



Managing Your Career in HR Five Key Actions for Success

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As an HR professional, you spend your days and often too many nights helping others to manage their careers, reach their potential and contribute successfully to the organization. It is important that you take some dedicated time to focus on your own career and ensure that you are moving effectively forward to achieve your own professional objectives. The following five actions comprise some of the most powerful techniques to take control of your career and position yourself (and your organization) for a successful future.

- **Build on your strengths**

Determine key areas of strength, such as financial acumen, negotiating skills or powerful communication skills. Utilize these strengths to propel your career forward. For example, if you are a powerful negotiator, review the strategic objectives **of the organization** and create a plan to enable you to leverage your negotiating strength to resolve specific roadblocks hampering the achievement of one or more strategic objectives. Document your success and look for additional strengths to leverage to move the organization forward.

- **Know Your Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are everybody involved with you or your career, and those who can influence your career indirectly. Stakeholder groups can be as diverse as: bosses, mentors, customers, peers, or other employees. Know which stakeholders are important and support them to achieve objectives or move agendas forward. It is helpful to think of stakeholders in terms of a hierarchy or, graphically, as a pyramid with the most influential at the peak and others following in descending order. However, it is important to keep in mind that stakeholder influence is a dynamic relationship, manage your relationships with all stakeholder groups.

- **Be a Role Model**

Deliberately create the reputation you want others to experience. Every action or failure to take action will have an impact on your career and your HR team's ability to achieve objectives. Many hold the HR leadership to a different and tougher standard of behavior; additionally some have a preconceived notion of the value of the HR leader. Regardless of the case in your organization, create a clear picture of how you want to be perceived and then take measured and focused steps to deliver the appropriate level of performance.

- **Recognize Your Shortcomings and Proactively Address Them**

Assess if your current behavior still supports your career objectives. Often as leaders move up the ladder, they continue to display the behaviors that got them there, without recognizing that they must expand and replace their behavioral skill sets each time they are promoted. Enlist the assistance of a coach or mentor to evaluate whether your current behaviors and performance have kept pace with your career progression. If you are 'stuck' likely you are still displaying the behaviors of a previous level.

- **Damage Control**

No one is immune from crises. Crises can be in due to inadvertent transgressions, natural calamities, malicious intent, a private remark taken out of context, etc. The most critical period to reputation damage control happens in the first few days. It is the tendency to go quiet. This is a mistake because critics will quickly use the time to give their worst-case scenario and put out a negative spin. You should quickly gather all the facts and begin to plan recovery. Being defensive is rarely effective. Often the best way to diffuse a crisis is with a timely and sincere apology.



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