

Career Path: No One Cares as Much as You Do

Career Development

Corporate, Securities, and Governance



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Today I will tell you why you need to be a one-issue stakeholder if you want to be successful in your career. We recently discussed how to deal with one-issue stakeholders in the context of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) topics. The point in that article was that no one cares as much as they do about their issue.

Guess what? No one cares as much as *you* do about *your* issues. This rule applies universally across your entire life. It operates not just at work, but in your personal life as well. On every topic you can think of, you care the most about the things that affect you.

It’s not you, it’s just that you’re one among many

Your doctor may be wonderful, talented, and caring. You are still one of hundreds of patients and, for the doctor, there is a commercial aspect to your visit that colors the encounter. Thus, you must be your own zealous advocate in managing your health.

Your contractor is a whiz with every kind of power tool, sticks to their quotes, and answers the phone. You are still one of many clients and, for the contractor, your project is a job to be completed and an invoice to be paid. They do not have to live in the house after the renovation and will not notice every fleck and imperfection the way you will.



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Your kid's teacher is patient, experienced, and magic with the class. Your child is one of a room full of students and, for the teacher, represents a source of work and aggravation. There is homework to review and tests to correct, but the end of term looms with graduation all but certain. Whether your child performs to her maximum potential is no doubt a matter of some interest, but no teacher's concern will match your own when it comes to your child.

Life plays out no differently at work. You know the stupendous EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance program you developed, the latest climate disclosure regulation the US Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) issued, and the new contracting template you've spent months perfecting? No one, and I mean no one, cares as much about these things as you do.

How to be heard

I don't mean to depress you by hammering home the point. I do hope you start to see that in our colleagues' eyes we are each as much a rabid one-issue stakeholder as the ESG advocates who drive our companies mad. In seeing the truth of the matter, we can start to position ourselves accordingly. Here's an example to illustrate:

- If no one is eagerly awaiting my latest email explaining the new contract template, I better make my mail easy for them to read. Can I even make it entertaining and grab my colleagues' attention by surprising them?
- And should I expect that one mail is going to be sufficient to get the message out? Of course not. But if not, what does an effective communication strategy look like? Let's see, some

people will be traveling or on vacation and won't even see my message. So, I better plan on sending some follow-up communications.

Half of the recipients won't open the message or will give it only a cursory read before tossing it in the virtual bin. Of those who do give it more than a glance, some will misinterpret the mail, the template, or both. Others will have questions that I should anticipate and answer.



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Understanding that no one cares as much as you do about your issue gives rise to two important

implications:

- First, successful implementation of your initiative requires *much* more effort than you think it should.
- Second, and because of the first point, you can successfully pursue fewer initiatives than you would like at any given time. This is because you'll be spending more time and effort on driving progress on each initiative.

Alter your approach

> Take your talent and your energy and devote them to being a tireless advocate for one (or a few) initiatives at a time.

Your ambitions exceed your abilities not because of any failing on your part, but because we are all focused on our own priorities. Be realistic, therefore, in your expectations of how quickly you will advance. There is no shortcut. There are no exceptions.

Take your talent and your energy and devote them to being a tireless advocate for one (or a few) initiatives at a time. And then plan on doing it over and over again for everything in your life that you consider important.

If you find this image disheartening, let me leave you with this thought to cheer you up again. Each time you persist and persevere, you will become more effective. You'll learn which of your strengths to leverage in what settings, and which of your counterparts respond best to what pressure. Your tasks become easier, therefore, whenever you succeed.

> ... Only progress is progress, no matter the desire and effort.

Your colleagues will not be as patient as you. They will mistake busyness and effort for progress, although they are not the same. You will recognize that only progress is progress, no matter the desire and effort. Because of this, you will succeed more often. Over time, the combination of your focus, persistence, and successful implementation makes you unstoppable. That is worth fighting for. So go ahead and care about your issues, the more the better.

Be well.

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