

3 Tips for Career Planning



When You
Have No
Time to
Plan

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Published on www.lorman.com - September 2018

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3 Tips for Career Planning When You Have No Time to Plan



Whatever you've planned for your career, plan again. I say this because I've noticed a trend lately among my individual and corporate clients: whatever they planned for the next year is changing as fast as they can get ready for what they thought was going to happen, but doesn't. Doing more research into how technology is advancing quickly and challenging us to lead and manage in new ways has confirmed that the traditional idea of "career planning" is pretty much gone the way of the dodo bird.

Unfortunately, unforeseen (and some foreseen) changes are impacting the job market and people's individual careers more quickly than they can "plan" for them. Here's what the unable-to-plan for career reality looks like to most of us:

- Jobs you "grow out of" in a year or two
- Job opportunities you were promised that never materialize
- Layoffs and reorgs that hit you (or close colleagues) out of the blue

- Business/career development strategies that used to work, now don't

Here are the things that I see people do to weave career planning into their everyday lives to help them deal with ongoing change and an unpredictable future.

Look for a new job every year

Does it surprise you to learn that the average job tenure is 3.7 years in the private sector? If you've been at your job for a few years it may be time to start your next job search anyway.

Why look for a job every year? Although no employer wants to hire someone who's going to leave in a year, just because you look for a new job doesn't mean you need to take one, does it? The point is not to *change jobs* every year but to plan to be doing work next year that's different from what you're doing right now. This can take several forms including stepping up to new challenges and opportunities next year that you're not ready or able to take on right now, positioning yourself for an internal promotion or finding a dream job.

When you take on the challenge of always planning to be in a "new" job next year, your planning horizon moves closer. You'll pay more attention to what results you can produce in the short term (and how it positions you for something new). You'll start paying more attention to what skills and experience employers are seeking for the jobs you want to be doing next year, which helps you seek training opportunities and new experiences. It makes your networking more goal-directed and relevant to both your current job and the job you think you want next year (networking can help you focus on exactly what you do want to be doing in the future.)

You can do all these things whether you change jobs next year or not. This practice will keep you sharp and aware of what makes you competitive in the employment market, and thanks to the Internet, staying abreast of employment opportunities has never been easier!

Always have a motivating vision of success and tell your boss

Putting your head down and doing a good job is always a good thing and it used to be a decent career strategy. People who produce good results create more opportunities for themselves, right? Sure. Sometimes. But when doing the work blinds you to trends and changes that may affect your job or career, it's not a good thing at all. It can make you complacent in your current skill set, for example, and distract you from developing new skills in your current job. Also, many employers see someone who just does good work and doesn't appear to aspire to more as someone they don't need to invest in.

You don't want to create that impression! You want your boss to know what you're striving for. Ideally s/he will help you gain the experience and training opportunity to become better at what you do and get ready for what you'll do next.

Of course, you may or may not trust your boss with this information, so take this advice with a grain of salt. Some bosses will use it against you or think you've got one foot out the door. My advice in this case is (1) confide to your boss about the skills you'd like to work on that will help you do your current job better and contribute to the team and (2) get a coach to help you with the rest of it! Whichever route you choose, don't get caught blindsided because you never spoke up about your goals.

Set aside small amounts of career development and networking time every week and every month

Of course you don't always have time to be thinking ahead when today's work and life takes so much out of you. But I guarantee you that if you set aside 30 minutes a week to think ahead, and 1 hour a month to reflect on where you've been and where you're going, you'll start moving closer to your future more comfortably and quickly.

Here's a weekly 15-minute checklist to put in your planner:

- What meetings do I *already* have coming up this week that I can use to help me move toward my goals? (Add a career-related intention to your calendar items to remind you)
- What ONE activity or conversation can I add to my week that is primarily career-related (e.g., shoot an email to an old boss to see if she will be at the conference next month and wants to meet for coffee)
- What ONE new opportunity (e.g., training, job opening, industry event) can I research this week (schedule the research time on your calendar)

Here's a monthly reflection exercise to put in your calendar on a recurring basis (1 hour):

- What career-related activities did I accomplish last month?
- What did I learn?
- Are my career intentions still solid or do I need to adjust them?
- Next month when I do my check in, what do I want to have learned that I don't know now?

Now I know many people find it challenging to establish career intentions and goals in the first place. And this is even getting harder as change happens more frequently! I get it. That's why I've created the Future-Proof

community to give you career planning tools and a regular monthly coaching call to help you stay focused on your goals. Join our monthly calls where I start every session with the monthly questions above. We meet every month on the 1st Wednesday of the month. [Sign up to join us here!](#)

Join A Community That Cares About Your Career

Change is becoming a way of life, so we might as well start living this way now. I'm excited to announce that InPower Coaching is opening a new section of our website, [Future-Proof](#), to help all of us keep up with the ways the job markets are changing out from under our feet.

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