



# Getting Smart About Professional Development

Do you feel your current place of employment no longer is suitable for career advancement?

Do you believe that you are underpaid and undercompensated? Use the following information to help you recognize the value of your skills and increase your true earnings, as well as to give you ideas about creating greater career options for yourself in the future.

## The final straw

Making drastic life changes—especially those that affect finances—tends to create a deep sense of anxiety in most people. For the majority of the work force, disagreeable as a job may be, it still supplies a paycheck. Unfortunately, this reality is what usually prevents most people from pursuing better opportunities. When employees complain about their work difficulties, they often explain their dissatisfaction by stating that they thought they were offered a great proposition when they were hired initially, but soon realized that the job wasn't so impressive after all.

Rather than seek employment elsewhere, they choose to wait, hoping that they might be given an increase in salary, a promotion or a bonus that would further compensate them. In some cases, employees become resigned to a stagnant work environment and are pacified for the time being. This inaction can turn into months and—for some—even years. However, a sudden situation may occur that results in some serious soul-searching.

## Understand restrictive covenants

Commonly, people only make career changes when they can't bear their current work situation any longer. After making the decision to look elsewhere, employees often tell close friends and family that they intend to seek new employment.



In some cases, this proclamation may upset those who remain in less-than-ideal positions. In fact, more often than not, many people who try to leave their dead-end jobs are made to question if they really can do better for themselves. This is because when people decide to make lateral career moves, it sometimes makes others wonder if there isn't something bigger out there for them as well, eliciting jealousy and envy. Typically, career advancement exposes many individuals to social and professional resentment.

### **Avoid hindering advancement**

Once you have committed to moving on, you should become aware of your most unique professional attributes. Identify your marketing position before promoting yourself to potential employers. The value you place on yourself will influence your job expectations and can

encourage or discourage you from trying to obtain prime positions. Paint a picture of yourself that will inspire confidence. Your perceptions about your true worth will dominate every action you take in your job search. If your thoughts about your professional self are negative, you may sabotage your well-intentioned efforts. In addition, a low opinion of your skills, knowledge and personality traits also may carry over into interviews and negatively affect the outcome.

### **Rate your attributes**

Equally as important as it is to possess the best skills and experience for a high-paying job, so is having the right attitude. This distinction contributes to good team morale, adherence to protocol and self-discipline—elements that are essential to any spa environment but that some candidates may neglect to develop. Don't

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overlook these highly valued attributes that are essential in landing the position you want.

- A demeanor that personifies the term “professional.”
- An impeccably groomed and properly maintained appearance.
- An attitude that exudes dependability.
- A service-oriented work philosophy.
- A “team player” mentality.
- An ability to converse with new clients and make them feel instantly comfortable.
- A calm, yet not too competitive work persona.

### Let behavior speak

Most skin care specialists give little consideration to what makes them stand out as a preferred candidate among their colleagues. An upbeat, enthusiastic demeanor and a healthy sense of humor are viewed as especially valuable. A-list applicants recognize the demand for certain workplace attitudes, such as an easy-going personality, which make them considerably more appealing than those who lack these inner qualities. They also know that most employers are put off by intense, controlling and perfectionistic personality types who convey an impression of superiority.

A recently graduated twentysomething esthetician named Connie, who now practices skin care in Mill Valley, Calif., provides a good example of how far the right attitude can take you. After being selected for one of the most sought-after positions in the entire San Francisco Bay Area and offered a considerable salary, many of her peers couldn't explain why this novice, who lacked years of experience, had been selected over more seasoned skin care providers. Compared with her fellow interviewees, she was the least likely applicant to be offered the job.

As any longtime spa owner or manager will attest, poor employee attitudes drastically impact what happens in the workplace—especially between members of the team. Although the other estheticians treated Connie as their inferior while they waited

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for the final decision, the interviewer observed their lack of compassion—an essential care-giving component at any skin care facility. Quickly, it became apparent that Connie was a better fit than the other applicants.

Because Connie recognized this, she was able to convince the manager that she would work hard to earn the respect and admiration of the rest of the team. The humility she exhibited provided real insight into her professional behavior. In doing so, Connie made herself an obvious choice for the manager to justify her selection, even though she lacked some of the expertise of the other candidates. Her inner warmth, sincerity and easy-going nature were her most important qualifications.

### Recognize your weaknesses

When identifying what distinguishes you from other candidates, it is important to evaluate your weaker areas as well. What can you do differently in order to obtain more opportunities for career advancement? Ask yourself the following three questions.

- When interviewing, are you responsive enough to make the interviewer feel confident that she is speaking to the real you?
- Can you convince the interviewer that when you are face to face with the rest of the team, they will like who they see and trust you to collaborate with them?
- What can you say that would make a potential employer want to hire you instead of other candidates?

### Manage future career advancements

When thinking of your career, it is a good idea to evaluate it as an ongoing process with three phases: the opening, the middle and the final stages. The opening stage can best be defined as the discovery period in any career. Every effort should be made to learn as much as possible, constantly analyze your skills, increase your knowledge, and recognize and capitalize on your possibilities. The middle stage is a time when you should be well-positioned and fully enjoy your work experience. The final stage involves shrewd insight and deliberate precision, which are demanded of those who hold top positions of authority.

### Make the choice

Regardless of where you are in your career cycle, you should think about how you would like to further develop yourself professionally. Whatever current circumstances you are experiencing, your efforts—or the lack of them—have resulted in you becoming the kind of professional you are today. By exploring the cause and the effect of your past career-advancement strategies, you quickly can gain an essential awareness of your motivations, influences and restrictions. It is only the frustrated and unfulfilled individual who accepts the idea that at any stage there is no hope of career progression.

The wisdom gained from past attempts has the power to erase hesitancy if you just tap into it. In order to be a forward-thinking career professional, you must have resolution. You must emphatically declare: “I just cannot accept what I am doing with my career anymore, and I will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to recognize every inch of my true potential.” ✕

