

# HOW TO



# GIVE YOUR CAREER A BOOST IN CHALLENGING TIMES

PERFORMING WELL ON THE JOB IS NO LONGER ENOUGH – BECAUSE A REVOLUTION IS GOING ON THAT IS HAVING JUST AS MUCH OF AN IMPACT ON THE WORKING WORLD AS THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION OF THE 19TH CENTURY, SAYS LORI DAVILA.

**T**he days of working for the same company for 25 or more years and the company initiating promotions and handing out gold Rolex watches at the end of those 25 years are long gone. This is mainly because of growing competition, and the entire working world is reorganising.

Now, however, there are other ways to give your career a boost and to achieve stunning results, such as:

- Finding a new, fulfilling path.
- Getting a promotion and higher pay.
- Achieving long-term career goals.

The best way to keep excess weight off is with a consistent exercise programme and good eating habits – significant lifestyle changes and not fad diets. If you only notice your career when problems or issues arise, they will add excess ‘weight’ to your career that may be difficult to lose.

Don’t expect to read about a ‘quick fix’ to your career woes in this article. Instead, you will learn how to make lifestyle changes, but you’ll need a real commitment to these changes, to take your career to the next level.

The three keys to boosting your career include visibility, connections, and helping others on a regular basis. All three interconnect – you can’t have one without the others.

## VISIBILITY

Not only do you have to be good at what you do, but you also have to be visible. The more visible you are to your co-workers, management teams, customers, other departments, vendors,

professional colleagues, and community members, the more likely you’ll move your career in the direction and at the speed you want. Without visibility, you may end up in less fulfilling, less challenging, and lower paying jobs than you deserve.

## CONNECTIONS

Even if you’re not ready to make a career change, building and maintaining relationships is the smartest strategy for career growth and survival in today’s highly competitive and turbulent marketplace.

Make lists of people who can enhance your career and meet with them. Over coffee, lunch, or dinner, you can explore with them your respective backgrounds, experiences, and career goals, and ways you can help each other. Hold two ‘meetings’ a month on a consistent basis, unless you’re like me – I hold at least two ‘meetings’ per week.

## HELPING OTHERS

Take time to help others by making connections for them. Provide advice and guidance, or simply volunteer to help someone, a project, or an organisation. Helping others will do more to improve your chances for boosting your career than any other single action you can take. And you’ll make the world a better place, since helping others is contagious!

## SIX-MONTH CAREER BOOST PLAN

A six-month plan is outlined below to help you proactively gain visibility, make comfortable connections, and help others reach their goals. Do these activities in any order depending on your current employment situation.



### MONTH 1: EXPAND YOUR INTERNAL COMPANY NETWORK

Set up short 'get acquainted' meetings with other employees to share information. Take on high-visibility projects and support colleagues in their endeavours. Gaining support, new resources, and alliances inside and outside of your department will benefit you and ultimately your company in several ways:

- You'll identify new contacts that can help you become more efficient in your job.
- You'll gain knowledge about other areas of the company for potential career paths.
- You'll resolve issues more quickly by broadening your list of experts.

### MONTH 2: BUILD YOUR OUTSIDE NETWORK

Start with what you're already involved in, such as tennis, neighbourhood events, or bicycle clubs. Everyone loves to talk about themselves. Get to know the people you enjoy leisure activities with by asking them what they do for a living and sharing experiences.

### MONTH 3: JOIN A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION AND VOLUNTEER FOR A COMMITTEE

If you're not already an association member, attend meetings as a guest to assess whether a particular association would be of value. Are the members the kind of people you would like to know and are they successful in their careers?

Once you find an association that meets your needs, join it, find a committee and volunteer. You will have the opportunity to get to know others in your profession and to perform for them. Many people with limited contacts and resources have risen to prominent positions by getting to know the key leaders in professional associations.

### MONTH 4: BE MORE PROACTIVE AT WORK

If you only do what you are asked to do at work, you will be considered an average employee. Do more than what's expected, by volunteering for new projects, and developing and implementing ideas to improve your manager's life and your company's relations with suppliers and customers. Ask to be trained in new skills and let your boss know about all your key accomplishments.

Managers are impressed with employees who strive to increase their value through doing more and learning more, and they will typically help pave the way for your success. Asking and suggesting shows your manager you are eager. That alone will make you more visible.

### MONTH 5: VOLUNTEER FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Donate your time with a well known charitable organisation. It's amazing how far you will go when you begin to volunteer. It's one of the fastest ways up the ladder of success. Your willingness to give of yourself will soon be noticed by people who are higher up.

### MONTH 6: CONTACT PEOPLE WHOM YOU ADMIRE

Don't be shy about contacting someone you admire for advice and counsel. Most people will be glad to find time in their busy schedules to offer advice. Perhaps you admire an author, speaker, or industry expert. Write them a letter. I have many clients who have been successful using this strategy, and they received life-changing contacts and ideas as a result.

### SUMMARY

Keep recycling and expanding this list of monthly activities. Perform them consistently to avoid unemployment for long periods of time, to avoid stagnating in a job or organisation, or to change and improve your current situation. Evaluate what progress has been made and where you found the greatest satisfaction and ideas.

Don't forget to keep a positive attitude. People like to be around and help people they like, and cheerfulness and optimism always get noticed. When you cultivate an attitude of friendliness and helpfulness toward people, they will go to extraordinary efforts to open doors for you. ■

Lori Davila is a career marketing coach, resume writer, author, and columnist who specialises in developing customised marketing strategies for clients to achieve their career goals – fast! She also works with corporations to develop leaders and teams, and to implement right fit interviewing and hiring techniques. She writes a professional development column for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and is a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal. Her book, "How to Choose the Right Person for the Right Job Every Time" (McGraw-Hill, August 2004), includes 401 behaviour-based and other interview questions. She may be reached at [lori@atlantacareermarketing.com](mailto:lori@atlantacareermarketing.com).