



# 3 Principles of Sustainable Career Growth

Motivated people seek career growth, not stagnation. But even motivated and engaged employees may not know how best to achieve that growth for the long-term. Just wishing and dreaming about the perfect job is not the solution. It takes effort, a solid strategy, intelligence, and focus. The following three principles offer a practical starting point toward reaching your goal of whatever you envision for a sustainable and satisfying career path – no matter your field of expertise.

## **Principle 1. Invest in developing a comprehensive strategy instead of short-cuts.**

Conceiving a strategy to achieve some objective is no easy task. It requires, foremost, a deep understanding of what you are trying to do, along with patience, persistence, agility, and commitment to reach optimal results. Most people, unfortunately, fail to execute their strategy – and then blame that strategy for their failure. However, failing in execution might not always signal that you have not done a great job in conceiving that strategy in the first place.

In a world where it seems that others somehow get “lucky” first and then act as if they were strategic, it becomes even more difficult and frustrating to commit to a strategy. The result is that many people default to waiting for their “lucky strikes” or mostly focus their energy on short-cuts, thereby delaying their creation of a broader strategy. After all, many people believe that once they get their “lucky strike” or discover a so-called short-cut, they could easily act upon it without needing a comprehensive strategic approach at all! Why bother and make the effort if things seem to be going well by just tapping into their shortcut toolbox when needed?

The truth is that short-cuts are practical in general, but only if they lead to efficiency. Otherwise, they could easily be deceptive when it comes to achieving “sustainable” positive outcomes.

So, the fuss about the importance of being “strategic” means very different things to different people.



For example, a good number of people believe that “networking” must be their main strategy to achieve any successful outcome. After all, the “networking theme” is probably the most referred-to narrative in the majority of stories that individuals tell about their career success. For example:

- The not-so-successful but hard-working person meets a visionary and super successful business person, they connect, and they build super-successful businesses happily thereafter.
- Or, the undiscovered employee meets the big boss at an event, the boss is impressed, and, suddenly, the formerly undiscovered employee is promoted and becomes one of the most important leaders at the firm.

Do these things really happen? The answer is yes, they do really happen! But what we need to keep in mind also is that people win lotteries, too! So, does that mean everyone will win a lottery one day? Of course not. Does anyone who meet the big boss get promoted? Of course not. Does every hard-working person who meets with visionary business people build successful careers? Of course not.

So, the first thing to realise is that although having a lucky-strike is extremely important in achieving any successful outcome, there is absolutely no formula for becoming lucky at all times. That would be the same thing as saying randomness is a matter of order. It simply is not.

## **Principle 2. Validate your conceived strategy with others.**

The second most critical principle for establishing a sustainable career development is to ensure that you validate your conceived strategy with others around you. Many people fall short in taking this step. After all, it is one thing to conceive a strategy based on one’s knowledge, understanding, and convictions. It is quite another to validate that strategy based on how others perceive it.

For best results, consider validation or confirmation as a matter of transparency and openness. The more transparent and open you are about your career strategy, the more competitive, supportive, and sustainable it will be in the long run.

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There is no point in convincing yourself that you have the best strategy to move forward if you have not sought out validation. Seek truthful feedback and appreciate it as the best gift you'll ever receive. In general, when people look in the mirror, they only see what they want to see – not necessarily what they should be seeing. There is a big difference between the two. You should not skip this step, as it is important – as well as educational and advantageous – to hear how others around you perceive your strategy. A broader view from intelligent individuals can help you avoid needless errors that your own perspective might not perceive.

Further, don't believe people who say you should just do what you think is good for you and don't listen to others. That rhetoric belongs to ancient myths. However, you should, of course, do what you think is good and beneficial for you since it's your call. That said, at the very least, you should obtain a realistic indication of how your strategy appears from the outside before deciding where to begin. Your efforts will have a better chance of success if you first validate the strategy and then fine-tune it.

### **Principle 3. Stop doing just anything, and start doing only what needs to be done.**

Once you have conceived and validated your strategy you are ready to make choices. If your idea is sound and solid, the process should be fairly easy. However, if you have not done your earlier homework, you will find yourself dragged into things that you should not be doing. So many people fall into this trap because they believe that they need to do as many things (often, unnecessary and wasteful) as they can to advance their career. That is a great indicator that shows they did not have a good strategy to start with. In essence, any strategy is all about making specific choices. If not, you wouldn't need one.

So, if you have a good strategy, you will know exactly what you need to do – which actions to take to achieve whatever you want to achieve. The sum of all your focused actions when synched with the rest of your desires and wants in terms of your career growth will, by default, lead you to success because of its natural evolution.



### **People Need a Strategy, Not Isolated Advice**

The bottom line is simple: it is much easier to develop a narrative about how others succeeded in their career in the past than what is most probably going to happen in the future specifically for you.

“Isolated advice,” unfortunately, does not lead to any verifiable success formula. When people give advice to others, they usually refer to just the symptoms of success and not necessarily to verifiable causes of success. And most importantly, by doing so, they indirectly lead others towards unintended failures or frustrations in many cases. People perceive and accept isolated advice because it fits perfectly well to the definition of “shortcuts.” We all love short-cuts and encourage everyone around us to find and leverage shortcuts to achieve outcomes. When one is surrounded by such widely accepted perspectives, it becomes even more difficult for many to grasp the difference between a solid strategy and isolated advice.

In other words, we need to teach employees how to develop a strategy to catch a fish. That means, we must stop giving them the illusion that they can catch a fish any day without explaining how we actually caught the fish in the first place. A viable objective, a solid strategy, and practical steps will lead to a career that is sustainable in the long-term, offering success and engagement. That result can only benefit both your employee and yourself.

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