

Be Ready to Advance Your Career



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Change is inevitable in the business environment, with globalization and the constant evolution of technology. To stay competitive, businesses must keep up with the rapid pace of change, and employees often shoulder the responsibility for making the change happen. But how can employees deal with change, and even use the experience to advance their careers, when change is thrust upon them?

Let's look at a few scenarios: (1) Your career has been advancing steadily at SuperCo. as the company has grown. The company decides to move to a larger facility, and every employee will relocate to the new building. Your routine is disrupted: everything from emptying drawers, to a longer commute and more expensive parking, to a new dress code. (2) At ValueCo, managers announce that a new software system will be installed with all the bells and whistles to make the systems faster. During the following six weeks, everyone must attend IT training, learn to navigate a new desktop platform, and then immediately start using the new CRM system. Finally, (3) RealityCo., was just bought by a national chain. Jobs will be consolidated, new suppliers and distributors will be contracted, the company will have a new name on the side of the building. For some employees, change will mean finding a new job.

These examples are common scenarios that happen in today's fast-paced world. Change is necessary to grow, evolve and stay competitive. Change is challenging, frustrating, and even crippling when organizations don't link change initiatives to professional development. But, there is another side of change, a positive side. In fact, people are built for change biologically, socially, and psychologically. Today we are emphasizing traits like curiosity, innovation and continuous improvement as the critical elements for future success.

People can establish a personal model for successful change that dovetails the learning opportunities offered by their companies. Here are four ideas that will help you take control of developing yourself:

2. **What's in it for me:** This concern is on everyone's mind but never really put out there to be answered. People worry that it will sound self-serving. However, during times of change there is ample opportunity for learning and professional development. Ask the question to your supervisor or others leading the project this way: "What opportunities are there for me to both support the company and learn new skills to advance my career?" In other words, when all is said and done, what do you want to be able to say you learned, what skills do you want to add to your skillset, and how will you apply these new skills and experiences to advance your career?

2. **Champion change:** Career development is as much about developing technical skills to do your job as it is about leadership skills. Getting people onboard with change requires leaders who can motivate others to see the value in the new approach, get people to understand the vision, and help people see how they contribute to the overall success of the company. Businesses value employees who champion change and raise their hand, and take initiative for leading others through positive change.
3. **Connect the dots:** The impact of change is far reaching. Some of the impact of change is predictable and expected, while other things that are impacted are not known and could not have been predicted. Keep an ear to the ground. Help ideas get translated to different people. Listen for the things that are working and start a list of best practices for share with other people or departments. Be a connector of dots and a sharer of best practices.
4. **Leverage training:** Most companies have training programs that offer various courses for talent development. Many of the courses are compliance focused, but just as often there are professional development courses that are offered online, in-house or at learning institutions. Ask your boss or Human Resources manager what new skills you need to develop for other roles in the company, maybe even ask to look at a few job descriptions, and then what you can do to qualify for professional training that will get you ready to grow in your career.

Getting yourself ready for new opportunities, starts with you. You can start by asking yourself what you're want to do next or you can start with what you need to learn to round yourself out as a professional and emerging leader. Performance is a combination of productivity and attitude. Being a high performer means producing high quality work and having a positive, can-do attitude. Be a high performer and be ready for anything.