

A Check-List

19 Nudges to Move Your Career in the Right Direction

By
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When you're asked to explain why you should be promoted, get a raise, or have a new job, it can make you feel uncomfortable. Why? Because you're forced to talk about yourself—something mother told you never to do. Besides, who will believe you?

Well, there's a better way to get noticed without having to say a word. You can nudge your career in the right direction. Here's a check-list so you can see how you're doing—and what you need to do:

- *Possess awareness.* Be sure your antennae are always up! Never stop observing and gathering information, which allows you to read situations accurately and anticipate outcomes.
- *Act honorably.* Be known for being candid. If you say you'll do it, others know they can count on you. You're open, not guarded, and you don't come up with excuses.
- *Demonstrate confidence.* Take time to read yourself accurately, both your strengths *and* your weaknesses. It's worth the effort. You'll avoid the dangers of becoming viewed as overconfident.
- *Present effectively.* Recognize that nothing can get you more positive feedback than being an effective presenter. Your team will look to you to be persuasive and deliver the goods.
- *Express yourself clearly.* Dashing off memos, letters, emails, texts, or voice messages has consequences: namely, confusing recipients and earning the right to be ignored. Taking time to frame your thoughts for clarity is a game changer.
- *Contribute generously.* What you do every day when arriving at work goes beyond your job description. Contributing ideas and making suggestions will improve your performance and help the business succeed.

- *Possess an aiding attitude.* The workplace is often competitive and everyone plays it cautious and close to the vest. Yet, everyone needs help, so be the outlier and offer it. Don't look for a "Help Needed" sign; you can sense it. The payback will be instant.
- *Show some imagination.* Many good ideas get killed before we express them. Why? Because a little voice in our head tells us that others will think we're stupid. Take a chance. Let your mind play with possibilities and say, "You know, I was thinking...."
- *Stay focused.* Some call it being mindful; others label it being single-minded. Whatever the word, you're focused on what you're doing; neither distracted nor distracting.
- *Simplify endlessly.* At some point jobs take on a life of their own—and somehow become unnecessarily complicated. It just happens and most people accept it. Don't be one of them. Ask yourself, "How can I simplify it and get rid of all the stuff that keeps me from being more productive and helpful?"
- *See the bigger picture.* A career isn't only about doing quality work. It's also seeing yourself as part of an organization, recognizing its challenges, opportunities, and where it's going.
- *Be consistent.* "Tom, you have some helpful ideas, but you're unpredictable," says the boss. "Your work is all over the place. As much as we would like to, we can't count on you."
- *Avoid jumping to conclusions.* Some shortcuts are helpful. But not this one. It keeps us from slowing down long enough so there's time to accurately evaluate ideas, situations, and people. Distorted judgements result in poor decision making.
- *Be a thought leader.* It's easy to spot these people. They are the go-to people, whether on a team or in a department or an office. Others are drawn to them for their knowledge and expertise.
- *Celebrate others.* It doesn't need to be something big like getting an award or winning a job promotion. Any act of helpfulness qualifies. Celebrating others sends the message that those around us matter.

- *Recognize the blind spots.* We all have them. Make a “What I need to know” list if you want to get ahead. Then, tackle them one at a time; you’ll stand out from your co-workers.
- *Welcome new challenges.* Many people like working in a “groove” where the routine never changes, there’s little pressure, and few surprises. Be the exception; seek out new opportunities, even when it’s a little scary.
- *Stay on top of things.* Falling behind can be fatal, so don’t rely on your memory. Use an app to keep track of everything. You’ll get a reputation as someone who has it together.
- *Take a stand.* There will always be those who go with the flow and keep a low profile. It’s the perfect prescription for being ignored, lost in the crowd, and never missed. Don’t be one of them.

Keep on nudging and you’ll find yourself going in the right direction.

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