

## 5 Essential Elements of Your Career Plan

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It may be difficult to believe, but the fourth quarter of the year is already here. A new year will be here before you know it. Will you accomplish everything you wanted to accomplish professionally in 2016? What about 2017? What will next year bring for you and your career?

Absolutely nothing happens without the **desire** to make it happen. Things just don't happen "by themselves" or by accident, and that's certainly the case in the professional world.

That's why when it comes to your career, you need a **PLAN**. You won't know what to do if you haven't *planned* what to do. Without a plan, you won't have a definite direction, and without a definite direction, you'll eventually find yourself in what is called a "career rut."

Nobody ever sets out to be in a rut. However, without a plan, that's exactly where you could find yourself . . . if you're not already in one.

Below are **five essential elements** of your career plan:

### #1—Your motivation

This is where everything starts. It's what your plan is built upon. To determine this, you must ask yourself some serious questions. What are the things you want from your job, current or otherwise? What do you want from your career overall? What big goals do you have? What makes you happy? You must drill down until you can identify your overriding motivation. It's what drives everything.

### #2—Your expectations

Once again, more questions need to be asked (and more importantly, answered). What do you expect of yourself? Of your employer? What do you expect will happen if you invest in yourself with more training and education? Remember: if you set big goals, then you must set high expectations, and if you set high expectations, you must meet those expectations. This underscores the importance of not only creating your plan, but also of executing it.

### #3—A proactive approach

Speaking of which, you can't sit back and "wait for the world to come to you." The world is not going to come to you. Even if you are a superstar within your field, a proactive approach is necessary to maximize the opportunities that are available. This definitely involves taking risks, including pursuing new opportunities within your current organization and considering taking a step outside of your current organization to explore further career development.

#### #4—A sense of urgency

This is one of the best ways to foster a proactive approach. Since it's that time of year (and we've already talked about the "fourth quarter"), let's use the game of football to illustrate this point. When a team falls behind its opponent and is trailing in the second half, it does not help them if they panic. However, if they play with a sense of urgency, then they give themselves a much better chance of winning. A sense of urgency focuses your efforts, no matter if you're playing football or building your career.

#### #5—A flexible mindset

Creating a plan is great; being able to adapt and tweak the plan in response to ever-changing circumstances and situations is even better. Flexibility is a valuable trait in all settings, professional or personal, and employees who exhibit this trait are typically considered to be among the **most valued** individuals within an organization. It can help you not only with the creation and execution of your career plan, but also with your quest to move up the ranks within your current employer.

Are these five elements part of your plan for 2017 and for your career? Do you have a career plan? If so, how detailed is it? If not, why don't you?

These are a lot of questions, but the answers to these questions hold **the key** to greater career satisfaction. Take a moment (or longer) to assess your situation. There's still plenty of time to put together a comprehensive plan for next year . . . so you can avoid the ruts and reap the benefits.