

THE HONORABLE DOZEN: CAREER ADVICE NO MATTER WHERE YOU'RE HEADED

By Adele B. Lynn

It's not your boss's job, it's not your mentor's job, and it's not your mother's job. Managing your career is your job. It may be great to have some help, but frankly, I think you'd be better advised to realize that you and you alone are in charge of such an important matter. It's also important to realize that career advancement has a great deal to do with job performance. Today, many people are good performers, so in order to get ahead, you must distinguish yourself from the crowd. No matter where you are headed, these career tips may help you get there.

1. Find out what you love to do. Passion is more important than skill, knowledge, or intelligence. Most successful people are not successful because they possess great skill, knowledge or intelligence. They are successful because they are relentlessly committing time and energy to the task. They do it because they love the task.
2. You must be able to "see it." If you can't see it, you can't articulate it, you can't ask for it, you can't ask others to get excited about it, and you can't ask others to assist. You **must** have a vision of what you want to be doing. If you don't know what you want, chances are others will pick up your uncertainty and may interpret that as disinterested.
3. You must have a network. Networking is not just a list of people that you know. It is a list of contacts who are good at what they do, who are inclined to help you, and who you can contact for specific job / career related issues. Your network should be people who can help you solve problems, circumvent problems, gain perspective on issues or problems, and connect you to others who can help you do the same.
4. Always look at things from many different perspectives - your customers, your boss, your co-workers, your competition, and your employees. Use a zoom lens. Know when you need to take a birds-eye view and when you need the detail view. Change the angle of the picture frequently. If you need help with your perspective, use your network to help you adjust your view.
5. Career advancement isn't based on working hard at your job. It's not about coming in early and staying late. It isn't about making your job easier. It's about looking for areas that will ADD VALUE to the company and then pursuing those ideas. Look in the areas that are just outside your job that no one else seems to own. There are usually rich opportunities for shining in these areas.

6. Not all teams are created equal. Select your assignments and teams wisely. It's better to serve on one team that adds value than on 50 teams that are viewed as fluff. You will not be viewed as a major player until you are adding value. It's nice that you plan the company picnic, but most bosses aren't going to hold your job because of it.
7. What you don't know can hurt you. You must manage your skills and your learning. If your company is embarking on something that will be important to their future, the more knowledge and skill you can gain in this area, the better. Learn, learn, learn... and then learn some more. But most importantly, apply what you learn.
8. Make others shine. As a co-worker, employee, team participant or especially as a team leader, your job is to make others look good. If they look good, you look good. Learn not to be a pain in the... or a whiner. Talk about what's right with your company, not what's wrong with it.
9. Be a master at the dog and pony show. In every industry, it's important to package what you know. People will pay attention when you are asked to explain your project or task. If you're not careful, they could be paying attention to your poor communication or presentation skills. Yes, spelling counts. It doesn't mean you should be all show.
10. The little bit extra is the most important bit. Most people can get you just about to the end of the project. It's what you do to take it further, to top it off, to go the extra step, which will set you apart from the crowd.
11. Sometimes the right job is the wrong job and the wrong job is the right job. It's not about the job. It's about what you are gaining in the process. Are you learning something that will be useful in the future? That will enable you to add value to the company? If not, you may be in the wrong job. A corner office isn't going to do you any good in the long run if you get trapped in that corner. Think long term about your career.
12. Choose your battles wisely. It's old advice, but it still holds true. Standing up for something you believe in, is important to the company; and it set you apart from the hundreds of "yes, people" out there. Just be sure you want to be set apart for the issue you've selected.

In Search of Honor is a monthly column written by Adele B. Lynn. Adele is the author of the book *In Search of Honor – Lessons from Workers on How to Build Trust* (BajonHouse Publishing) ISBN 0-9664084-4-6. Comments can be address to Adele Lynn, Lynn Learning Labs, 609 Broad Ave. Belle Vernon, PA 15012, 724 929-5352 or e-mail, lynnlabs@westol.com.

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