

The Secret to Pursuing Your Own Vision of Career Success

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Having a rewarding career depends upon pursuing your own vision of professional success. Otherwise, you're likely to spend your days trying to live up to the expectations of others or mindlessly drifting from one job to the next.

Of course, success itself means different things to different people. For some, it's a matter of earning more money and climbing the corporate ladder. For others, it's more about stretching their skills and contributing to society.

Make your work life more satisfying and build accomplishments that you can be proud of. Use this checklist to plan your future and put your plans into action.

Planning for Career Success:

- 1. Identify your strengths.** Think about your talents and how you can apply them. Do you like working with numbers or do you have a passion for design? Browse online for aptitude tests that will suggest careers that suit your personality.
- 2. Set specific goals.** Create objectives that will motivate you and allow you to evaluate your progress. Give yourself realistic short- and long-term targets that are challenging but feasible.
- 3. Address obstacles.** You may find that you need some additional resources to complete your goals. **Figure out what's holding you back and how you'll overcome it.**
- 4. Consider your brand.** What makes you unique? Understanding your personal

brand will help you to market yourself. You'll know what you stand for and the audience that you're trying to reach.

5. **Think ahead.** Career planning is an ongoing process that requires more than keeping your resume updated. Review your job status regularly to decide if it's time to make a change.

6. **Write it down. Put your career plan down on paper.** You'll be more likely to keep your strategy in mind instead of letting it get buried under daily events.

Implementing Your Career Plan:

1. **Manage your time. Block out space in your calendar for activities essential to your goals.** You may need to cut down on distractions like watching TV or shopping online.

2. **Maximize your network.** Build a strong network where you can share practical and moral support. Ask others for help when you need it. Be generous with sharing information and referrals.

3. **Learn from others.** Benefit from the experience of others. Find a mentor or shadow a star employee at your company.

4. **Build your qualifications.** Seek opportunities for education and training. Take certification courses online and check out the adult education catalog at your nearest community college.

5. **Increase your visibility.** Promote yourself by volunteering for committees at the local chapter of your professional association. Write articles for your company website or publish your own industry blog.

6. **Negotiate compensation.** Research current salary data when you're exploring a new line of work or expecting a job offer. **Talk with your employer about fringe benefits that are important to you, such as childcare or flexible hours.**

7. **Take risks.** If you want to excel at work, you'll need to move beyond your comfort zone. **Focus on gradual growth you can sustain, and the small victories will add up.** Deliver a presentation at a staff meeting to prepare for addressing the crowd at your annual convention.

8. **Stay positive.** Your professional career may last 50 years or more, so a cheerful attitude will help you to persevere. Look on the bright side of difficult situations and learn how to laugh at yourself.

Create a career that enables you to do what you love and achieve balance in your personal and professional life. Start planning today so you can make decisions based on your values and goals.