



GET THE JOB

Get Promoted

Looking to advance within your company? Even if there isn't a role open for you to do so, you may be able to perform your way into a custom-made position.

Proactive employees who go above and beyond their stated job descriptions are the ones who often get promoted. Below are three ways to make a mark with your management team. Put them into play and they will have no choice but to move you up the ladder.

PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Do you find yourself taking others under your wing on special projects? Are you a go-to person when it comes to other employees sharing their frustrations or ideas at work? You're likely a natural leader with abilities to mentor and coach people to success.

On the other hand, maybe you're more of an individual contributor always ready to take on the next task that is expected of you. The point is, once you realize where your strengths are in an organization, your bosses will take notice and put you in the department or role that will make the best sense for the company.

VOLUNTEER FOR A SPECIAL PROJECT

Employers love to see a proactive employee. If you're looking for a promotion, show them you're committed to the company by jumping head first into an important new



project.

If your boss announces the need for employees to sign up for a new initiative, be the first to raise your hand. Exploring new responsibilities is a great way to prove to others — and yourself — that you are wor-

thy of more important tasks. It could also expose you to new parts of the organization, helping you become a more well-rounded employee.

COME UP WITH AN IDEA

Are you a vital part of your

department, handling a lot of the nitty gritty work that your bosses may not necessarily see on a daily basis? Maybe you've noticed a process that could use some tweaking to streamline operations or improve productivity.

The best ideas often come from employees because they are the ones working through problems with customers and issues with production teams. Come up with an improvement and pitch it to your boss.

Writing Your Brag Book

Have you heard the term “brag book?” Think resume but with more emphasis on specific achievements and projects. While your resume should stick to the traditional format of summary, professional experience and education, your brag book offers a chance for you to be a bit more creative.

Brag books are particularly important to sales professionals because they are a great place to highlight detailed, revenue-focused information that your resume may not have room for.

BASIC COMPONENTS OF A BRAG BOOK

Remember that your brag book should serve one purpose: getting hired. The right information presented in a professional way could make the difference in landing the job or securing new clients for your business.

Here are some things vital to every brag book:

- **Data:** Quantifiable achievements should pop off the pages of your brag book. Numbers never lie, especially if you are in the sales or marketing industries. How fast did you grow a specific territory? How much revenue did you generate in each of the last 10 years of your professional background? Work with a local graphic designer to present this information in infographic format like pie graphs or charts. Creativity will take your brag book to the next level.

- **Testimonials:** Let others do the talking for you. Recruiters and hiring managers are more apt to believe the words of others when it comes to describing your key skills and achieve-



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ments. Ask a few colleagues or past employers to write up a nice paragraph on you. Your brag book won't be complete without these important components.

BRAG BOOK FORMAT

Don't let the word, “book” throw you off. This should not be a 20-page novel about your career and personal attributes.

Look online for crisp, sharp formats that will resonate with recruiters and hiring managers.

If you're looking for a branded brag book, work with a local graphic designer to handle the development of a personal logo or letterhead. The more professional your materials, the bigger better the impression you will make on your reviewers.

HOW TO USE YOUR BRAG BOOK

Once you have created your brag book, it's time to make it work for you. Instead of sending it out with your resume, keep it in your back pocket for when interview time comes around. Once you secure an interview with a prospective employer, email your brag book as a supple-

mental document.

Let your potential hiring manager know that you wanted to share an additional document ahead of your meeting. They will be impressed by your initiative and will appreciate the level of detail in your approach. When you're battling tough competition for a new role, every detail counts.



Become a Networker

Whether you are happily employed or constantly on the lookout for your next job, networking is one of the most important skills you can have.

Building relationships with others — both in and out of your industry — is a surefire way to stay apprised of breaking news and opportunities that could impact you and your future.

Have you ever noticed that those who are highly connected also seem to be the “luckiest” when it comes to landing new opportunities or being promoted in their current organization? The adage, “It’s not what you know, but who you know,” has plenty of truth.

NETWORKING FOR JOB-SEEKERS

In today’s ultra-competitive job

market, simply sending out a resume every couple of days is not going to cut it. Think of your most proactive fellow job-seekers. They are likely applying for numerous jobs per day and receiving regular interview requests. Consider how you measure up and work hard to be on their level.

One of the best ways to do so is through networking. Attending job fairs is a great way to meet new people and learn of new openings.

Even if you don’t leave the fair with a job prospect, it’s great to interact with hiring managers and

other candidates.

Why not reach out to past co-workers and managers? If you haven’t kept in touch, you never know which company they are currently with or who they may know who can recommend you for a new opportunity. Keep your communication lines as open as possible and remember to build as many relationships as possible during your search.

NETWORKING FOR PASSIVE CANDIDATES

Even when you are not actively

looking for jobs, networking is a great way to foster partnerships that could benefit you — or others in your network — in the future. Don’t you love being connected to that proactive networker who always seems to have a new introduction for you?

With a little effort and networking skills, you could be that person. Listen closely to people’s needs and try to offer solutions by facilitating introductions with others in your circle. Doing so will not only establish you as a highly connected networker but will add value to the lives of those around you.

Join your city’s chamber of commerce, or plug into a professional association. You can never have too many people in your network.

The Energy Industry

If you read your local and national newspapers, you realize that today's energy industry is facing many challenges.

Lawmakers, lobbyists, industry leaders and community members are seemingly at odds about which types of energy — clean coal, solar, natural gas, wind or nuclear — are the best for sustaining our environment for future generations.

The national spotlight on energy issues has opened up the hiring market for the industry like never before. New careers in research, field work, project management and innovation are there for the taking.

A CHANGING EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Consider the statistics below from the U.S. Department of Energy's first annual analysis of how changes in America's energy profile are affecting national employment in multiple energy sectors.

The numbers show a dramatic shift toward renewable energy and efficiency projects, paving the path for new college graduates, as well as job-seekers transitioning out of other industries.

The DOE used a combination of existing energy employment data and a new survey of energy sector employers to produce its inaugural U.S. Energy and Employment Report.

- 3.64 million Americans work in traditional energy industries, including production, transmission, distribution and storage.

- Of these, 600,000 employees contribute to the production of low-carbon electricity, including renewable energy, nuclear energy and low-emission natural gas.

- An additional 1.9 million Americans are employed, in whole or in part, in energy efficiency.

- Roughly 30 percent of the 6.8 million employees in the U.S. construction industry work on energy or building energy efficiency projects.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Trying to decide which sector of the energy industry offers the most opportunity? The solar and wind industries are each creating jobs at a rate 12 times faster than that of the rest of the U.S. economy, according to a new report published by the Environmental Defense Fund's Climate Corps program.

The report shows that solar and wind jobs have grown at rates of about 20 percent annually in recent years, and sustainability now collectively represents 4 to 4.5 million jobs in the United States, up from 3.4 million in 2011.



Self-Improvement Tips

Being handed a pink slip is no one's idea of an ideal career move, but how you handle your situation can define you as a professional — and a person.

If you've been laid off from your job, maybe it's time to advance your skills so you can find a more secure position with your next company. Or maybe it's simply time for you to recharge your battery.

If funding allows, using your layoff to learn new skills, catch up with family members or take a vacation can be an eye-opening experience — one that allows you to objectively assess your situation and make decisions that position you for greener pastures ahead.

DON'T GET DERAILED

Losing your job is difficult. It can impact you emotionally and financially, and put you in a tough position with hiring managers and recruiters. This is the time to surround yourself with positive influences in your life to keep you from getting stuck in a rut.

Financially speaking, it's important to understand how long you can go without a job and still remain in good fiscal health. Check out all of your bank accounts, credit cards and retirement accounts.

Assess your situation and put together a plan that keeps enough cash in the bank while also not maxing out your credit cards.

TAKE A BREAK

Your first instinct may be to find a new job as quickly as



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possible — and that's completely understandable. Another route is to give yourself a little time to process and react to the situation.

A trip to the Bahamas may not be the most financially conservative thing to do, but take a mini-vacation to a local

campground or a relative's home to unwind. This time of reflection can be vital to help strategize your next moves.

HOW TO FRAME A LAYOFF TO EMPLOYERS

It's true that a layoff can be a red flag to recruiters and hir-

ing managers. They may see an end in employment on your resume and immediately judge you as a poor performer or dispensable employee.

It's up to you to set the record straight. Be upfront with interviewers if you lost your job due to the company

restructuring or it cutting jobs due to a drop in business. If this was the case, consider asking for a letter of reference from your past employer. This explainer document can go a long way toward easing the concerns of your next potential boss.

Negotiating a Raise

There are some key things to keep in mind when negotiating a raise with your employer. The most important may be to actually ask for one.

Less than half of working Americans ever even ask for a raise, and close to 30 percent are uncomfortable negotiating salary, according to a 2015 study by Payscale. The fact is, if you don't bring it up, it may not happen.

As a hard worker who has shown commitment to your company, the first step to asking for a raise is realizing your own worth.

PAY BUMP STATISTICS

Of people who have put themselves out there to request better compensation, three-quarters saw their paychecks go up, according to Payscale.

Here are some other statistics and takeaways from the organization's study:

- 44 percent received the amount they asked for;
- 31 percent got an amount that was less than they asked for;
- The higher your annual salary, the more likely you are to have asked for a raise and the more likely you are to have received the raise you requested;
- Individuals earning \$150,000 or more per year were the most likely to see their employer match the exact raise they requested (70-percent success rate);
- Only 25 percent of those earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000 saw their incomes



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increase by the amount they asked for, while 51 percent had their request for a pay raise denied entirely; and

- If your annual income tops \$70,000, you have at least a 50 percent chance of getting the

pay raise you request.

TRACK AND LEVERAGE YOUR PERFORMANCE

If you've got something to back up your request with — such as figures that show how

you have made or saved the company money — asking for a raise becomes easier.

If your company doesn't track this type of information, it might be up to you to proactively build your case. Frame

and present a list of achievements to make your case for a pay raise. Maintain a running list of employer or customer testimonials. This will help convince your employers of your value to the company.

Americans with Disabilities

New reports show that while employment figures are on the increase for Americans with disabilities, there is still more work to be done to level the playing field.

The employment-to-population ratio for working-age people with disabilities increased from 26.6 percent in December 2015 to 28.7 percent in December 2016, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This timeframe represented a nine-month improvement in the ratio for people with disabilities — a welcome trend for those dealing with the difficulties of finding sustainable work due to their mental or physical disabilities.

DISABILITIES BY THE NUMBERS

There are nearly 10 million Americans with disabilities, many of whom desire and are able to work. Here are some other important statistics related to the topic, as reported by the BLS.

- Nearly 70 percent of working age Americans with disabilities are currently outside of the workforce;

- About 1 in 5 Americans live with a disability, and there are 22 million working-age Americans with disabilities; and

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990 and is a crowning achievement of the disability rights movement. Americans celebrated the 25th anniversary in 2015 with nationwide events.

KNOW (AND DEMAND) YOUR RIGHTS

If you are a person with a



disability or the loved one of a person with a disability, it may be up to you to voice your rights to local employers. Consider joining a vocational rehab program to prepare you for paid employment opportunities.

There are many national initiatives such as Bridges and Project Search that are working

hard to advance the disabled population with training and advocacy. Join similar groups — or start your own — to make a positive impact on the local and national economy.

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS

One of the reasons employment prospects are looking up

for people with disabilities is technology. Sophisticated tools and mobile applications have been developed to assist those with visual impairment or speech impairment, and people with motion disabilities or disorders.

This assistive technology makes life easier on a daily basis, including everyday work

tasks that may have been more difficult before. If you have a disability, speak with your local employment program about finding these emerging technologies, including Braille smartwatches or hands-free mobile phone operations platforms that allow users to control their phones without even lifting a finger.