

Growing your Career



With the Press full of doom and gloom and every business sector under pressure, now more than ever is the time to take proactive action!

Over the next few months, Step System will be sending you our 'Top Tips' to encourage proactivity and to help you prepare for the opportunities that adversity brings.

Step 1

Understand what your current job is really about – You may have the same job title as last year, but the business will expect different things of you. Are you clear about your contribution to the business? Do you know what value you add? Can you identify your key outputs? Can you build on these?

Imagine you have 60 seconds to make a 'lift speech' to the person who pays your wages – could you market yourself to them, succinctly selling the benefits that you bring to the business right now?

Step 2

Don't assume that the future will be like the past – Strategies that have worked for you previously may no longer be what is required as the world moves on. How future-proof are you?

Think like an outsider – If you were your own 'Trusted Advisor' what would you recommend you do? Analyse your attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Where do you have scope to make adjustments?

Step 3

Set clear goals and prioritise them – People who are successful have great clarity, enabling them to identify which tasks they most need to work on. Importantly, these are also the tasks that they then actually spend their time on.

What are the key 20% of the things that you are involved in that help you to achieve your greatest results? – Get working on these! If you have not got time to do everything, at least do the things you need to do to be successful!

Step 4

Focus on success – What do you do well? What do you do less well? You now have a choice – either find ways to leverage benefit from your great strengths, attributes and skills or develop yourself in those areas where you are less strong.

Follow one strategy or the other – Don't confuse the two.

Step 5

Look for 'elegant solutions' – Identify those things that will help you to achieve what you need in the short-term, but which will also position you to move forward in the medium to long-term as well. Don't be tempted to focus on short-term urgent activity at the expense of longer-term proactive issues.

Set aside time to think – Do a SWOT analysis for yourself and your team. What are your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats? What can you do **now** that will help you to position yourself for success in the medium **and** the long-term?

Step 6

Get organised – De-clutter your brain. De-clutter your planning tools. De-clutter your workspace. De-clutter your life. Then tackle your current workload. Do one task at a time; starting with the things you do not like doing, (but which need to be done). Having completed the difficult and complex, reward yourself by doing tasks that you enjoy, but stay focused on delivering tasks that add value.

Do not allow things like email or meetings to override your clear priorities and measurable objectives – Don't confuse getting through volume of tasks (being busy) with being effective.

Step 7

Think about your people – People who feel good about themselves produce good results and people who produce good results tend to feel good about themselves. Create a positive spiral. Ask yourself: "What can I do to help my colleagues to feel so good about themselves that they are more likely to produce good results?" and then ask "How can I help my colleagues to recognise that they are producing great results, so that they will feel good about themselves?"



What proactive steps can you take to create a positive environment in your business?

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Step 8

Respect others' time – Avoid setting unreasonable deadlines or making unrealistic demands upon others. Sometimes, compromise will be needed from all parties in order to achieve win/win solutions.

Forward planning and open dialogue will avoid confusion and the stress of imminent deadlines.

Step 9

Strive for balance – Take strength from the things that you enjoy and are good at and use it to tackle things that you find more difficult. Are you more successful in one part of your life at the expense of another?

Think about your work/life balance – Create an airlock between your work and private life. Leave work at work and home at home, but recognise that one will inevitably have an effect upon the other. Proactively develop your support structures (colleagues, family, friends) and get some 'credit in the bank' before you need to draw upon this fantastic resource, which athletes call their 'Team You'.

Step 10

Be optimistic – Research suggests that there are direct links between levels of optimism and the extent of career success. Review your approach and reflect upon your communication style and content. What is the ratio of optimistic words you use compared to pessimistic? Use 'power words' and mean what you say. Make commitments and deliver. Avoid saying "Yes, but ..." when "Yes and ..." would work just as well.

Choose your attitude and choose your language. Recognise that you are a role model who can influence the culture of your entire organisation.

Step 11

Address your challenges – What are the real blocks to your success? Discuss these with a Mentor or trusted advisor and develop proactive solutions, using the GROW Model or other problem-solving tools.

Look for precise solutions – Setting clear targets will make it easier to develop your strategy, create a game plan and to think through your tactics.



Step 12

Respect your body's rhythm – Everybody experiences peaks and troughs in their energy levels. Play to your strengths. Don't allow your prime time to be consumed by little things or interruptions, use it instead for the important high-impact tasks that you need to deliver.

Find ways to energise yourself – Your diet, exercise levels, the people that you spend time with and your optimism levels will all have an effect on your energy. High energy carries you towards high impact!

Step 13

Put your career before your job or individual projects – Think of your career as a marathon and each job or project that you undertake as being a part or strategic move within a much longer race.

Think of yourself as a brand – Now more than ever, it is important to understand what you can do to make yourself more marketable. Accepting new challenges, working on cross-functional teams, writing an article or undertaking professional development will all be positive moves, helping you to develop your brand.

Step 14

Learn to network – Make a regular plan for keeping in touch with other people. Keep a list of your top 40 contacts, with a small note besides each reminding you of what is high in their values or priorities.

Look for opportunities to contact people when you don't want something from them – Taking some time to demonstrate your interest and concern in others will keep your name alive in their brain and make it more likely that they will share opportunities and ideas with you.

This extract is taken from a series of 30 Hints & Tips, created by Mark Barnes of Step System.

Step System creates and supplies coaching and training interventions, supported by blended learning and focused publications, delivering success in the areas of personal, team and organisational development.

Next Step

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