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Planning Your Career Goals

Discover

- how to set goals to help you advance in your career.
- how to work smart to improve your chances of promotion.

Key Terms

ambition
role model
professional organization
network

Choose your goal, then develop a plan to reach it.



Case

Working Smart

Gabriella is a video technician in the news department of a local broadcasting company. The job uses all the skills she learned in school. She also works with experienced video editors. She is learning new skills from them.

The pace in the newsroom is very fast. Gabriella keeps up with the fast pace. She is friendly and efficient. Her coworkers and supervisor like her.

Gabriella has goals beyond video editing. She wants to be a news editor and then a news director. Gabriella knows it is possible. Sharon has done just that. Sharon is now assistant director of news operations. Gabriella sees Sharon in the halls. She's heard that Sharon started in the video-editing room, but quickly moved on. "I want to be like her," Gabriella thinks.

The video-editing department is used by several shows at the station. Each show likes to have its work done in a certain way. Gabriella strives to make her work flawless. She keeps up with all the latest video-processing techniques. She volunteers to do difficult jobs that others do not want. She organizes her files of footage and labels them. This way, when a request is made, she can easily access the file. When footage from a previous broadcast is needed, Gabriella can find it quickly. The department head, Greg, notices what a timesaver her filing system is. He then asks Gabriella to set up a system for the whole department.

Because of her excellent work and creativity, Gabriella is given more-demanding jobs. She enjoys the challenges. Gabriella also works on learning about other departments in the company. She learns the names of the department heads and directors. She watches all the station's programs. She greets directors and producers by name and mentions their shows.

One day there is a breaking story of an out-of-control fire. Gabriella is assigned to help Sharon's team. They work overtime to prepare footage for the breaking story and news special. Sharon has an opportunity to watch Gabriella at work. She is impressed. Gabriella never complains or seems tired, even though they work late into the night. She pitches in and does whatever is needed. Gabriella is not afraid to speak up. She offers suggestions and ideas without being pushy. She is able to explain herself clearly and thoughtfully. Gabriella reminds Sharon of herself ten years ago.

When a job for a newsroom video supervisor opens, Sharon recommends Gabriella. After posting the job and interviewing several candidates, the director decides that Gabriella is the most qualified. When Gabriella is offered the job, she happily accepts.

Name _____

Case Discussion

After you have read the case *Working Smart*, write your answers to the following discussion questions.

- What is Gabriella's attitude toward her job?

- What is Gabriella's goal?

- What does Gabriella do to reach her goal?

- Do you think Gabriella will reach her goal?

- What role did Sharon play in Gabriella's career plans?

- What did Gabriella do to show her competence?

- What did Gabriella do to show her initiative?

- What did Gabriella do to show her work ethic?

- What do you think Gabriella will say to her coworkers when her promotion is announced?

Analyze

For some people, their work goal is to find the right job. Once they have found the right job, they are happy and productive. Their goal is to stay in their jobs and be the best they can be.

Others have the **ambition** to move onward and upward. Ambitious people want new challenges and responsibilities. Generally, the rewards are higher status and higher pay. The challenges may include difficult situations, harder work, and more stress. For some people, the rewards are worth the challenges. For those who want to move up in their companies, there are certain steps you can take to help you achieve your goals.

ambition. Desire for rank, fame, or power.

Be Clear About Your Goal

When you are in a job and know you want to advance, identify the specific job you want. Gabriella enjoyed her job as a video editor. As she became more familiar with the company, she identified her long-term goal: to become news director. Once she identified this specific goal, she could start taking steps to reach it.

If you are having trouble determining your goal, talk with your supervisor or human resources director. Many corporations provide support for people who want to climb the corporate ladder.

Identify Realistic Steps

Gabriella identified the first step on her path to news director. She needed to be promoted to supervisor in the video-editing department. To put herself in a position for promotion, Gabriella needed to demonstrate several things: her technical and creative skills, her initiative, and her strong work ethic. She demonstrated her skills by keeping up with the fast pace of her job. She worked hard to turn in "flawless" work. She showed initiative by developing a way to organize files that impressed the department head. Because Gabriella works hard and works smart, she is given more-demanding jobs.

Gabriella also looked for a **role model** in the corporation. She has heard about and observed Sharon. Sharon is a woman who has reached her goals in the corporation. Gabriella learns about Sharon's career path, and determines to take the same steps.

role model. Person whose behavior is a good example and worth following.

In a corporation, it is also important to be friendly with everyone, but avoid getting too close to anyone. She keeps her relationships positive and business-like. She does not gossip or spend time socializing. She focuses on work. She also learns the names of other department heads and watches their shows. In this way, when she meets the department heads, she can talk knowledgeably about their programs.

Good job skills combined with good human relations skills are your ticket to success. A constructive attitude is important to your relationships with coworkers and supervisors. It is also an important element in career advancement. Gabriella would not have developed a reputation as an outstanding worker if she had only focused on her job skills. It was the combination of good job and human relations skills, a constructive work attitude, and the influence of a role model that assured her success.

Do a Little Extra

Take every opportunity to show initiative. Volunteer for challenging tasks. Take initiative to do something to improve your department. Gabriella took it upon herself to reorganize the filing system for her video footage. The department head noticed that her new system made it so much easier to find footage. He asked her to share her system with the department. By sharing it with the department, she helped her coworkers become more productive. She earned their respect and that of her supervisor. At the same time, she increased her visibility and drew positive attention to herself and her skills.

Know Your Company

Learn as much as you can about your company. Know the products or services it offers and what each department does. Learn how your company is structured. Who are the department heads? Who does the hiring, firing, and promoting? Are people usually promoted from within the company or brought in from outside when an opening develops? Your chances to advance are greatest in a company that promotes from within.

Know Your Field

Keep up with the latest developments in your field. Read trade journals and magazines. Keep up with the latest news in the business section of your local newspapers. We live in a society where change takes place rapidly. Keeping up with trends, influential people, and events in your field gives you food for conversation with people on the job. Being aware of developments in your field is one way to let people know that you are interested in moving up.

Join the **professional organization** in your field and be active. Professional organizations often provide excellent trade journals and continuing education opportunities. In addition to the educational value, their meetings are good places to meet people and **network**.

professional organization. Organization or club established to help people be successful in a profession or career.

network. To make connections with people in the work world.

Be Open to Opportunities

Be receptive to changes and opportunities. Gabriella was lucky to get an offer in the news department, where she wanted to go. What if she had been offered the video supervisor job in a different department? She would have been wise to take it. Opportunities don't always come exactly where or when you want them. When there is an opportunity for you to be promoted into a job that will help you grow and learn new skills, don't be afraid to take a chance. Look for opportunities to prove your ability.

Show Your Ambition

Let people around you see your desire to succeed. You do not have to be pushy or brag. Just show others by your actions that you have ambition. If your goal is a management position, prepare now. Take courses in management and employee relations. Dress like a manager. Volunteer to lead projects. Offer to head a committee to solve a problem or develop a new procedure. Be willing to take the jobs that no one else wants. Become involved in your company's charitable efforts and special events. You may learn the most from the difficult projects.

Keep Your Attitude Positive

As you achieve your goals, do not leave your positive attitude behind. Good human relations skills are important no matter how high you go in an organization. Often, the higher you go, the more important relationships become.

Conduct yourself so that when your promotion is announced, others will be happy for you. Don't ever indulge in putting others down to get ahead. This type of behavior will damage your reputation. If you feel it is necessary to behave this way, perhaps it is time to think again about your goals.

When you are promoted, do all you can to make the transition smooth. Leave your work in order. Volunteer to train the person who will be taking over your present job. If that is not possible, write a memo to your replacement to provide information about the job. Include your new phone number, and let your replacement and supervisor know that you will be happy to answer any questions they have.

Name _____

Apply

Case: Promoted over Your Friends

You are the top producer in your department. Because you are happy to help your coworkers, your excellent record is not resented but respected. You look forward to going to work every day. You genuinely like the people you work with. You often socialize with them after work and on weekends. In fact, you consider two of your coworkers your best friends.

The day after your supervisor announces he is moving to another city, you are asked to be his replacement. Although this has been one of your career goals, you didn't think it would happen in this department. Your supervisor is very young and you figured he'd be around for years. Now you are worried—how can you ever be an authority figure to your friends?

Case Discussion

- List three options for dealing with your job situation.

Option 1: _____

Option 2: _____

Option 3: _____

- List the option you would choose, and explain why you would choose it.

Name _____

Review

True or False

Circle *T* if the statement is true or *F* if the statement is false.

- T F 1. Everyone has to have ambition for career success.
- T F 2. The first step in career advancement is to define the goals.
- T F 3. Goals that require numerous steps to achieve are not worth the effort.
- T F 4. Excellent technical skills are all that is needed to reach career goals.
- T F 5. It is okay to step on others to get ahead.
- T F 6. Sharing good ideas that increase group productivity is a good way to show initiative.
- T F 7. To get ahead, focus only on your department.
- T F 8. Professional association meetings are a waste of time.
- T F 9. Good human relations skills are important for career advancement.
- T F 10. When people are promoted, they should volunteer to train their replacements.

