

Pondering Career Development

For many, navigating the business world, charting a successful career path, and finding satisfaction and balance within this career can be challenging, exhausting and more than a bit scary. Mentors can help, not to mention professional coaches, which, to clarify, I am not. My career in law has had a few planned and unplanned twists and turns, but has ultimately been very satisfying. In writing this, I am both sharing some helpful pieces of advice that I have discovered throughout my career, and personally revisiting some as I add another facet to my professional life, by crossing the table from senior legal adviser to business leader on corporate boards. I don't pretend to have found the elusive 'silver bullet' or a 'plug and play' approach to success and career satisfaction. Instead, here are some of the pointers that guide me and many successful women I know and admire:

Planning, Prioritizing and Pursuing

Be the architect and driver of your own career. Only you know what you want and need. The first step (which I suggest you revisit regularly) is to take stock of where you are, how you are doing, and whether your current approach fits with your current or future plans. From there, you should make or revisit your next steps, recognizing that it is ok to change your mind, your focus, or to start all over. My goal: always have a plan and set your priorities, while recognizing that these plans may shift.

Pathfinding

Consciously build your career, but always remain open to exploring the inevitable, unexpected twists and turns along your path. Flexibility is key.

Profile-building

Move out of your comfort zone - seek out and accept opportunities for growth and profile-building. You have so much more to offer than you give yourself credit for. Force yourself to do things that put you 'out there', recognizing that sometimes

it is uncomfortable, but that this discomfort will diminish with experience. Particularly in the early stages of a new career or a new focus, it can be beneficial to raise your profile internally, as well as externally, highlighting to your peers and supervisors what you bring to the table, rather than minimizing your achievements. Don't assume that those who should know your accomplishments and contributions are aware of them. People are busy and focused. Be tactful, yet confident and assertive, not aggressive, in your self-promotion.

Preparation

Working hard, honing your skills and being prepared is important, not only in getting things done, but also in developing confidence in your abilities and recognizing that you are ready for the challenges and opportunities that come your way. But make sure to also keep reading and learning outside of work.

Proficiency

Aim to become indispensable for your knowledge, experience, perspectives, approaches or processes. Take ownership of the different roles that you occupy in your professional life.

Pragmatism

Be pragmatic and solutions-oriented, not a naysayer and an obstacle. Try to always advance or help a situation. Look five steps ahead and from side to side and voice well thought out perspectives. Listen more than you speak, but don't allow others to muzzle or speak over you.

People

Success can depend upon the relationships you form, the trust you engender, as well as the value you bring to the table. Invest the time to get to know clients and colleagues. This does not necessarily mean that you must socialize with everyone, but take an interest in people as individuals as well as in their business needs. Most importantly, be sincere. Develop a network of colleagues,

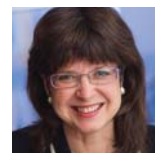
peers and more senior types, not just in your field, but in all aspects of your professional existence, who will support, mentor, and look for opportunities for you. Tell them what your career goals are so that they can be more effective resources. Do the same for them or others. This can be rewarding on both a personal and professional level. I have found the people I work and surround myself with are key to my success and happiness.

Passion

Do not expect a career to be an all-consuming and completely fulfilling passion. Placing these unrealistic expectations on your career can lead to unnecessary job hopping rather than developing the skills and expertise you need to succeed in your work. Every job will have aspects you don't like; focus on the elements you do like first. In my work for example, I find satisfaction in the intellectual stimulation, enjoyment, opportunity, respect and recognition that it grants me, but also understand the importance of maintaining other aspects of my life and in exploring interests outside of work.

Patience, Perseverance and Pardoning

This all takes effort and time, so persevere. Delays and mistakes can be overcome. Don't be afraid to show that you are human. Admit to what you are not, but don't let this defeat you. Recognize that side steps, or even steps that feel like they are taking you backwards, can prove beneficial in the long run, providing you with the time, experience and skills that can enhance your path and open more avenues.



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