

4 realities to help you get ahead in your career

Written by [Shawn M. Galloway](#) 06 February 2012

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How much time have you invested, both professionally and personally, in improving your ability to create and deliver new value? How many different methods do you use to develop your capabilities and knowledge?

What have you contributed to your profession this past month or year that no one else can claim? How many people know the answers to these questions?

With every new year, countless individuals search for differentiating methods to demonstrate why they alone deserve a position or raise. Those who are successful have recognized the new reality of today's career growth and job search. The goal of this article is to provide insight into this shift and ultimately challenge your thinking.

Reality 1: Contributed value has become the new coinage in the career realm.

Gone are the days of a company managing an employee's growth path. Your career will now be determined by your increasingly expanding value contribution more than anything else. If you are not personally investing your own time and capital improving and expanding your professional abilities in your career, make sure you find the time to update your resume.

There are many others standing in line for a chance to make a difference. Who you know will always hold importance, but what recognizable value you provide and your ability to continuously learn will be your ultimate competitive advantage. Should you desire improvement in your results and career, a transformation in how you look at things is compulsory.

Reality 2: Resumes that outline duties, but ignore value are a waste of time.

Begin with your current or most recent employer. What value were you able to add to your immediate supervisor and company? How were situations or lives improved with you in the picture? Outlining this will help shift the focus from inputs to outputs, and from performance to results.

Yesterday, the purpose of the resume was to highlight job duties and differentiating capabilities, certifications or knowledge. Today, the importance lies with contributed value. Many resumes still look like a job responsibility outline than anything else. This is a mistake. Write your resume to outline accomplishments.

In this highly-competitive market flooded with resumes, you want yours to stand out. It needs to show immediate, positive differentiation. Rather than stating what you do or did in your previous positions, describe the value you provided and how it positively impacted your boss and the company. Show what value you brought the company, rather than what you did for it. What did you do to specifically add value that they wouldn't have experienced without you? Once you have reflected on your previously-contributed value, it becomes much easier to become focused on future value potential. Plus, it never hurts to keep your resume up to date.

Reality 3: There is no excuse for not learning something significant daily.

With platforms such as blogs, podcasts, self-published books, YouTube and Wikis, there is increasing availability of information than ever before. Most readers will remember a time when they were told by a parent to look something up. Without dating myself too much, I must admit that it was a difficult and tedious process. Today, a few seconds with a search engine on any current computer or smart phone will result in

differing views of the requested topic. Not capitalizing on this content will be a career-limiting move.

To begin to find new value-contribution opportunities, seek out this easily accessible information. While not all answers to every question are available, learning about topics outside of your current competencies often brings a fresh perspective to established problems. Regardless of how educated you might be, there is more knowledge than any one person can obtain. However, learning should never be only a purposeful event. Identifying new opportunities to demonstrate value derives from the curious and those who maintain the perspective that improvements in everything are possible.

Reality 4: When you focus on value and results, you become more valuable.

New programs and initiatives are mechanisms to obtain results, but are never more valuable to companies than the results themselves. This may not seem as fun, or fair, but it is the reality of business. Autonomy, purpose, enjoyment in the job, and the ability to self-improve are all imperative for the achievement of excellent results.

If new results from new value are not being recognized, however, there will be little enjoyment and little chance to improve. Worse, your importance to the organization will diminish. Ensure you are proactively holding yourself, vendors, direct reports, and those whose support is necessary accountable for the desirable performance and results.

There are few things more valuable than to help someone see things differently so they can personally generate new results. This is also more sustainable than any sold program, process or methodology.

Asking someone to change their internal questions from, “What can my employer do for me?” to, “What unique value can I provide my employer and the people I manage or support?” is not an easy paradigm shift for some to make.

It is vital, however, to make this shift in thinking. If you are not proactively seeking out new opportunities to demonstrate different value on a frequent basis, and ensuring others recognize your contributions, there are others waiting for a chance to do just that. Remember, if you manage the contribution and recognition of your unique value, you will be effectively managing your career. This is the reality of today’s career growth and job search.

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