

How Do I Get There from Here? Setting and attaining career goals

•Map it out•Stand out•Mix and mingle

Whether you've been with your organization for years or you're looking at how to create a career path for yourself, there are steps you can take to get to the next level.

Map it out

Instrumental in reaching your destination is knowing where you're going and how you're getting there. Creating a career map is a wonderful way to help you visualize a bright career future and get there faster. Here's how to start:

Mark out a finish line. What is your destination or goal? Be specific about the position you'd like to be in.

Plot needed skills. Brainstorm and plot out the skills you'll need to get on the path to your final destination. Don't be afraid to ask for directions along the way. Contact people in the position you aspire to and ask them how they got there—their stories may surprise you.

Mark your route. As with any long-term traveling, there are always stops along the way. Mark down the roles you see as possible steps on the path to your desired position and the skills and training you'll need to get there.

Use the map. Don't forget to refer to your map when making career decisions. Your career map may be personal to you, but it's important that you know it well enough that you can share your career development goals with your manager.

Adapt the map. With life challenges, opportunities, and career moves ahead, the only certain thing is that plans will change. Review and update your map from time to time. Keep yourself on course to your destination, even if that finish line is different than originally planned.

Stand out

Now that you have your career plans on paper, it's time to put those plans into action! To excel in the workplace, be sure to:

Ask questions. Make sure they are relevant and prompt. It shows you're interested and eager to learn.

Show initiative. Don't always wait until someone asks you to do something. Look for opportunities to help and offer your services.

Be a team player. Be positive, encouraging, and give credit where it's due. Your co-workers will appreciate your efforts and you will earn their respect.

Do great work. Don't just get the job done. Give 100 percent with everything you do, even the tiniest of tasks, and you will be trusted with more over time.

Learn and learn some more. Volunteer, get a mentor, go to seminars, take a course! View every opportunity for growth as valuable and never stop learning.

Mix and mingle

Networking can provide you with important connections that can help you grow both professionally and personally. It's often who you know that gets you to the next stop on your career map, so be sure to maintain and expand your connections.

To build and support a great network:

Keep your old friends. When starting a new career, especially if you move locations, don't leave your friendships behind. It's easy to stay in touch wherever you go, so be sure to maintain those connections.

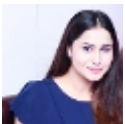
Make a daily effort. Whether by email, phone, or in-person, stay connected to different networks. Get to know your friends' network of friends and take opportunities to mix in different circles.

Be of service to others. If you know about a job opening, send the posting to a connection that may be looking. Found an intriguing article? Email it to a contact you think might also find it interesting. Look for opportunities to help others and good things will come back to you.

Get involved. You'll be amazed by the types of networking opportunities available by staying active at work and in the community. Whether it's heading up your organization's bowling league, pitching in for a fundraiser, or joining a professional organization, stay active and involved.

The career track can be intimidating at first, but with a goal in mind and a strategy in place, you can keep yourself on target. In our fast-paced world, it's easy to get caught up in looking forward without enjoying and appreciating the place you're in today. Your experiences now will help you down the road, so be sure to enjoy every bit of the journey toward your desired career goals.

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