding at most companies; fewer companies reimburse for advanced education than they did three years ago.

So it's up to you to take your development into your own hands. Whether it's a weekend workshop, coaching, a mastermind group, a tele-seminar series, or even a book, invest some of your own time and money to continue growing regardless of whether your employer sponsors you. Your mental and emotional well-being will benefit greatly and you will be adding skills that make you increasingly valuable.

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