

The ABCs of Work: Xerox

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 we discuss why learning how to **Xerox** for yourself will help your career in surprising ways.

Last time we explored the various ways to calculate your Worth, and came up with an impressive

tally. Today we discuss why learning to Xerox is your path to bigger workplace success.

Were you just looking for an X word?

I mean today's advice sincerely and wholeheartedly. And I will explain why.

Xerox was the trademark name originally applied to machines used to copy written material. Because of their office ubiquity, people came to refer to making a copy as "xeroxing," and the copy itself as a "xerox."

As I mean it here, "xerox" is a stand-in for making copies and *everything else* that falls into the administrative side of work:

- Fixing jams in the copy machine, replacing toner, and generally making it work when it isn't working


Master the ins and outs of Microsoft platforms, such as Excel, to make yourself more employable. Menara Grafis / *Shutterstock.coicm*

- Writing, addressing, and dispatching letters, sending overnight packages, and knowing how your company's mail process works
- Being a Microsoft Office guru, including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Becoming expert in the other software programs your company regularly uses
- Knowing how to connect any computer-like device to any presentation-like device in every setting
- Being able to get your hands on spare batteries, office supplies, paper, post-its, and markers

Wait, I didn't go to law school for this

I learned how useful it was to be useful at administrative tasks as a junior associate. We worked crazy long hours, well after midnight when everyone sane had gone home. No secretaries, no staff, just desperate lawyers needing to get work done.

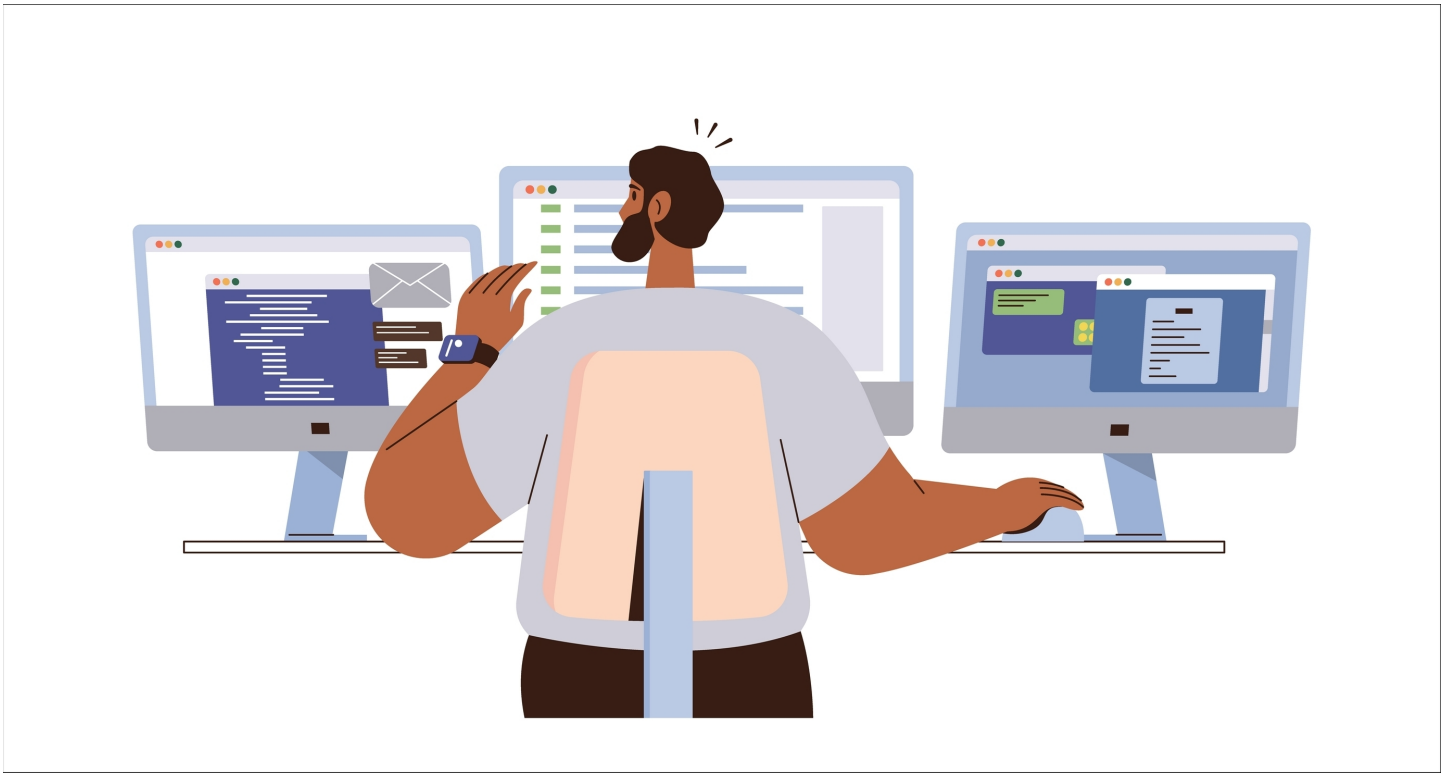
When the copier broke at 1:00 a.m. and you could fix it, you were valuable. When a partner struggled to reformat a document and you saved the day with a few clicks, you suddenly looked a lot smarter.

I remember a senior associate one night saying to me, “James, you’re a terrible lawyer but you’d make a great secretary.” He thought he was insulting me, but I was secretly pleased. “Why,” you ask? “You didn’t go to law school to learn to connect laptops to balky projectors, right?”

How do you stand out in an over-achiever crowd? Every associate was as smart or smarter than me, and almost all went to more prestigious schools. Well, guess what? We were all largely useless compared to even the second-year associates.

But few fancy-degreed lawyers thought it was their job to master office technology. By getting my hands dirty and learning every trick and tool I could, I became more useful than senior associates and partners.

I went to law school to become a lawyer. I learned at work to use every tool at my disposal to advance my career. If being able to create an Excel table quickly and easily makes me shine, that’s an easy win.



Having expertise with various administrative tools can be very beneficial and set you ahead of others. zuperia / *Shutterstock.com*

Question, comment? Contact Career Path columnist James Bellerjeau.

Are there times you should just let your assistant do it?

Yes, many. You should jealously guard your time. This means knowing your value proposition and focusing your efforts where you can have the greatest impact. Usually this means leveraging your specific legal expertise.

The point is not that you must do everything yourself all the time. Rather, you should be *capable* of

doing many things. Then, you can jump in when the need is great and make a difference.

I'll mention an additional benefit to staying familiar with the copier, and that is staying humble and grounded. You're not more important as a person than anyone else in your company. You're just an individual with a job and certain skills, so don't let it go to your head.

It used to annoy me when the Chairman asked me at board meetings to coordinate administrative details like letting management and directors know about a new start time for our board dinner. I soon embraced such tasks, both because I was good at them, and because they reminded me I'm just a person like everyone else.

Honorable mentions

Leveraging a single tip to drive work success is a heavy lift, even a tip as important as understanding your worth. 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.

Xenophile — This means a person attracted to foreign peoples, manners, or cultures. I can't think of a better way to build a diverse and robust legal team than drawing on talent from across the globe.

Xerophile — A xerophile is an organism that flourishes in a very dry environment. Successful in-house counsel learn to appreciate and work well people who operate in different environments that initially seem dry and hostile. The tax and intellectual property departments come to mind.

Be well.

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Bellerjeau served for two decades as group general counsel for Mettler-Toledo International Inc., an S&P 500 company with its worldwide headquarters in Greifensee, Switzerland. He then led Mettler-Toledo's global Sustainability program for several years through June 2021.

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