Career Maintenance, Transition, and Strategies for Promotion
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It’s important for professionals to be in control of their own career destiny because it’s not your boss’s job to look out for your career future. Learn how to showcase your value during a performance review and ask for a raise when the time is right. We'll also discuss when it’s time to move on and consider growth opportunities that align with your long term plans.

Perhaps you are re-entering the job market after raising children or caring for elderly parents. Check out our video resources to help you get your career back on track.

The goal of this section is to empower you with the knowledge that career management is your responsibility and to give you action steps to pursue as you grow your career, or transition to a new one.

Planning your career journey in 5 year increments

If you have landed your first real job after graduation it’s already time to start planning your next career move. A savvy professional networks before he/she needs it and is always thinking ahead about short- and long-term career goals. If you are an entry-level associate at a law firm or a production assistant in an advertising agency for example, you should start to plan now for what you want your career to look like in 5 years time.

Think about designing your personal business plan for Me, Inc. – that’s you! What are your professional goals? Does your current organization have growth opportunities? Do you want to pursue an advanced degree? Will you be starting a family or getting married in the near future? All of these questions impact your career and life journey.

While mapping out a definitive and exact career plan is impossible, it’s important to consider the mile markers you want to achieve during your long-term career marathon. Start by jotting down some personal and professional goals you would like to complete in the next 5 years and keep these in mind as you move forward in your day-to-day work. Your goals will impact the kind of work you must accomplish in your current job in order to achieve your desired outcome.
Consider assembling a personal Board of Directors and ask for advice and strategies about growing your career in accordance with your plan. Seek out mentors, sponsors, accountability masters, and advisors to help develop your Me, Inc. business plan. You don’t have to know exactly where you want to go but it will help to assemble your team and you will benefit from the experience and wisdom of others who have your best interest in mind. You might get some great ideas from your team if you are uncertain about what you want your career future to look like. Don’t forget that Colgate Alumni is the best place to build your warm network so start with iCAN to tap this amazing resource.

Businesses and non-profit organizations create strategic plans and mission statements to map out their goals for the future and provide structure for implementing these goals. Think about designing your own strategic plan so you can create a career destiny that honors your values, interests, personality, and strengths – so your career doesn’t happen by default. Bottom line – career planning is your responsibility. In addition assembling your team of volunteers and advisors, consider employing a career coach to help you develop and implement these goals if you need more professional assistance.

Confidently asking for a raise when the time is right.

Most individuals would never dream of asking for a raise – they simply wait for performance review season and accept the allocated raise (if any) established by the company powers that be. Consider thinking outside of the box and introduce the concept of a promotion if you have gone above-and-beyond in your organization and if you are ready to defend your case to your boss.

The onus is on you to determine your worth in your organization and showcase why you are a value-add. You need to be well armed with a raise campaign that illustrates the return on investment for your company by having you in the job. Here are some strategies to consider before you make the big ask.

Wind down your emotions. Emotions about salary inequity can be extremely frustrating and although valid, need to be left at home, at all cost. Check your emotions at the door before you enter your workplace and know that research, strategy, and action require a clear head.
Read up. Study up on your negotiation techniques, consider role playing with a trusted mentor or career coach, and be ready before the big ask.

Do your research. Use trusted resources like the Salary Calculator to find out what the going rate is for your position in a given industry and geographic area. Look at your company’s close competitors and sleuth out their salary rates for additional comparison. You must have hard facts to support your case. But remember, asking a network contact, even a Colgate alumnus/a how much they earn is inappropriate unless they offer to share this information first.

Quantify your contribution to the organization. You must be ready to illustrate your worth in the organization as it impacts the bottom line and or strategic mission of the company. Factors such as clients served, percentage of sales, reduction of costs, and other measurable values you bring specifically to the organization. You should be calculating these quantifiable metrics regularly so you are ready at a moment’s notice to articulate your worth.

Time it right. Schedule a private appointment with your boss so you have her/his undivided attention. Nobody wants to be surprised with this type of request and you want the focus of the conversation to be about you.

Make your case. Be ready to state what salary you think is appropriate in terms of your contributions to the organization. Don’t argue, get defensive or overly emotional – stay cool and focused on your value-add proposition. Leave your boss with a written account of what you delivered verbally so she can consider it after you have left the office. An informal follow-up email will establish any next steps and keep your request in play.

Update your resume and portfolio. If the organization does not respond positively to your request, it may be time to leave. Sometimes you need to move to another organization in order to move up. Keep your resume and professional portfolio updated and ready should you need to start networking quickly. All the work you put into asking for a raise will certainly come in handy when you transition to a new organization and discuss starting salary with your next employer.

How to Ask for a Raise video
Knowing when it’s time to “fire your boss” and move on.

A really good boss and a great leader can take you upward with them inside or outside of your current organization, if you prove your worth. If you have the trust of the rising star in the company -- keep it and maintain it, for this is your insurance policy. If your current boss is not star material, it’s time to look for one that is.

If your boss just doesn’t get it and there is no hope of a change in mindset, you need to stealthily devise your exit strategy. It’s prudent not to leave a job unless you have another to go to, especially in a tough economy. But if your boss is not a good leader and there is no system in your organization that will help change that, then you deserve to be in an environment where you can grow and develop your career.

Even in the most blissful job environment, you should be thinking about your five-year plan and where you see your career going in the future. A great boss can help you on your way but alas, not all of them are so enlightened.

The next time you are interviewing for a position make sure you interview your prospective boss thoughtfully. By asking compelling questions about their leadership style you will be able to ascertain if they are going to grow or diminish your talent on the team.

Bad bosses are not bad people but they are not gifted leaders, which often translates to unhappy and under-utilized subordinates. If your boss fits this description then you should consider firing your boss and hooking your star to a talented and dynamic leader. In reality we know this does not mean to literally fire your boss -- but begin seriously looking for a new work environment that will empower you with a strong leader who in turn will help you grow your career if your boss is zapping your potential at work.

How to pursue a professional reinvention if you are seeking change.

In this tumultuous economy many people have changed careers by necessity and others, by choice. This is the perfect opportunity to take charge of your destiny and reinvent your professional self to reignite your career and your life.

There are five essential self assessment strategies to pursue for your professional reinvention. These steps will empower you with confidence and help you discover what you really want so you can market yourself and achieve your career goals.
1. Consider What You Value
Take the time to get quiet with yourself and determine what you value. Values are the biggest predictor of career satisfaction. Rank the things that are most important for you in a career such as: flexibility, security, autonomy, salary, work/life balance, etc. The values list is endless and only you can articulate what is important for your work environment. Values also change over time so what you want in a workplace now may be very different from the job you held 5 years ago.

2. Rediscover Your Interests
Knowing your interests can help you unlock your passion when choosing a career. Interests are the biggest predictors in career selection since we gravitate towards what we like. Are you a hands-on doer, an investigative thinker, or one who likes to create or invent? Perhaps you are interested in helping people or enjoy organizing data and information, or maybe you enjoy persuading and influencing others to achieve a goal. Your interests may lead you to a brand new career or entrepreneurial opportunity.

3. Embrace Your Personality
Personality refers to your unique patterns of mental, emotional, physical, and behavioral characteristics. Your personality preferences play a big role in the types of work you may like or dislike.

• Where do you draw your energy? Do you prefer to focus on the external world of people and actions or are you energized by ideas and feelings of the inner world?
• How do you perceive information? Do you focus on the realities of the present or the possibilities of the future?
• How do you make decisions? Are you guided by objective, analytical reasoning or subjective, personal values?
• What is your need for order in life? Do you prefer to be organized and planned or spontaneous and flexible?
• Know thyself and honor your inborn personality type to help you find a career that matches your natural tendencies.

4. Scrutinize Your Skill Set
A skill is an ability, based on training or experience, to do something well. The goal is to discover what they are and market them with humble confidence to make you attractive to employers who value these skills in the workplace. Skills fall into three main categories:

• Transferable Skills - taken from job to job and important in many career sectors. Examples include: communication (verbal and written), critical thinking, analytical, leadership, project management.
• Specialized Knowledge - these are skills relevant to a particular job or career field. Examples include: operating laboratory equipment, computer program proficiency, and foreign language ability.
• Adaptive Skills - these are personal competencies you bring to the professional environment and often the most sought after by employers. Examples include: motivation, initiative, integrity, flexibility and resilience.
5. Develop Your Brand

You must showcase your strengths and define your “special sauce” in this competitive job arena. Market your unique combination of passions and talents and develop your story about why this is a valuable commodity. If you need a jump start, query people in your circle of trust and ask them what makes you special.

Ultimately you are in control of your personal brand but gathering input from others can be a great point of departure.

Take the time to get quiet with yourself and discover what you value, what interests you, how your personality plays a role in your career, and inventory your skills. You can’t plan your career road map until you know where you want to go and it begins with self reflection. Developing your brand will help you play to your strengths to identify opportunities where you will thrive.

Whether you are looking to reinvent yourself in the same industry, transition to a new career, or develop your own business, this is your opportunity to clean the slate and design a new professional you that plays to your strengths and feeds your soul so you can take control of your career and your life.

You will notice that the steps for career change and reinvention are exactly the same as for the entry-level job seeker crossing the threshold into the professional world-of-work. This should give you comfort that the process is precisely the same so you have the ability to reinvent as often as you like. Current research indicates that adults are changing career fields, not just jobs, an average of 6-9 times throughout their adult lives. Change is an opportunity for you to always pursue a career that gives you satisfaction.

How to Return to Work after Being a Stay at Home Mom video
Reigniting your passion at work when your career is in a rut.

Often people get bored in a job and seek change because they need more challenge or intellectual stimulation at work. Playing to your strengths and monetizing your passion is the ideal formula for happiness on the job. But in reality, often individuals must stay in a job to deal with the financial realities of life such as school loans, credit card debt, and mortgage payments until they find a career that speaks to their passion and provides an opportunity to pay the bills.

Don’t forget to honor your avocation – your hobbies and life activities that bring you joy and happiness while not at work. Often we focus so much on work satisfaction that we forget to enjoy life. If you are passionate and fulfilled by outside hobbies and activities then you just might find work more palatable until you are able to find a better career fit.

Playing to your passion pursuing an avocation can also lead to a career opportunity. Many people find volunteer opportunities in community and social service organizations that feed their soul. These volunteer positions can often lead to actual paid positions since organizations test drive individuals and seek out talent from people they know. The power of networking is alive and well and playing to your passion through volunteerism is a great opportunity to look for a career change.

Finding work you love is one of the best things you can ever do for yourself and your loved ones. Imagine someone who grinds through the day in a job that sucks the life out of him and someone who actually gets energy from the work she does. Which one would you want to be at the end of the day? Which one is going to be a better wife, husband, partner, parent, or friend? When you love what you’re doing for such a significant portion of your waking hours, the positive ripple effect on your family, your coworkers, and the everyday people you encounter will be substantial.
When you set things in motion in the direction of your passion, things have a way of happening. Doors open you would never have known were there. Opportunities come up you would never have imagined. But it’s not guaranteed. Just because you’re doing what you love doesn’t mean you can automatically turn the dream into reality. You have to get there the hard way, with intense work, patience, persistence, resilience and flexibility – there is no easy road to career satisfaction.

If you want to succeed in pursuing your passion, you have to be realistic and you have to work hard. You also have to question assumptions and be creative in figuring out ways to make it happen. You have to make hard choices. Making it happen is a very nitty-gritty process requiring you to develop a deep awareness of both yourself and the world around you.

Finding your career passion is possible and we wish you a successful journey as you travel your unique career path. The common thread in all of this is networking so you can learn from others, tap their resources, and pay-it-forward when you have opportunities to give back. The Colgate alumni population is a great place to start networking and you can grow your community from there.

This Alumni Toolkit is the first of many resources that will be available because Colgate really does have your back! Check the website regularly for new initiatives in the works including career coaching calls, special events, and programs designed with your career needs in mind. The Maroon Advantage is here to serve you on your ongoing career development journey http://www.colgateconnect.org/s/801/template.aspx?sid=801&gid=1&pgid=311

Here are some of our favorite new career management and transition books that address strategies for navigating the new normal of this job economy.

• Knock ‘em Dead: Secrets and Strategies for an Uncertain World by Martin Yate
• Suddenly in Charge – Managing Up/Managing Down/Succeeding All Around by Roberta Chinsky Matuson
• Strengths Based Leadership, and Why People Follow by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie
• Coach Yourself to Win: 7 Steps to Breakthrough Performance on the Job and in Your Life by Howard M. Guttman
• Your Next Move: The Leader’s Guide to Navigating Major Career Transitions by Michael D. Watkins
• This Is Not The Career I Ordered: Empowering Strategies From Women Who Recharged, Reignited and Reinvented Their Careers by Caroline Dowd-Higgins