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## Career Management In The New Workplace

by Leslie B. Prager

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The work world of today is dramatically different than the workplace was when I began my HR career back in 1980. Those were the days before the social media phenomenon, blackberries, the internet, virtual meetings, etc. The issues facing professionals today include the "new workplace"; fast-paced, on-demand staffing; a multi-generational, cross-cultural workforce; demographic trends such as the aging workforce and baby boomers leaving the organization; talent management; employee attraction and retention; the impact of technology; globalization; work/life balance; virtual offices, 24/7 workdays and a progressively more competitive and global marketplace.

Planning and managing your career is important throughout all stages of your career. This article will present various strategies for career management for those at all stages of the career lifecycle.

### CAREER MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW WORKPLACE

Career self-management is a key survival tool and a necessity in today's workplace. The days of lifetime employment with one employer are long gone and you must take charge of your own career. It is important to be strategic in order to get ahead and to reach your goals.

It is important to have a career development plan for yourself and to develop your own "business plan". Goal-setting is critical and one should set both short-term and long-term personal and professional goals, and these goals should be "SMART": specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and tangible. As the saying goes, "failing to plan is planning to fail". Is your goal to become a human resources director, marketing manager, or to own your own business? Plan so that you do not just fall into a job, company or function.

**Social Networking** - This latest "trend" is here to stay. Have you joined the social networking revolution yet? Have you developed your LinkedIn page yet? Are you LinkedIn and what does your profile say about you? Do you periodically update your status? Are you on Plaxo, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Remember to balance your online communication with the tried and true methods - face-to-face, telephone and written word, i.e. high-tech with high-touch. Stay up-to-date with the latest trends in social networking and social media marketing.

**Your Own Career Development Plan** - Self-assessment is the first step in career development and career management. It can be either formal or informal and can include standardized instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and can be tied in with the performance review process and discussions with others. Look at your strengths and developmental needs. Personal job and career enrichment strategies can include taking a fresh look at your life, job and career; preparing to move laterally by streamlining or expanding your current job; updating your computer or time management skills; seeking out training and skill upgrades; building networks among colleagues; volunteering for a project team, task force or special committee; developing a proposal for a needed project and finally, taking daily mental health breaks to avoid burnout and stress, and to maintain your own work/life balance.

**Annual Career Audit** - This is a way to ensure that your career is staying on track and that you are working toward your goals. You may want to do this yourself, with the help of a co-worker, manager or a career coach. Make the most of your employers' annual performance appraisal process - it is a wonderful opportunity for you to use as a tool in your own career development. As you continually set new goals for yourself, ask yourself several questions. Did you reach the goals that you set for yourself this past year? Did you achieve what you wanted to do for yourself? Have you managed your professional development?

**Education / Internships** - The number of colleges offering undergraduate and graduate degrees has steadily increased over the years. Certificate programs and executive education programs are another option. Typically offered during college, internships are beneficial for students to gain real-world experience, to gain contacts and begin to develop a professional network, as well as for employers as a recruiting tool for new employees.

**Mentoring Programs** - These can be both formal and informal programs which offer the mentee practical experience and information, career advice and support. Your goals with mentoring are to meet with someone well-respected in the profession, willing to give you honest feedback, and who can help you to develop interpersonal, communication and other necessary skills. You can find mentors at professional associations, universities, or within your own company.

**Certification** - In addition to formal education, you can obtain certification to demonstrate a certain body of knowledge, establish credibility, increase your marketability and help with certain job opportunities. The designations Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) or Global Professional in Human Resources (GHR), show that you have mastered a core body of knowledge, and stayed current through re-certification. There are other certifications that are more function-specific, such as Certified Compensation Professional (CCP), Certified Employee Benefits Specialist (CEBS), Licensed Clinical Social Worker

(LCSW), Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM), National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) and Certified Financial Planner (CFP).

**Join Professional Associations** - Become active and maintain ongoing connections throughout your career. Along with staying current in the field, joining professional associations can provide you with numerous ways to develop and enhance your skills, learn from colleagues and maintain visibility. You can become involved on committees, volunteer for special projects, assume leadership roles, attend monthly meetings and annual conferences. You can begin with small steps such as joining a committee before you make any major time commitment. By becoming a volunteer leader, you are presented with the opportunity to become visible in the field and to develop your leadership, presentation, seminar planning or writing skills as you take on various volunteer roles (board member, committee chair, newsletter editor, president, etc.)

**Network, Network, Network** - Networking should be an ongoing process throughout your entire career. Build and manage your network throughout your career, using a balance of "high tech and high touch" methods. To me, networking is a career/life survival tool, something so "simple", yet often ignored. Networking has been a way for me to stay involved throughout my entire career, both as an HR practitioner and as a career counselor/career coach. Keep your network alive, as a contact base, resource for on-the-job problems and questions, job leads, corporate culture, etc. The most successful professionals are those who understand the value of networking. Tip: Always carry your business cards with you, have your "elevator speech" memorized and always thank those who have helped you.

**Self-Marketing** - Doing a good job is no longer enough to ensure career success. In order to get ahead, you need to market yourself and your skills. It is important to stay visible in your field, both within and outside your company, to develop a reputation and to establish a presence. You have to market yourself as a commodity and maintain visibility - write articles, develop a blog, attend conferences, make presentations at conferences, develop a reputation and establish a presence, and be "necessary" to your CEO. Promote your function, eg. marketing, sell your services within your company and demonstrate your value outside your department. Also, publish your own industry-related material or make yourself available as a resource.

**Ongoing Skills Development** - Leadership, project management, communication, interpersonal, time management, HRIS technology, delegation, internal consulting, conflict resolution and the list goes on. What skills do you need to develop in order to reach your goals? Continually update your skills. Maintain your industry and company-specific knowledge. Take on special projects to build your management and leadership skills, utilize internal career development programs, online resources, executive development and job rotation programs. Keep up with your industry/profession and workforce trends and continually demonstrate your value to the company and how you contribute to the bottomline.

**Ongoing Professional Development** - Along with formal education and certifications, continuous learning is necessary in order to keep abreast of the ongoing changes in the workplace and your profession. You can stay current by attending professional conferences, workshops and seminars; participating in teleseminars and webinars; and reading professional journals. Try strategic volunteering to develop skills and make contacts.

YOU have to manage your own career, wherever you work and at whatever stage of your career. Now is a very exciting time in the workplace with many opportunities and various career paths that one can take!

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*Ms. Prager has an M.A. in art therapy, a B.A. in psychology, and additional training in career assessment and career counseling techniques. She has been published in the Wall Street Journal's National Business Employment Weekly, on the subject of job loss and job search. She is a frequent speaker and writer on career management issues, has been seen on television shows, and has been quoted in newspapers, magazines and online. In the past few years alone, she has conducted career workshops for the Mid-Manhattan Library, Association for Women in Science, Society for Human Resource Management, New York State Association for Counseling and Development, American Marketing Association, American Women's Economic Development Corporation, National Association of Corporate Real Estate Executives and the American Society for Training and Development.*

*The Prager-Bernstein Group has provided its' services to numerous organizations including Actor's Equity, the American Association of Retired Persons and the United Nations. In addition to maintaining her own firm, Ms. Prager was for over a decade the Coordinator of The Career Center at New School University.*

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