YOUR EXECUTIVE COACH
A Guide to Successful Careers
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Introduction

In this fast-moving digital era, your career will take more turns and pass more milestones than the paths pursued by any previous generation.

As a millennial college student or graduate in the workplace, you likely will have 15 to 20 different jobs before retiring. Each will require its own talents, knowledge base, credentials, and relationships.

Because you will need an ever increasing number of skills for all the careers in your life, it will be important to gather all the education, training, experiences, and contacts that you can.

Walsh College has coached thousands of students and business executives in ways to advance their careers, shift course as needed, and benefit from the experience and capabilities of their colleagues along the way. Walsh now has collected some of the most essential advice offered by its career services and management experts into this brief career guide. It is designed to serve as your digital executive coach.

The recommendations here can help ensure that you start on the right foot and avoid missteps when changing direction throughout your career.

The one skill every job seeker needs

Your most important career step is never to overestimate the importance of good communication skills.

In a survey of businesses, the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that communication skills were the number-one quality or skill that employers want, even ranking ahead of honesty and integrity.

While technology advancements have changed the way we all communicate, the digitization of society doesn’t mean you should only develop proficiencies in social networking or HTML.

The ability to communicate one-to-one both verbally and in writing is a primary skill sought by hiring managers when filling positions.
You have to talk with people and groups in many different situations. And inevitably, communication will involve presenting—standing before a team, a large audience, or even a news reporter to present your position on an issue. Strive to:

• Learn how to create and deliver digital presentations and webinars.
• Become proficient at writing articles and summary reports.
• Sharpen your on-screen skills for presenting via Skype and FaceTime.

Your communication talents must be constantly evolving if you expect to move up in your organization. Otherwise you risk stagnating in a lower-level position because you cannot present your thoughts, plans, and recommendations in a well-considered, coherent way.

**Advance your career**

As you begin your career, you will want to focus on actions that help you achieve success milestones. For example, obtain credentials that demonstrate you are knowledgeable about your discipline and your job.

In today’s knowledge-based economy, a bachelor’s degree is comparable to the high school diploma of your grandparents. It’s now the baseline indicator of your training and knowledge.

After graduation day, earn additional credibility with certifications in your profession, whether it is accounting, public relations, engineering, human resources, or scores of other careers.

Not only will credentials allow you to develop as a professional, but they also will make you a more valuable team member. They tell your boss that you are someone who can multitask and that you are motivated to stay current.

Virtually every discipline has its own credentialing system that signifies overall excellence and/or expertise in a specialty. Sources for credentials include:

• Industry-specific professional societies
• Local associations
• Online webinars and learning modules

You may find that pursuing a graduate degree can significantly accelerate your career success. It also can enhance your earning potential and lower your risk for unemployment, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In addition to the strategies and skills you can acquire in graduate school, many colleges offer certification programs and leadership courses that can contribute to your advancement.
See what your employer offers to help you complete a certification or pursue a degree. Tuition support is becoming a selling point for businesses to retain talent. You may find your organization will foot some or all of the tuition bill for your degree if you are viewed as a current or potential high-value employee.

In your day-to-day life on the job, you should keep in mind the attitudes and actions that can help you be considered for advancement by your organization’s leaders.

**Six tips to advance your career:**

1. Always present a professional profile, both in person and online.

2. Be willing to talk with peers, administrators, clients, and customers on an intelligent, professional level.

3. Seek out opportunities to network with people in your company who are in higher places and can support your efforts to move up.

4. Exceed what is required of your job, bringing new technology and new ideas into the organization.

5. Stay current with developments in competitor organizations.

6. Send the message internally that you are remaining up-to-date within your field and are knowledgeable in areas your organization needs.

Focus not only on the tasks involved in your job but also on the values of your profession as demonstrated in your credentials, your networking, and your self-education. You will better stand out as a future leader in your company.

**Earn that promotion**

In pursuing career advancement, it’s important to understand that promotions will not be handed to you on a silver platter. Asking for a promotion may work for some. Largely, however, a promotion will be directly related to your perceived value to the organization.

Here are six ways you can start working toward moving up:

1. Be seen doing tasks successfully by your supervisor and other “evaluators” in the organization.

2. Document achievements and acknowledgements by managers, colleagues, clients, or other influencers. With a documented track record of your success, the decision to promote you becomes easier.

3. Align yourself with people at a higher level who are connected to your discipline, and build relationships with those individuals.
4. Work beyond your job description. Ask for additional responsibility and additional projects from other departments.

5. Look for projects or ideas the organization needs to advance, through existing efforts or an idea of your own. Legends emerge within organizations among those employees who can look above and beyond their daily duties to find new opportunities for the business.

6. Study ways to save money, to grow the business, and to create strategies for gaining new customers. The more intelligence you gather, the more intelligent will be your interactions within and outside the organization. These interactions collectively will be big success drivers for your role.

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Join and manage teams

Job satisfaction depends not only on the tasks you carry out every day but also on the assignments of your colleagues and teams that impact you. You’ll stand above the crowd if you develop good teaming skills. No one works in his or her own silo anymore.

Get noticed—and appreciated—by volunteering anytime you’re in a meeting where your team leader needs assistance.

Raise your hand for teams that are formed to resolve issues or propose plans within the organization. Volunteering can be critical to your career plan. It’s a sign that, despite everything else on your plate, you are willing to take on more responsibility on behalf of the organization.

Team leaders will see that you are in the process of developing your own leadership skills, and they will want to provide the counsel that will help ready you to become a leader yourself.

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As you do move up in the organization, you may reach the stage where you are responsible for making tough decisions within teams, including terminations or promoting one person over another. Every manager faces these stress-generating decisions. The key to reducing the stress is to ensure your decision is based on as many objective criteria as possible. In choosing which person to promote and which to pass by, you may consider each individual’s related experience, demonstrated initiative, success in completing projects, and ability to work well with people.

When it comes to employment decisions, objective information can form the foundation of your conversations with employees and help you feel confident about your decisions.
Change careers

Count on changing your career path a number of times over the years ahead. Some of these changes are likely to be bigger than others, such as choosing an entirely different line of work. Making this kind of transition can be difficult, but it becomes a bit easier when you prepare your resume with a transition in mind.

- Your resume should reflect transferable skills relevant to the new career you’re seeking.
- Your college career services office can coach you on how to answer job interview questions and how to position yourself differently for your new profession. Most people have transferable skills that can relate to any profession, but they don’t know what they are. Career advisors can help you dig them out.

It’s important not to jump into a career change, however, until you have examined why you want to change. Is it the work you’re doing, your supervisor, or the organization itself that’s driving your decision? Less drastic changes might help resolve your displeasure with your current job and avoid a major career shift into something else that makes you unhappy.

Rather than being a reactive decision, a job change should be considered thoughtfully.

Tips for a Successful Career Change:

- Do the upfront research that will help inform your thought process.
- Spend time with people who currently are doing that kind of work. Find out what makes their job enjoyable, as well as the drawbacks of the daily grind.
- Keep in mind that a switch might require earning new credentials, accepting lower initial pay, or moving to a different part of the country. Lean on your network to help you make the decision, since it could impact many of those around you.

Turn your college into a resource

We generally think of colleges as places to prepare us for careers, but they can help you substantially after you graduate, as well. Many of them have well-developed career services departments with connections to local businesses, industry professionals, and other resources primed for those with your background and experience.
College-sponsored leadership institutes provide certification programs and leadership courses. Career services offices organize workshops to prepare you for on-campus recruiters and career fair encounters, advising on networking techniques and ways to present yourself.

Colleges also offer a range of certification programs for jobs ranging from project management to finance. Many of these programs allow you to earn college credits and access free career service assistance.

If entrepreneurship is your chosen career path, many colleges and universities have programs to assist current students in starting up their own businesses after they graduate.

The Walsh College LaunchPad offers free advice for developing business plans and provides access to industry experts and investors.

Your route to success

Starting, changing, and advancing careers are life-changing inflection points and should benefit from expert advice and expert resources. The recommendations offered here are a starting point for a route to success. We encourage you to review all the resources available to you from Walsh College at www.walshcollege.edu, from the education community at large and from your local business and professional associations. Best wishes for success in your careers ahead.

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