

The ABCs of Work: Good Job

Law Department Management

Career Development



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Is there a formula for success at work? Are there simple rules that you can follow to increase your chances of getting what you want? Career Path columnist James Bellerjeau thinks the answer is yes. In this series of articles, *The ABCs of Work*, he shares the formula with you.

Greetings readers and congratulations! Simply by virtue of being here you are already on the path to increasing your odds of success. While luck plays a gigantic role in life, that does not mean you are helpless to control your fate. If you want to think of it this way, the tips we'll explore are ways to increase your odds that luck will find you.

Today's topic is doing a **Good Job**.

Last time we talked about Fakery, in the sense that it is appropriate to trust you'll be successful in a

new setting by calling on your existing skillset. Today, we talk about what happens when your trust is rewarded, namely that you do a good job.

Do a good job at what, exactly?

I implied earlier that if there was just one formula for success, it would be to follow Continuous Improvement principles.

I was dispensing separate advice to ambitious colleagues even earlier than I was proselytizing about continuous improvement. That was reinforcing the critical importance of *doing a good job in your current job*.



No one ever got promoted by neglecting their current duties. Artwork by kirill_makarov / *Shutterstock.com*

Your ambition I take as given. Your belief in your ability to improve I will toss in for free. Your experience, abilities, and outlook are all superb. But, they all add up to virtually nothing if, in your pursuit of a promotion, you neglect to do a good job in your current position.

Many, many colleagues are convinced they could do more. Many are right — they could do more. The thing is, job opportunities don't always come at convenient times. Sometimes, they come when we're *not* yet ready. Just as often we must wait a while after we're more than ready for a change.

Today's article is for all the impatient waiters. No one ever got promoted by neglecting their current duties. Yes, you may be capable of so much more. But you demonstrate that by excelling in your current job and volunteering for projects on the side.

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Don’t be undone by impatience just when you’ve positioned yourself for further good things. Stay focused on the goal, which is in fact not the promotion in itself but rather doing your very best at everything you do.

Of course, let your boss know you want more. Your boss can sympathize better than you think. Maybe they can’t (or won’t) vacate their job tomorrow to make way for you. But they can certainly find ways to help you develop your skills and experience. Be open to nontraditional approaches. I promise, if you can keep your performance up and your motivation up, things will look up.

Can you be *too* good at your job?

Yes, and for the excellent reasons I laid a while back, Career Path: Can You Be Too Good at Your Job? I encourage you to read it at your leisure. For today, I’ll summarize by saying your super performance risks your boss asking you to do a disproportionate share of work, doing some unscrupulous colleagues’ work, and burning out.

That’s nothing you want, although your boss asking you to do more and more is OK sometimes, so learning to draw healthy boundaries is key.

Honorable mentions

Leveraging a single tip to drive work success is a heavy lift, even a tip as important as doing a good job. Our formula will necessarily be incomplete. But the formula has impact, and all the more so because we’ve kept things simple. Here, to finish, are some honorable mentions to serve as food for thought:

Give and Take — The more effective you become, the more you will succeed at what you do. You will be more persuasive than most, which means you’ll win arguments more easily. Don’t be a jerk about it, and don’t abuse your skills. Remember there are more ways to win than dominating the field. Sometimes letting others take a victory in small things makes it easier for them to let you take the victory in big things.

Gratitude — When we’re focused on improving, it is so easy to be dissatisfied with our current condition or pace of progress. I admit, a certain desire to challenge the status quo is necessary to get better. But never at the expense of your own happiness. You must therefore cultivate the competing mindsets of appreciating what you have while striving to improve. Expressing gratitude is a fine method. Each day, note several things you’re thankful for. You can write them down or say them out loud at dinner with your family. Make it quick and easy so you can do it daily.

Greatness — Good is almost always good enough as long as you apply it across everything you do. You don’t need to strive for greatness in any one thing because it’s time-consuming, difficult, and rare. You can still be a great in-house counsel, though, by doing a lot of things well.

Be well.

Question, comment? Contact Career Path columnist James Bellerjeau.

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Bellerjeau shares thoughts on how to live a good life at Klugne. You can also follow him on LinkedIn.