

Rules to help boost your career

So, you're a star at home. The family listen to you, you lay down the rules and there is order and happiness all around. But at work it's a different matter. You're the one to follow the rules and do all the listening, but it seems that you're going nowhere, at least not in the direction you should be heading. Now is the time to take some risk at your workplace and see how they pay off.

Taking a risk is scary when you focus on the downside and can be exciting when you know you're going to pull it off. Most people associate risk with chance and avoid taking one. But avoiding a risk won't keep you safe. In fact, often the opposite is true.

Rule number 1 - Take a calculated risk. Running across a crowded road during peak traffic hours is not taking a calculated risk. It's being downright stupid. Asking for a salary raise befitting your new promotion is a calculated risk. At the very best, they will give you the raise. At the worst, they will say no. But the chance of them rescinding the promotion offer is minimum. Always ask yourself this question - how can I maximize the chance of succeeding, while minimizing the potential downside?

Rule number 2 - The worst case scenario is rarely that bad and can be turned around to your benefit. Take the above situation, at the worst case, they would probably just say no to giving you a raise. The upside to this (and yes, there is always an upside if you look carefully enough) is that you know they are not seeing your full worth and you can now explore other work options without feeling guilty about it. Using any situation to your advantage and learning from both successes and mistakes is what makes the difference between an average worker and an office superstar.

Rule number 3 - Do not take things personally. For the most part, we always personalize situations at work. The boss was in a bad mood and snapped at us - he doesn't like me. My colleagues went out to lunch without inviting me to join them - they are plotting against me. I was not invited to a meeting - they don't think my opinions are worth it. There are a lot of reasons we can find to any given situation, but the trick is not to personalize any of them. If you actually take the time to figure out the reasons, you'll see that it most likely has nothing to do with you. The boss is going through a divorce and is upset, or your colleagues are planning a surprise party for you or you were not invited to a meeting because of a planning oversight. Unfortunately, once a degree of mistrust or dislike has been established, it's almost impossible to undo it. And considering you will be spending half your day in the office, it's important to make your life a grudge free zone.

Rule number 4 - Believe in yourself and your ideas. This is a really important rule and the one that pushes us forward. So, you have a brilliant idea and you know it will work, but are yet hesitant to propose it. If you are convinced it's a good one, then why should you expect others to disagree? Going in without preparation is what makes one so often fail in proposing an otherwise brilliant idea. Believe in your own instincts, prepare yourself and then sell your idea. If you won't, then who will? And don't feel the need to over explain yourself. Your ideas should sell on their own merit.

Rule number 5 - Be generous with praise and stingy with criticism. I've taken this rule from the 'one minute manager' by Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson. And it applies to all aspects of our lives. Making someone feel small does not make you feel big. All it will do is allow them to take the criticism personally, which as we've seen, is not very motivating. On the other hand, praising someone's efforts will only spur them on to higher achievements and move you forward to being the kind of manager every team and every company wants to have.

Rule number 6 - Some rules are breakable, you have just got to know which ones. All companies have a certain set of written rules. And then there are the unwritten ones. You can't do much with the written rules- they were made to be enforced. The unwritten ones though can be played with. This would however, largely depend on the relationship you have with your colleagues and management. Knowing which rules can be bent and when is the key to not getting fired, but getting a promotion instead.

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