

Dr. Paul's Top Ten Career Tips

If getting your career into high gear is one of your New Year's resolutions, here are ten solid ideas you can use to help make it happen.

1. Do a recent retrospective. Take a clear look back over the last year or two. What were your successes, where did you stumble? What do you wish you had tried, what should you have avoided? Don't let this look in the rear view mirror discourage you or make you complacent; this self-evaluation is to help you set new but realistic goals for the year ahead.

2. Write a career plan. Where do you want to be in a year or two years or five years? The saying is that "no one plans to fail but many fail to plan." In a letter to yourself compile a quick outline of your 2007 career goals and your plans to make them happen. At this stage don't worry about details; aim for the sky.

3. Go back to school – one way or another. Where do your skills need some beefing up? Your organization will probably partially or fully pay for some continuing education that you can use to "fill your toolbox." If you have skills others envy, consider teaching a course, seminar, or workshop in that area that will enhance your professional reputation.

4. Build your performance review file. No one should go into their annual review cold. During the year save all memos and emails that document the contributions you've made. Keep your own list of significant accomplishments and the obstacles you had to overcome. Save any pay scale information that comes your way and be ready to reference all of these data as you prepare to discuss your performance, ask for a raise and seek future assignments.

5. Read more. Keep abreast of new developments in your field by reading relevant trade, professional publications and web sites. Even skimming these information sources can help you identify areas or technologies of which you need to be aware. Also - many breakthrough ideas come from concepts adapted from other fields so make some time for non-work reading.

6. Talk to the headhunter. Even if you're not looking for a new job this year, pick up the phone and return all calls you get from recruiters. They may be seeking your ideas about a search, sourcing potential job candidates, conducting a reference check or assessing your readiness to move on. Treat them with courtesy now and they will be there for you when you need them.

7. Surf the web – at home. If you haven't job hunted in the last few years you may not be aware of the explosion of web sites that offer the latest in career books, job listings or free advice. Visit me at drpaulpowers.com or go to Dick Bolles' site

jobhuntersbible.com or visit the funkiest (and busiest) job site in the world - Monster.com. But don't get caught doing this at work.

8. Get out more. Join or become more active in a professional or trade group. This will raise your profile both inside and outside of your organization. These groups offer you great networking and specialized training opportunities. Also, consider joining a social, charitable or civic organization. In addition to making a wider range of contacts, you'll get a "helper's high" from reaching out to those in need.

9. Build your Black Friday file now. I hope it doesn't happen but this might be the year you get laid off or fired. You can get up to speed on a job hunt more quickly (and with less stress) if you take some time now to update your resume, build a current list of employment recruiters, touch base with your references, cut out articles about employers that are hiring and update your invaluable contact list. A sudden layoff or shutdown could deny you access to your computer so keep your Black Friday file at home.

10. Ask the Big Question - regularly. Are you working to live or living to work? Have you let your job overshadow your family, your health, your dreams? Keeping an active career in balance with the rest of your life takes energy and focus. Find a mentor, friend or confidante who can help you keep your work in perspective.

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Author: *Winning Job Interviews* (Career Press, 2009) *Love Your Job! Loving the job you have, finding job you love.* (O'Reilly Media, 1994)

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