



Owning Your Career: Personal Growth and Development

By Susan West

Fifty years ago, if you started a career with one company you were likely stay with that company right up until retirement. You didn't have to worry about developing yourself to advance your career because as long as you did your job, you had a job.

Those days are long, long gone. There is no such thing as a lifetime job anymore, you have to constantly grow and develop to stay competitive in the modern workplace. Smart professionals know that personal growth and development lead to so-called soft skills that are in high demand. Companies are not just looking for workers, supervisors, and managers; they are looking for leaders, team builders, and people who can build strong interpersonal relationships.

What do I have to do?

If you want to arm yourself with these desirable skills then you must take charge of your career. Motivation is the key to learning, growing, and making yourself attractive to employers.

Your personal growth and development efforts should generally fall into four categories. They are:

1. Knowledge
2. Leadership
3. Responsibility
4. Advocacy

We'll look at each of these in turn.

Knowledge

Cultivate your ongoing thirst for knowledge. This means constantly looking for opportunities to learn about something that will add to your base of knowledge. Take a management or business class, arrange an internship with a leader you admire, learn a foreign language, or pursue your MBA.

Check with your employer about programs available to support your acquisition of knowledge. Many companies offer tuition support, mentoring programs, career cross training, and other options to help employees expand their minds.

Leadership

Leadership is more than just a popular buzzword in the business world; it is the single most important attribute that you can develop in yourself. Companies understand that in a competitive world they need to employ people who can motivate, inspire, and lead their teams to better performance.

Look for opportunities to develop and practice your leadership skills. Volunteer to serve on a committee from your professional association, organize a community project, or serve as a mentor. Make sure that these activities are visible to others so that they will see you in a leadership role and have confidence that you are capable in this area.

Responsibility

Actively look for ways to increase the responsibilities that are part of your job description. Offer ideas or suggestions for improving the business and then lead a project to try out those ideas, or step up to manage a company program. When you demonstrate that you are enthusiastic about personal growth and development, you become a much more valuable part of the organization.

This does not mean, however, that you should run roughshod over your peers, colleagues, or employees. Be eager and motivated, but don't be blinded by ambition or ego.

Advocacy

This last category can be challenging because it requires you to advocate for yourself to others. Instead of sitting back and waiting to be noticed, go to company leadership and talk about how you can contribute more to the organization. Show you are committed to improvement by asking for feedback and applying that information to your interactions with your management as well as your employees.

When you use tact and diplomacy to discuss your achievements you are more likely to be noticed and noted as a person with a strong future of career growth.

Article Source: www.bestmanagementarticles.com