

# How To Craft A Successful Career Plan



## Career experts share winning strategies that many workers overlook.

By Chris Kyle

Want to get ahead in your career?

Tired of treading water at work?

Looking for professional success?

To help you find your stride at work, we asked career experts to share their best tips on getting to the top.

Keep reading to learn more about successful strategies that many workers overlook...

### Career Tip #1 - Slow Down

Instant messenger, iPhone, Twitter. These are tools to help us get what we want, whenever we want it.

As much as we'd like to tell you otherwise, a successful career plan isn't a quick click, tweet, or phone call away. It takes time and patience to develop the proper blueprint.

Deborah Brown-Volkman, a certified career coach in Long Island, New York, says that most people are speeding up in today's fast-paced world when they should be slowing down.

"Many people feel like they want something new and they want it now," Brown-Volkman says. "They hop. They go to a new job and it's no good so when a recruiter calls, they go to another new job."

Brown-Volkman tells clients that they need to take a step back and figure out their long-term vision.

In other words, slow down and take a deep breath. That's our first tip and it's also the first step to putting together a successful career strategy.

### Career Tip #2 - Unmask Yourself

Curt Rosengren, a Seattle-based career coach and author of "101 Ways to Get Wild About Work," says that any successful strategy starts from within.

"If you look at the percentage of people who are truly engaged and happy with their work, the statistics are pretty meager," Rosengren says. "For too many people, getting up and going to work is putting on a mask. It's putting on a costume."

Rosengren tells his clients that their long-term success is tied to finding and pursuing their true talent.

"When you are trying to do something that isn't what you're naturally built to do, you may be able to do it well but you're not going to be able to sustain it for nearly as long," Rosengren says. "The quality of your experience is going to be significantly less than something that is in line with who you really are."

"Bottom line: you can never be anyone else half as well as you can be you," Rosengren says.

### **Career Tip #3 - Focus**

In archery there's no way you can hit your target without focusing on it first.

Every other pursuit in life is the same, whether it's archery, accounting, or web design.

This is the stage where you need to focus, says Brown-Volkman. "You need to get clear on what you want."

"It involves some work and perspective and it's not always comfortable to look at yourself, but without having a destination or asking yourself what you want, your plan is not going to be effective."

Brown-Volkman says the number one mistake people make is skipping this step.

When identifying your goals, don't be afraid to get greedy. Think of it as a career wish list.

Already know what you want? Good. You're ready to move on to our next career tip...

### **Career Tip #4 - Start Planning**

Once you understand where it is that you want to go, it's time to plan how to get there.

Rosengren says this may involve taking a class, reading a book, or asking friends and co-workers for advice.

For people experiencing financial hardship, Rosengren recommends pursuing a parallel track.

"I'm not a fan of saying that everything is daisies and tulips and sunshine when things are hard," Rosengren says. "But I'm also not a fan of saying that things are tough now so I have to focus 100 percent of my attention on how to get through this."

Rosengren tells clients to strike the right balance for their plan. "Maybe the vast majority of your time should be focused on getting that next paycheck and there is a percentage of time - maybe it's just 10 percent - that can you use to start moving in the direction that you want to go. That's okay."

[Going back to school](#), whether it's part-time, at night or online, may be a good option for people who want to pursue a new career or promotion without giving up their day job.

Finding the right school or degree program involves the same tips we've talked about. Figure out what you want and then plan how to get there.

### **Career #5 - Go For It**

Congratulations are in order! Yes, yes. We know. You're not at the finish line quite yet, but you've come a long way and there is reason to celebrate getting this far.

You figured out what you want and you put together a plan. Now you need to go for it.

"Here you need to talk to people and network," Brown-Volkman says. "Even if your goal is a promotion, you need to talk to your boss and your co-workers. Ask them how you are coming across. Find out what you need to differently."

If you're introverted or afraid, this step requires a leap of faith.

"Many people have a perception of what other people are going to say," she says. "That holds them back. Most people are their own worst critics."

Just keep in mind that the most important part of this last step is your commitment to seeing it through.

"Don't stop and don't give up," Brown-Volkman says. "Most people don't get what they want because they stop and a lot of times what stops them are their thoughts. But if you have a clear vision and a clear plan and you are implementing your plan on a regular basis, you will be successful and you will get what you want."