



Ideas@workSM

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Career Building Strategies That Work for Everyone

A recent discussion thread on an Internet job board asked people to suggest career building strategies for women. Anyone who read the responses would conclude that these career building ideas are not only good just for women, but for anyone who is looking to advance their career. In fact, these are just common sense ideas that work, and you can use them to advance your career too. Here are five of the best ideas:

- **First, decide what you want to do next in your career.** For some people this might mean the next step on a career ladder. For other people, this might mean looking to change to another career field. Regardless, it is important to decide what you want to do rather than leave your career development to luck or the next seemingly great opportunity to come your way. By deciding first what you want, you will more easily find opportunities that will take you to the next level.
- **Network inside and outside your company.** This is a long-term building process, but anyone who wants to advance their career will do so by expanding their network. Start first with the people within your own organization. They are easy to reach and meet. Next expand your network within your industry. This can be done by joining a local association or industry group in which you can become active on a committee. Then expand your network outside to include key people from other industries. You can do this easily by volunteering to work with a non-profit or on the local United Way campaign.

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- **Use the new social media tools.** Keep track of your contacts using the various tools that are readily available on the Internet, like LinkedIn or Plaxo. This will not only make it easy for you, but it will allow you to leverage your network beyond your first order contacts to second and third tiers. It will also allow you to maintain the information the Internet rather than on a company computer. Thus, you can always have access to it, and it will be portable and private. These tools are also specifically developed for managing networks and offer a variety of features for this purpose.

- **Keep current on your job skills:** This includes not only technical by also non-technical skills. Everyone should be in a mode of continuous learning. Some professions require this as part of their license requirements, while other professions might not; however, for all professions it is just common sense to stay current with new trends and technologies if you are serious about your career. Also, don't forget about the "soft skills" like project management, leadership, and conflict resolution. If you are prepared to step into a management role, then you will open some doors that might have otherwise been shut. This is where preparation meets opportunity.
- **Position yourself as "the expert."** As you advance in your career, you will benefit from increased visibility if you position yourself as an expert. Look for opportunities to do some public speaking at trade shows or conferences where you can share your expertise with others. Write an article for a trade publication or newsletter for your association. Start a blog about your industry or profession which is very easy to do now with the readily available technologies. Over time, you will become known as the "go to" person not only for information, but also for career opportunities when they arise.

Building a career is different from finding your next job because it is a long-term process. However if you do find yourself out of work, these same activities will help you jump start your job search for your next career enhancing opportunity. The best time to build for the future is while you are currently employed. So, especially if you are happily employed today, lay the groundwork for your future by following these simple steps. You will be glad to have done your homework in advance if you suddenly find yourself looking for something new. So regardless if you are a women or a man, the same advice will apply: decide what you want, build a robust network, and position yourself as "the expert" in your field. Just get started today.

Leonard Kloeber, Jr. is a human resources consultant and leadership expert. He has extensive "hands-on" experience as a leader in both business and the military and with large and small organizations alike. Most recently he was a senior level human resources executive with a multinational company, but has also worked for start-up and small privately held organizations as well. He is the author of **Victory Principles: Leadership Lessons from D-Day** where he uses the WWII story of the D-Day invasion to illustrate universal leadership principles that can be applied to any leadership endeavor. He lives in Prior Lake, MN. For more information contact him at www.leader101.com visit his website: www.victoryprinciples.com.



Key Ideas:

- **First, decide what you want to do next in your career.**
- **Network inside and outside your company.**
- **Use the new social media tools.**
- **Keep current on your job skills:**
- **Position yourself as "the expert."**

Plant the seeds for a successful career now and reap the rewards over time. Just get started today.