

10 Rules for Creating Your Career Action Plan



By Lauryn Franzoni

Everyone needs a career plan. Crafting a plan will help you gain advancement and recognition in your field and land the top jobs when they open up. But the career plan isn't something you can create on the fly. You need to start laying the groundwork right away. Here are 10 rules to help you get going.

Rule 1: Never Stop Networking

All of you should be looking for your next job, even those of you who are currently employed. Network extensively. If you're currently employed, network both externally and within your current company/client. Chances are good that you'll find your next job by networking among the people in your present one.

Rule 2: Make Yourself Valuable and Visible

Become indispensable outside your immediate area and let others know about your knowledge, skills and the value you can contribute. For example, participate on intra-company task forces and committees outside of your direct responsibility.

Rule 3: Build Alliances

Develop strategic alliances with corporate colleagues, vendors, customers, partners and associations.

Rule 4: Become Known in the Industry

Expand industry and professional involvement in associations, professional organizations and societies. If you are in the safety industry, volunteer to speak at the big safety conferences like the National Safety Council, American Industrial Hygiene Association, American Society of Safety Engineers or, if you're Canadian, the Industrial Accident Prevention Association. You can also contribute articles and content to blogs and newsletters in your industry to gain exposure.

Rule 5: Anticipate, Don't React

Keep on top of what's happening in your industry. Anticipate the trends and factor them into your career planning. For example, you might want to start cultivating expertise in technical fields that you think will become crucial in the next few years.

Rule 6: Look Forward, Not Backward

Set your sights on new opportunities. Don't dwell on the past, and be ready to abandon it.

Rule 7: Be Proactive

Be proactive. Create your own opportunities and don't wait for opportunities to find you.

Rule 8: Be Assertive

Don't assume that others in the industry know you and recognize how good you are. It's incumbent on you to tell them and make them aware of what you can do to meet their needs.

Rule 9: Roll the Dice

Don't play it safe. Be prepared to take chances. Sensible risks are often essential to career success.

Rule 10: Think Big

Try to be more than somebody who solves day-to-day problems. Become a person who foresees problems and heads them off before they arise, a person who can take a program and the company to new levels.

Conclusion

Yes, summer is coming. And it's a great time to become known. Help plan that company or industry group summer mixer. Or better yet, volunteer to make a presentation at a local group meeting. And don't forget. . . when you catch up on your reading, send articles of interest on to select colleagues who can help you get ahead.