

Growing to Advance

Advancing in your career means always striving to learn and improve. It often requires taking calculated risks and seeing mistakes as opportunities for learning. Because people move up to meet organizational needs, you are most likely to advance when your abilities match those needs.

1. Be clear about your strengths and interests. People who continually grow in their career often are highly self-aware of their strengths, passions and weaknesses. They rely on their strengths to achieve results and they commit to developing their weaknesses.

2. Be eager to learn and share your knowledge. Be eager to learn not only for yourself, but also to share knowledge with others. As your workplace evolves and changes, pay attention to emerging skills and take part in any training opportunities available. People who enjoy learning and sharing with others multiply the impact of their knowledge.

3. Be a great relationship builder. Build strong relationships with your colleagues and department leaders, but also look beyond. Get out and connect with others across the organization; truly understanding others' needs and building trust with them will help you grow. Being a great relationship builder is one of the most important skills for success you will ever learn.

4. Know that competence alone will not get you what you want. Part of your job is making sure that others know how you are contributing. Too often, employees assume that their managers will automatically know they are doing great work. Sharing your desire for advancement with leaders and discussing how you have contributed are both essential steps when exploring the possibility of career advancement. You have to share your aspirations, strengths and accomplishments – your manager is not a mind reader. Further, track your developing skills and accomplishments; that will make it easier to have career conversations and to write the kinds of resumes that lead to interviews.

5. Speak your mind. Voice your opinion, give advice, or add input at the next meeting or situation in which group sharing occurs. Weighing in on issues and questions will show your supervisor that you care, demonstrate your knowledge, and make you memorable.

6. Network – even when you don't want a new job. A well-developed professional network can be a source of leaders, colleagues, mentors and coaches. These contacts can provide objective insights about possible opportunities, special assignments or projects that could contribute to your growth and advancement. Networking will feel and be genuine when you look for opportunities to help others out, as well. So, reach out to

someone you admire and ask for input or mentorship. It takes a couple of minutes to make a phone call or send an email, but this small action could change the entire course of your career.

7. Take a proactive approach to long-term goals. While it's important to focus on the big steps that will help you advance your career, advancement isn't all about landing high visibility projects or making the "right" connections. It's about consistent accomplishment, quality relationships, and taking whatever steps you can right now to lead towards your goal.

8. Ask for more responsibility. Consider asking for new challenges or a special project, as this will really help you stand out in the crowd. To ensure your request is meaningful and seriously considered, make sure you ask for work you have shown you deserve and can handle.

9. Learn more about the organization. People who advance in their careers are expected to know about their department and organization. Stay attuned to McMaster's culture – its unique values, traditions, beliefs, interactions, behaviours, and attitudes. Culture is as important as business strategy because it can either support or undermine the achievement of business objectives.

10. Conduct presentations. Most people dislike—and even fear—public speaking. Tackle this skill head-on. Take opportunities at work and in your volunteer or community life to talk in front of a crowd—whether it's a presentation at a staff meeting, introducing a guest speaker at a community event, or doing outreach. This will help you demonstrate your leadership potential.