Supercharge Your Career
A Guide To Getting The Corner Office

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Introduction

Many perceive their future career advancement as if it was a conveyor belt. If we patiently ride the steady path of the company ladder, surely all the possible milestones will come naturally. Unfortunately with this conception, by missing out on the right career conveyor belt at the right time you may have missed your chance all together.

This is the wrong way to imagine modern career growth. I believe that success today is not based on merely waiting for opportunity. Expecting doors to open without effort can actually leave you stagnant. As intelligent machines and technology create swift changes in business, workers that shift along with the tide will see greater success than those who wait for the next obvious step to be revealed.

But how do we jump into the ever-changing current of modern business and find these chances? It could feel especially risky with a new career or position, which means tackling skills or resources that seem out of reach. How do we get in touch with the right network? How do we persuade someone to take a risk on us? How do we find time to reach for what we want when we’re already so busy? Yes, planning your success and getting there quickly is intimidating, but very possible. I have found that anyone can build the career path they want by simply learning to work more efficiently, focusing on the essential, and cultivating the right mindset.

For myself, the decision to expand beyond what is required has led me to rapid career momentum in paycheck and mobility. More than just predicting, you can plan an express path to success, instead of merely taking what might come your way. At first, it might feel like acting on these ideas is risky, but I argue that embracing full control over your own career is the only way to get where you want to be. I offer up my own experience as proof of this conception, but I’m certainly not the only one to practice this idea.

In 1994, a career in software design for a Wall Street Hedge Fund was innovative, sought after, and certainly a lucrative means of living. Surely, the risks of leaving this job would seem treacherous over the benefits of staying. Even more unsound was the idea of quitting, gambling on a new company, and driving cross country to sell books out of a garage.

At 30 years old, Jeff Bezos rejected this career path laid out for him on Wall Street and took control. In hindsight, we know that Amazon.com would become a multi-billion
dollar online marketplace, which allowed Bezos to change course yet again to pursue another career; space travel. However, for many it would have been easy to stay in New York, forsaking the challenge of a new innovation. I won’t castigate anyone who’s comfortable with waiting for opportunity over seizing it. I just want to point out that while Bezos would have done well in software programming, he would have never gotten the chance to reach the level of global influence he does now, or find a way to fund a space program to Mars.

Taking charge of your path doesn’t always mean giving it all up for a dream, but it’s still equally important to understand exactly where we want to go and strive for it. After an established career of cabinet making and building renovation, at 41-years-old Donald Fisher decided to dip into the retailing clothing business. Without any industry knowledge, but a strong vision of making denim a more variable product, Fisher founded the Gap label. Selling jeans wasn’t a revolutionary technology like Amazon.com, but Fisher identified what he wanted right off the bat. Fisher sought to create access to what he considered an important product and went for it. The follow-thru and consistency of values lead to a market-changing company.

Of course, today in the ‘start-up’ bubble there is an abundance of dreamers with one app idea that might make them millions, who take big risks and often find failure. So why does glorifying the radical and reckless choices of Bezos or Fisher matter to your own career success? While Bezos’ and Fisher’s stories may represent the well-worn idea of the “American Dream”, more importantly they exemplify taking full control of your career path and matching them with your values. The financial risks that Bezos and Fisher took in founding new companies are less important than the confident decision of choosing where they wanted to go next. An original idea can be a flash in the pan compared to the momentum created from taking personal ownership over your career.

These stories should give you reason to believe that you can easily create your own success efficiently, and not that these are rare occasions. They also prove that a career change can happen at any time in your life and at any skill level. I have borrowed methods and tools used by these success stories and honed them to find the most effectual.

This book is meant to encourage you to look ahead and embrace your ambition. Nonetheless, wanting for success is little without the tools to get there. As a plan builder and a reference, using the ideas provided here will route you from deciding what career you want, to where you want to work, to how to get the job, and finally how to get the most out of your position. You might be starting out of college and looking to begin any employment at all. Perhaps you’ve discovered the need to change
your current career path, but the idea of starting at the bottom again doesn’t bode well for your way of life. Maybe you’re just looking for upward mobility in what seems to be a dead end.

First and foremost, it’s time to decide what you want.
A strong division in the business world has blossomed in the last decade, and we can do well to acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages of the divide. The decisions you make from this point on in your career path should be bolstered by your values. However, we don’t often recognize what our values have actually become. Thinking through the kinds of business culture you may end up working in, or are already involved with can help to narrow down your personal career values.

As we discuss the differences between a Start-Up culture, a Corporate Culture, and the realm of true Entrepreneurship, take the time to imagine yourself in each setting. Visceral and emotional reactions to the benefits and challenges of each situation will outline where you will likely gain the most in your next career move. It’s also important to consider moving from one setting to another to strengthen your resume and skill sets, as some environments will offer opportunities that others will not. Depending on what you decide for your next move, knowing what can be found in each option will better define the search.

**The Startup Culture**

Possibly the most sought after in current job postings, but not without its flaws, Startups are defined as a brand-new company, small and in the early stages of funding. While many of these companies live in the tech world, not all of them are based on apps and algorithms. Startup work is attractive to young, “millennial” workers, often because they are less restrictive. These companies are more likely to utilize remote work, off-business hours, and align themselves with other startup industries.

The attitude of startups is identified commonly by its office spaces. Distinguishing themselves from the cubicle world of classic American businesses, startup offices are open spaces, decorated with bright colors and lounge areas. Some companies, like Birchbox in New York City, have built-in cafes and work-out amenities in office. Eventbrite in California allows employees to bring their pets to work and caters a “never ending snack supply.” These companies are advertised as innovative and refreshing. In the same vein of philosophy where dogs, snacking, and naps are welcome, startups encourage exploring new ways to tackle problems and grant flexibility that many corporate environments do not.
The Advantages

Startups are often exciting and fast paced. If you find your resume to be lacking in a variety of skills and experience, the startup environment will often require you to learn and dabble in areas outside of your job description. Paired with that, there is also a high chance for extra responsibilities and leadership roles.

With consistent work and a good measure of effort you are also going to stand out to executives and higher-ups more often than at a larger company. Making a name for yourself and pursuing difficult skills is well within reach in a startup culture.

With more responsibility and exposure of your ideas, working for a smaller, flexible company fosters a sense of ownership. Projects can become more personally motivated and bring a fuller quality to your work when you’ve accepted more dominion over the variety of tasks needed to complete them. This environment offers more room to grow than traditional cultures and without too much company oversight.

The Disadvantages

A big element to consider in working for a startup is the high risk. Often, these companies won’t be able to offer higher than median salary. While the ping pong table is nice in the office, if the company itself doesn’t land on its feet after a few introductory rounds, well than your chance of upward mobility is diminished.

Startups are also notorious for being unorganized. The free-wheeling, innovative attitudes of many founders can reject the procedural structures of corporate culture. Idealistically, this can seem enticing, but it can also be chaotic in finishing and tracking projects. Along with the risk of lower pay than a larger company, small startups also can equate to longer hours and harder work. With less hands on deck, the skills and responsibilities outside your position can be overwhelming.

Overall, startups are a great jumping off point. For those who excel under pressure and need room to explore different skills and avenues for their position, a startup job is the right place to look. However, for someone seeking to hone one set of skills, learn a more structured way of business, or even have the security of a job that won’t risk disappearing along with the company, than startups might be a secondary option in your next step.
The Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is facet of the American identity, based on the Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Fords of our history. We might imagine suits, meetings, conference lines, and a water cooler in reference to longstanding company work. This image is not always true to form, but it does represent an important aspect of Corporate Culture to consider in choosing a step in your career.

Working at a large, time-tested company represents structure and a clear job ladder. While much of this type of business management has been villianized in the face of trendier tech companies, it’s not without certain useful merits.

The Advantages

An entry-level position at a well-established company is going to be very competitive. Winning a job here is a great start for jumping into a new career path. This doesn’t mean that you have to be experienced, over qualified, or well-connected to get this position, but we’ll go into the logistics of that later on in this book.

A position at large company will have a fixed list of responsibilities, skills, and methods of training. Those hired before you in similar positions will have smoothed out all the difficulties of learning on the job. The path of training, promotions, and mobility will be laid out for you with a history of results.

For job security and benefits, working at a large company is the preferred option. Researchers at UC Berkley and Stanford calculated that 92% of all startups have failed in the first 3 years. Established companies are far less likely to purport that high level of risk in your job security.

The Disadvantages

Corporate culture moves at a much slower pace than a startup. For your career, this means the acquisition of skills, promotions, and projects will be spread over a longer period of time. Often, projects will be fragmented among different departments, stalled in the inner workings of the policies and schedules of each department.
The distance between your influence and the eyes of the executive will be much greater. It’s common for new employees in startups to become familiar with CEOs early on, even working on specific tasks along side them. With the exception of Executive Administrative work, it is unlikely that the CEO of a large company will learn your name at any point during your first years.

The bureaucracy and politics of a large company can create stagnancy in productivity. This is not a definite, and I have guidelines and tools later in the book that can combat these issues. However, you will encounter more obstacles in new ideas, projects, and career changes in an older, established company.

Entrepreneurship

As an entrepreneur myself, I encourage this route and believe that there is nothing stopping us from starting our own business ventures based on great ideas and hard work. That being said, this option for a new career path is the **most difficult**. I would only suggest it to those with the greatest desire to work for themselves, who are willing put in the extra time without an immediate return, and are prepared to take on the risk.

Entrepreneurship is scary, but not wholly dependent on the successful rise to a multi-billion dollar company. Sometimes starting out your own venture can lead you to better job at a company that values your bootstrapping tactics. Often we learn the most from taking these big risks and the rewards will be greater than any other choice.

The Advantages

You can work as hard as you want. This idea should be enticing if you’re the kind of person who regularly pushes themselves and others. It’s also a beneficial option if you need to create a unique work-life balance. Now more than ever the freelance marketplace is growing with people who are choosing their own work hours in the interest of staying home with family or being able to travel. Building your own work life forces the development of time management and self-motivation.

Entrepreneurial endeavors also lead to rapid boosts in skills. Imagine a conversation with an employer after working on a small business of your own. Technically, you may have never been hired for marketing, administrating, sales, or management in the past. Nevertheless, after developing a small business you will have probably learned how to do all of those things and have a wider understanding than someone they may hire from a skill-specific position.
The Disadvantages

Much like a startup position, building your own career from scratch carries with it plenty of risk. In this case however, you will shouldering the risk alone. It’s smart to go into this career choice full force and do your best to make it work, but also have a plan for when it doesn’t.

Before making the choice to pursue this plan of action, there are a few things to be sure of first. In a new business, it’s important to evaluate if you have a full understanding of your product or service, and if there is a market need. These may be basic economics questions, but often many small businesses are started on passion of vision and not these simple ideas.

Time to Plan

Throughout the above characterizations of the work cultures you will interact with, I hope you felt a reaction to certain details of the environments that built a better idea for your next career move. Some elements of each station may overlap, but the better you know what attracts your own values, the better you can navigate your next choice.

Now it’s time to plan.

The search for a new job or career move is tough. We don’t envy those looking for a job, even though in reality they have an opportunity for a better career than they had before. I believe in a “winner’s mindset,” affirming to yourself that you are capable of getting what you want. Wallowing in the negative of who might reject you is not cultivating a “winner’s mindset” and it’s certainly not going to charge up your career path.

Therefore, it’s important to treat this next move as if it is an actual new job. In the same way we would walk into the first day of a new position with excitement and desire to begin right away, the plan of action to help your career path should be met with the same gusto.

Let’s start with a checklist that will help guide and inspire our decision making throughout the rest of our ascension to a better career.
CAREER CHECKLIST

- What am I looking for?
  - We’ve gone through the kinds of environments you may end up in. The question now is what job do you want to have. Make a list of companies you want to work for, even if they’re not hiring. Make list of the kinds of jobs you want, even if they’re above your skill level. Anything on the list is reachable, as long as you can build and act on the steps to get there.

- How long do I expect it to take?
  - This is not a hard and set deadline, but providing yourself with a timeframe helps to build goals and act on them. The timeline will change as you go, but setting a date can help you plan if you need to take time off your current job, stay longer, or be willing to negotiate with a new position.

- What is my very first step?
  - Make this actionable. If the job you want requires a list of skills that you don’t currently have, figure out which one you’re going to learn first. We’ll cover more later on how to do this. If you need to reach out to specific people about openings, build a loose-template email for that group. You’ll fill in more steps after this, but decide and act on the closest one right away.

- Why do I want to do this?
  - This answer can be personal. It can mean you want better pay or to relocate. This can be anything at all, as long as it’s true. When it comes time to write cover letters, answer tough interview questions, or make decisions between one offer or another, this answer is where you will source from.

- What are you not willing to do?
  - Much like the question above, this answer will set important guidelines for you to follow throughout. It’s also meant to reinforce your personal value. The more confident you are about what you are not willing to sacrifice, the more satisfied you will be in your next move.

- Do I have time for this?
  - I will tell you right now, the answer is YES! It’s daunting and overwhelming to think of a career change, but if you look through your schedule you will find room to set aside. Working on new skills and researching new positions does not have to be done in 4-6 hours increments where you find more and more discouraging information. Set aside an hour for searching here, an hour for your resume there, an hour for networking next week, and so on.

After this chapter, you will build skills and strategies that apply to taking ownership of your own career and finding success faster. However, I want to note after this chapter
you have already done the hardest part. Deciding what you want and how you are willing to get there is the toughest part of choosing to change your work life. It’s much easier to sit by and wait for the opportunities to come to you. Now that you’ve come this far, we can meet the next steps with the confidence of knowing we are in control.
Building & Managing Your Network
The Right Tools for Old and New Connections

For every time there is a mention of how important it is to network, someone will inevitably follow with “It’s not what you know. It’s who you know.”

This phrase has been reused to exhaustion. It’s an outdated sentiment that most business executives view as a poor excuse for a stale career, rather than a justification. The phrase incorrectly suggests that if you are not connected to the right people, then no amount of talent will gain you success. We may live in a world where some inherently have more access than others, but the boundaries outside of our immediate affiliations are disappearing. We can no longer say, “I don’t know the right people.” Everyone is injected into a ready built network merely by having a Facebook or Twitter. Even while we may not be acquainted with the right people yet, we have tools to figure out how to reach them. Making use of the expanding interconnectivity of our world can broaden “who you know.”

However, it’s not easy work. The more connected we are, the more fragmented and distracted our networks can become. This is why it’s important to put real work into building and managing your network effectively. Before you even begin to make your next career move, you should take an audit of your network. The truth is, yes, we are more likely to find jobs, references, and introductions through friends. Actively fostering the right relationships can help steer your network to support your exact goals.

The Importance of Your “Brand”

“Branding” was originally meant for understanding how the public perceived physical commercial brands. That being said, the notion of adopting your own “brand” does not necessarily mean turning yourself into a product. In fact, that method can come off as disingenuous. Instead, consider that since you’re exposed to the public anyway, via online social media platforms, so your “brand” is already being perceived and there are ways to heighten the effectiveness.

A 2016 survey by CareerBuilder found that 60% of employers using their platform were reviewing candidates’ social media profiles. Even if your Facebook or Twitter is not listed on your resume, it’s surprisingly easy for recruiters and HR reps to find you. There are entire companies built around products that reveal buried Internet information regarding prospective employees. This doesn’t necessarily mean that companies are digging through your college photos and looking for an excuse to not hire you. But if the only information about you on the Internet is informal and unprofessional, then employers are certainly less likely to consider you.

Your online presence and “brand” is equally important to those you might associate with. There is evidence that endorsements from LinkedIn connections create a higher likelihood of visibility to recruiters and employers. However, as the frequency of Bot profiles surges, employers are
taking an active interest in exactly what profiles the endorsements are authored by. The more professional your image, the more valuable your positive engagements with others. Outside of LinkedIn, Facebook pages are growing to provide a space for direct interaction with potential employers. If your profile suffers from being too casual and lacks information about your work, then companies are probably not going to view you as a qualified asset.

I believe there’s an obvious argument here for why you should “clean up” your online presence. However, if you don’t take the time to maintain your “brand” then you’re also missing an opportunity to manage your message and control how you are perceived.

The Tools

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is by far the most career focused social networking platform. Recent studies show 25% of all Internet users have active LinkedIn profiles. Frequent LinkedIn users are primarily made up of college-educated professionals between the ages of 30-55. What does this mean as a social media tool? For one, your connections via LinkedIn will often be more experienced and influential, and therefore the most useful.

Business insiders will often suggest posting a clean photo to boost to the appeal of your LinkedIn profile. I agree that your first order of business should be to have a high-quality, professional picture. Sneak a peak at leaders in your field and note how they present themselves. If they’re wearing a suit in their picture, then so should you. If it’s common to have a photo from a promotional event or conference, then make sure to get in front of a camera when you attend them. It might seem trite to put so much focus on this simple aesthetic element, but a purposeful LinkedIn photo leads your online presence.

Also, think of your profile as a resume. Don’t leave relevant areas blank. The Summary Section is your mission statement, and it should be a concise explanation of what you are looking for and why you matter. Your Experience is your work history, so you should streamline these items to best represent what’s needed for the position or promotion you’re going after. Your Endorsements are your references. Give endorsements before asking for them. Choose wisely what skills you want to present and what you want to hide. Don’t bog down your profile with too much unnecessary information. Think of the career you want and model your profile to reflect it.

Don’t forget to join groups, follow influencers, and engage with your network. There’s plenty to do on LinkedIn beyond building a profile. Investigate communities that contain people you want to associate with the most. Endorse friends and colleagues in ways that matter. Customize your connection requests to help new contacts remember exactly how you know them. Post and share relevant industry news and opinions. Comment on others’ posts. Activity will bring you to the forefront of your connections’ feeds, and positive exposure of your fresh profile will bring in opportunities.
Facebook

Facebook has recently gifted the chance to present our “brand” outside of our personal profile. If you are starting a new business, have an industry blog, lead speaking events, or any activity that would help emphasize your expertise, then you can use a Facebook Page to promote it. Creating a page for a career-focused element or event means you can keep your private page separate, while still being able to carry likes and shares over from your friend network.

Brands have also jumped onto this feature as a way to advertise, engage with customers, and even recruit. Following the pages of companies that relate to your goal is another way to learn about the company’s priorities and culture. There will be posted events and news that matter to the leadership on their Facebook page, which you can use in interviews to stand out.

Twitter

Mark Suster, Guy Kawasaki, and Tim Ferriss are all venture capital celebrities and avid users of Twitter. Each has argued that the efficacy and ease of communication via Twitter is why they have stuck with it as a platform. All have claimed in one way or another that the most important element of Twitter is the access to anyone and everyone. Companies have Twitter accounts run by their marketing departments. CEOs have Twitter accounts often run by themselves. Industry writers promote and find sources over Twitter.

As with any social network open to the public, there are negatives. In regard to these issues, Guy Kawasaki has shared a few rules about Twitter engagement. Mainly, be nice and don’t complain. The Internet is frequently used for anonymous outlets of aggression. As a professional, you’re more likely to gain attention from being kind and helpful. Twitter is also a great way to publicly share a career change, a blog post, a new idea, or anything meant to spread across your network. As long as the news and posts are backed up with genuine messaging and honest content, then people will engage with you.

All of these social media accounts can be interlaced, allowing for connections, posts, and information to overlap with your online image. As we dedicate more time to networking and growing relationships, you should take the time to use these tools wisely.

I want to note that this dedicated social media time should be used to promote and engage in a productive way. It’s easy to get distracted by these tools. By reminding yourself that every hour spent on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or any other SM network is meant to be done with purpose and progress, than the time spent will not feel “wasted.” It is smart to schedule space for casual Internet browsing separate from career objectives.

Expanding Your Network

“Networking events” is not a new idea. George Lucas and Steven Spielberg met as teenagers at a film festival. Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin lived in the same hotel in San Francisco before
recording anything. Notably, one crowded building at MIT in the 1950s went on to produce radiation physics, nine Nobel prizes, and Noam Chomsky.

Surrounding yourself with positive, ambitious people is a necessity for making agile moves in your career. Don’t discount the motivating factors of competition or the value of cooperative favors. But how will you find the right people to associate with and increase your network?

Look. Work. And follow up.

Meeting New Connections

First, expand among potential colleagues. Connect with people in similar positions to your own. Contact people in the positions you want. Reach out to employers and management responsible for hiring both you and your associates. Create a map of who you want to meet and why. Expand beyond it and look out for people who you would want to work with. Mainly, build a list of people that you respect and want to learn from.

Now that you’ve looked, it’s time to do the work.

A common complaint about “networking” is that it feels contrived and empty of genuine interaction. Going into a meeting with someone without a motivation will result in a feeling of this empty networking. Marie Forleo, a career development expert, cites one rule as a way to keep the fake-ness out of establishing new connections. Give before you get. Many other industry writers have drilled in this rule. Marie Forleo outlines why this is such a necessary practice. Entering into a relationship with the intention to give (an interesting article, a promotion for followers, an introduction to a mutual interest, an opportunity with another connection) is the best and most engaging way to start a meaningful business relationship.

Marie also emphasizes the importance of being genuine. Wanting a favor or recommendation from someone is perfectly fine, but make sure that you also like the person whom you want to build a connection with. Strive to reach out to people you respect, then communicate with them directly and honestly. A network connection is not a sell. It’s a mutually beneficial exchange meant to help one another in the long term. Anyone you invite to a coffee meeting, informational interview, or discussion you should be sure you want this person in your network for a long time.

This method of genuine interest and giving introductions can also help connect with the heavyweights; executives. They are usually busier and receive innumerable requests for meetings, making them harder to tap. Tim Ferriss defines these efforts to relate with important people as “uncomfortable conversations,” but states that the fear of reaching out to someone you admire is easily surmountable. However, you will find more responses to a question or request that actually relates to the person and seeks to truly engage with them. In my experience, people appreciate brief and honest introductions. Before starting a conversation with a heavyweight, don’t consider, “Why would this person even want to talk to me?” but instead ask, “What would this person want to talk about with me?”
Not everyone will end up as an important contact. Mark Suster’s own insight into the work of building connections asserts the need to “take 50 coffee meetings.” The number is arbitrary, but big enough to represent how much time you should be committing to making brief meetings with new people. Coffee meetings, after work drinks, and introductory emails are short, sweet, and easy. You should be scheduling a lot of them as you are just starting out.

There are also effective ways to get the most events designed for networking. Don’t show up fashionably late. In fact, be early. The first few people to arrive will be the most serious about taking advantage of the event. It’s also easier to meet everyone if you’re there first. Be prepared with business cards, questions, and knowledge of what companies or people might be represented there. Don’t be on your phone, but be engaged. Don’t focus on trying to sell yourself and gain “followers.” Find out what people want out of you first, and offer it up if you can.

Here are some simple questions to start conversations with strangers at a networking event:

- Have you been to this event before?
- Did you get any meaningful connections out of it?
- What do you expect to find at this event today?
- Have you been to other events like this one?

These might seem obvious, but are rarely asked in the litany of “what do you do?” and “who do you know here?” These answers establish the specific needs of the person. If they expect nothing from the event, than you have a clue that there may be little gained from the conversation. If they have a history of finding great freelancers, partnership contacts, or vendor recommendations then you know immediately what they want and where you might fit in.

Revive Old Contacts

You now have a well-managed online presence. You have made the effort to put yourself out there and build new associations. With positive and consistent work, it’s very likely this will build a strong network to source from. Still, starting completely from scratch may not pay off right away, and we are here to learn how to move up quickly. Reviving old contacts that have previously gone inactive can add to your efforts.

As I’ve stated in the beginning of this chapter, we are already dispatched into networks via college, social media, long term friends, etc. In the past, you may not have turned to these connections for your career. However, as a rule it’s much easier to reach out to someone you already know than a stranger, even if originally your relationship was founded under non-career circumstances.

A quick way to start is with an email announcing a career change or new direction. The template below gives a short, easy example of how to reestablish a connection with little
pressure and invite positive responses, from general congratulations to leads on new opportunities.

Hello [contact name],

I hope this email finds you well. You might have noticed a few changes to my profile and feed. I've recently decided to [change career, pursue specific field, focus on specific skill] and I'm preparing to start this new stage in my life.

As I discover the requirements and opportunities of this [position/field] I'd welcome any advice or introductions you might think of that apply to my new direction.

Thank you for keeping me in mind. I'm excited to hear back any updates of your own pursuits!

Best,
[Your name, new LinkedIn profile, website, blog, etc.]

After sending this email you might want to offer the person a LinkedIn endorsement, share an article of a common interest, or any element they might appreciate. The email itself opens up a dialogue about your new career move, but also provides an outlet for your connection to give new information about their lives. By reengaging with another element you can back up the idea that you will be happy to repay any offered help.

This leads me finally to following up. As you schedule coffee dates, short meetings, email exchanges, and gather business cards you should also make allotted time in the future to keep in touch. Both Outlook and Mac Mail have built-in reminder settings to help schedule follow up emails. Gmail offers plugins that help flag and set reminders for sent messages. Try to take a moment after a meeting or sending a brief message to set a follow-up in 2 weeks, and then again in 6 months. At the time of the future reminder, you may not need to send an email as you've already maintained a dialogue. Or perhaps the person has referred to their busy schedule or the lack of ability to contribute. The 6-month marker is therefore set to manage any changes.

Your network will remain important throughout the growth of your career. Not only as a place to source job openings and recommendations, but also as a resource for advice, commiseration, and opportunities for long-lasting friendships. The better you treat the people you associate with, the more likely they will be to return it back in due time.

**Emails**

We are now at a prime point to discuss writing emails. The business world has been built upon communicating over email for decades now. They are seen as both a necessity and a nuisance. While I still value in-person meetings and phone calls as ways to get quick answers, much of our work life is dependent on effective email writing.
Casual and error ridden emails might pass among friends or limited network connections, but when it comes to contacting hiring managers, recruiters, and potential employers your email etiquette needs to be on point. Later on, as we address cover letters, HR representatives, online job postings, mentors, etc, I will present templates and example emails to accompany each topic. However, there will be many emails in-between for scheduling, following up, and asking questions that I probably won’t cover specifically. So, here I want to offer up a general approach to all emails and clear do’s and don’ts to keep in mind.

The Subject Line

Many people often use sales tactics in email subject lines to persuade the recipient to open them. If your intention is to sell or convince, then these methods definitely apply. This is where you might find subject lines that say “Your Next Steps,” or “Question about efficiency,” or “Have you heard about this?”

For job applications or network meetings these subject lines can seem insincere. For these cases, the subject line should reflect what the email is actually about. It’s important to be succinct in your subject line, but not cryptic. If it’s for a coffee meeting, then say “[Your name] from [where you met] - Grab a coffee?” If it’s about a job inquiry say “Candidate for [position] — [Your name].” If it’s an email about something specific, then put it in the subject line, as in “Recommendation for a great sushi restaurant in Philly.”

Busy people’s inboxes are filled to the brim with similar and confusing subject lines. Put the reason you’re emailing out in front, so that they know what to expect and can find it again easily if needed.

Grammar and Language

Grammar is important. Emails with well-structured and clear sentences don’t always align with great writers or grammar wiz’s. It just means that the person took the time to proofread their email. Misspellings and errors are distracting. Ask any teacher forced to read through hundreds of pages of papers. As with those who need to read through many emails in one sitting and vet through many candidates at once, a messy email can be frustrating. Remembering the correct use of there, they’re, their or its and it’s doesn’t take long on your side. Reading through your emails shows due respect for the person who needs to read them.

Another way to ensure you’re a great email writer is through efficiency. Reading on a screen is often subject to a “bounce” principle in which most people will “bounce off” of an article or email before ever finishing it. We’ve become conditioned to quickly lose interest in online text and are more likely to speed-read by scrolling to the bottom. The average email is open for 15-20 seconds, which for the average person is around 50 words read and understood. To give you an idea of how short that exactly is — this paragraph alone is 99 words.

So, how on earth do you keep people’s attention long enough to read your email? It’s simple. Be short and be concise. I find one common phrase that could be removed from thousands of emails is “I’m sorry.” Whether it’s an apology for bothering the person or using up their time,
it’s not a necessary piece of information. If your email ends with a “Thank you” and doesn’t make any unwarranted demands, there’s no need to say sorry. It’s also not necessary to write, “I’m emailing you about…” It’s redundant, but still commonly found. If you read through an email and say to yourself “Have I already said this before?” either implicitly or directly, then take it out.

I’m not saying that all emails should be under 50 words, but most emails are quick confirmations of plans, received resumes, or introductions to contacts. Therefore, leave the long emails to in-depth exchanges with mentors you are seeking advice from or long-established relationships that can’t be fostered over the phone or in-person.

**Settings and Extras**

Quickly, I want to reference how certain email servers, namely Google, will automatically attach a picture from another profile to what might be your business email. You should first check through this, exploring the settings and profiles that are linked to your email account, such as YouTube or Google Drive. This applies to Hotmail, Yahoo, Aol, and many other platforms. It sounds simple, but every once in a while, I’ll receive an email from a business contact that has a photo from a college party tacked next to their name. Also, don’t use smiley faces or emojis. I do realize that they’re becoming more accepted as a form of communication. I’m not against them, but if you’re just starting a career move or haven’t reached comfortable banter with your colleagues, then it’s better to leave the emojis out. You never know if the reader will find it endearing or juvenile.

Finally, let’s talk about your email signature. It’s your digital business card. Frequently, I have found myself clicking over to my inbox, searching for an email thread, and scrolling to the signature to find the person’s phone number under their name. In a perfect world, I would have all of their information matched up in my phone contacts. But that’s not always the case, so I appreciate when I can find all of their contact info in the most recent email. Gmail, Outlook, and Mac Mail all have easy settings to insert a signature at the end of emails. Your full name, job title or skill, phone number, LinkedIn hyperlink, Twitter handle, and any other relevant info should be there.

**Ready To Go**

It’s time to put yourself out there. With a close grasp on the tools needed to help you through the job hunt, you will now be able to move through it faster than most. As you search through blind job postings and apply with hundreds of other applicants, you will already have seeds planted within your network to find new opportunities. With practice in engagement and managing connections, you will be able to confidently start a dialogue with any hiring manager or reference regarding potential new positions. As you’re vetted and filtered through online searches, your “brand” will be catered to model exactly how you wish to be presented.

The goal of these first two sections is to prepare you for the work that goes into moving quickly to your new position or promotion. You will already have a head start over the competition
merely by the foundation of knowing where you want to go, and portraying to others you have what it takes to get there. Even after you’ve achieved the next step and found growth, the work you have put into these previous chapters will pay off well into your future.
Get The Job You Want
Hunting, Interviews, Promotions

It is called a job hunt, because great jobs don’t show up on their own. You have to go out, track them down, and win them. This process can be discouraging for some, but feeling the pay off of having the career you want is worth it.

At the beginning of your search, it’s normal to feel self doubt. It’s normal to wonder if you have what it takes or if you’re lacking the experience needed for the position. These thoughts are common. But, no one is better than you or deserves it more. The case may end up being that some positions are not a good fit, but the job market is not an epic gladiator battle against one another. Employers are looking for you just as ardently as you’re looking for a place to work.

This chapter is focused on the tools and strategies needed to negotiate the job market. With a rapidly changing business landscape and the influence of technology, getting hired is not nearly as straight forward as it used to be. Starting in the mail room and rising the ladder to CEO just doesn’t happen anymore. There’s a myriad of pathways to getting a position or promotion, and sometimes they can be confusing to decide between. Today’s hiring processes can be discouraging to both the applicants and the employers.

Logging hours hunting for openings or going after a promotion will feel like a job in itself. Therefore, these hours should be used efficiently in order to get to those important milestones. Regardless of the outcome of hiring manager emails, interviews, employer responses or non-responses, any time spent on dedicated work towards your next goal is important. Therefore, it needs to be mapped out, planned, and analyzed. In the same way that the perfect job won’t pop into your inbox and offer itself, carelessly shooting off resumes and trying for any position at all will create a loss of focus.

You should start this next step knowing exactly what work will be put in and feel confident that you are capable of doing it. Up until this point you’ve already been conditioning yourself, by making tough decisions and reaching out to intimidating people. Because of that, this next part will come more naturally.

A Clean Resume

A hiring manager’s world is built upon stacks of resumes. You might assume that in the eyes of an employer the most promising candidates are obvious and that their resumes stick out in the pile. This is not reality. There’s a reason an entire industry of HR reps, recruiters, resumes writers, and coaches are built out of deciphering exactly what a resume says about one person. You could hire a resume writer, where the cost ranges anywhere from $80-$400. If you’ve never written a resume before and don’t feel comfortable enough, this might be a good option.
However, resume writing is not a secret science. A successful resume is merely one that hiring managers don’t have difficulty reading. As a candidate you need to make your resume clean, simple, and easy to figure out. Anyone should be able to read through it without asking, “What does this mean?”

### Representing Your Value

Google HR, otherwise known as “People Operations,” runs through hundreds of resumes a day and recruits innovative thinkers regularly. A few years back a former People Ops Executive, Laszlo Bock, gave invaluable advice in resume writing that quickly spread through the biggest business publications. Ironically, Bock’s “cutting edge” advice was sourced from a resume practice used by sales professionals for many years.

Specifically, Laszlo Bock emphasized the quantification of details in your resume. He explains:

> “There’s a simple formula. Every one of your accomplishments should be presented as: Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z].”

Bock also gives helpful examples of giving numerical value to positions and responsibilities not traditionally paired with a number. These include a sorority leader listing the size of the organization’s budget or a manager representing recruiting growth in percentage gains. The basis of Bock’s hypothesis in this resume building tactic is that the biases and circumstances of resumes reviewers cannot be controlled, but attaching values will help to curb how they rank you.

While I believe this strategy will streamline the way employers see your resume, arguably it’s a borrowed idea from what has been working in sales for years. There are not many careers today that offer up the level of metrics in success as a profession in sales. For a career that doesn’t require a college degree or specific level of study, the success and proficiency of work is easy to calculate. That’s because it’s based on results.

Regardless of what position or field you’re going after, the murkiness of undefined experience and responsibilities on your resume can be cleaned up by thinking of them as a number. Line item each responsibility underneath a job or project and find a way to describe the value of your success in that endeavor. Even a college job can be turned into a value metric of your skills. A retail position provides revenue numbers, items managed in inventory, number of clients handled at once, etc. A volunteer project can amount to a purposed metric by considering the size of a service budget or benefits distributed in comparison to the staff size.

In creating these formulas, think about the skills required for the job you’re seeking out. Layering the measurements of your success with the specific skills that employers want will help sort the most relevant points of your resume.
Reverse Engineering Your Resume

Let’s say you wanted to become a surgeon. It’s highly unlucky you would blindly apply to surgical positions with a current resume and hope for the best. This is an extreme example, but it highlights a great point for thinking about your end goal. The path to becoming a surgeon is fairly clear; getting into med school, internship, residency, fellowship. While not all careers have a step-by-step bearing to the final destination, we can still use this to frame the course to our dream job.

Consider the factors that embody your final goal. If there is a specific position you’re aiming for then there are plenty of details to reverse engineer from it. If you are more flexible on an end point, but have an idea of your new career move, then there may be multiple points of access to move through backwards. A job description that lists skills you do not have should not be discouraging, but instead provide a map of your next steps.

For example, let’s imagine your ultimate goal is to score a position as a project manager for a tech start-up. However, at the moment you’re working in administration at a publishing company. The entry from one position to the other is not entirely clear, but we have the gift of a job description to gather the answers. The project manager position lists knowledge with specific software you have never used. The job also requires 2+ years experience in team leadership and a background in a tech start-up environment. Not one of these requirements apply to your current position. Where do you start building a resume that works as a bridge between the two roles?

First, start with skills you have that do apply to this position. Circle relevant items on your current resume and cross out those that are not. Write in the skills you will need, but do not have, and then write a corresponding list on how you can acquire each skill. From here you can build a plan of where to start and the amount of time needed to level yourself with other candidates. A table built for this job example might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needed Skill</th>
<th>Method of skill acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of New Software</td>
<td>1. Software Certification Courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Endorsements on LinkedIn indicating software skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Templates or Examples of work on website/LinkedIn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leadership Experience</td>
<td>1. Opportunities at current position to take on extra responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Volunteering for team leading projects at organizations of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background in Start-Up Environment</td>
<td>1. Start-Up oriented projects at current position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Volunteer with Tech Start-Up project or organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Possible new interim position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focusing on continued education is always valuable beyond skill building. There is an abundance of software certification courses available online at fairly affordable rates, and some are even available for free. A little research into what training resources are used by people already employed in similar positions or recommended by the company itself can be helpful. Asking classmates or online instructors to endorse these new skills after finishing the course, and then providing examples of your work will reinforce your efforts. Employers will also appreciate the impetus to go above and beyond the requirements of your current position and a willingness to learn something new.

Finding opportunities for leadership or start-up experience for the above list might mean reaching outside of your current work load. Let your boss know that you’re interested in taking on leadership responsibilities, or that you want to learn more about a specific new project in a different department. If those options aren’t available then think about volunteering your free time to a charity. VolunteerMatch.com and CatchAFire.com are both catered to match volunteers’ specific professional skills with organizations that need a few hours of extra help. If you aim for an organization in the tech sector, perhaps one that works with enterprising start-up companies or entrepreneurs, then you can build the experience needed. What’s more, volunteering for a good cause provides a positive personal impression. Companies will often promote value conscious initiatives and missions, and in turn look for employees that mirror their virtues.

You might reach an obvious gap, wherein you realize that you won’t be able to acquire the right skills in your current position. This might mean considering an interim position that bridges between your present job and your ultimate goal. Maybe this means taking a pay cut in the meantime, or moving to a job you may be overqualified for. If this move doesn’t entirely uproot your life and will eventually lead to your goal, then a new job might be worth it. It also offers up the opportunity to let a new employer know of your ultimate goal. Most companies encourage upward movement and foster enthusiastic employees by providing needed training where necessary.

A “Base” Resume

Many applicants will focus all of their energy on an interesting cover letter for specific positions, but then send an identical copy of their resume along with every single inquiry. This is a huge mistake. Because of the way in which HR commonly sorts through hundreds of resumes at once, you might be missing out on a chance to tick off a keyword sensor that’s already built into the job description post. Build a “Base” resume first, or more aptly something that will work as a template wherein you can fill in information based on the specific job descriptions. Leave the details of your job experience blank and start with a long list of every skill that might apply to a number of different positions. Then print out the job postings that you will be applying for, read through them, and highlight keywords. If a job posting’s responsibilities are “Design and Develop Reports,” then repeat the phrasing in your own resume under former job experience that applies. This tactic will guarantee that your resume stands out immediately, whether it’s fed through talent management software or sorted by someone in HR.
Many influencers and career coaches will emphasize the importance of a cover letter. They’re the most personal representation of you, in contrast to the formulaic objectivity of a resume. Some career advisors use the term “pain letter” or “opportunity letter.” This again steals another useful tactic from sales. A potential employer has the “pain” of hiring a well-suited person for an empty position. If the position is not filled, then the job is not getting done, or if the wrong person fills the position, then the job is not getting done the right way. Presenting a “pain hypothesis” in your cover letter will prove both that you have what the company needs and that you are capable of providing it.

Some industry leaders have found difficulty with the concept of “pain letters” and essentially “selling yourself” as a sole method for writing cover letters. There’s merit in considering what an employer needs and how you can provide that, but in truth a cover letter also shows your personality and interest in the company. You might share the qualification of being a solution along with other applicants, but other applicants do not have your personality or motivations.

Include your reasons and goals in your cover letter and show a little of who you are. Be professional and polite, but don’t be afraid to be yourself. I’ve seen cover letters that start out funny, such as, “I’m interested in the position for team leader. You probably figured that out already because you’re obviously very smart.” Or even enthusiastic, such as, “I saw your company’s keynote at the conference in spring and it gave me chills. I signed up for 3 software classes the next day.” Maybe there’s even an alignment of personal values that makes sense to mention, such as, “I am personally touched by your company’s involvement in school literacy initiatives. While I’m eager to schedule an interview for the new position, I also see it as an opportunity to bring in my stack of Goosebumps for your book drive.” Essentially, being different from other candidates means offering up genuine interest.

Below is a very basic cover letter template that just highlights where to input info, and then your own spin and persona.

Hello [name],

[List what position you are interested in, then give an honest reason why.]

[Tell a specific story or example from your experience that helps explain why you will be great for the position.]

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to hear back from you soon.

Best,  
[Your signature]
Don’t write a novel. Keep the letter to a similar length of an introductory or informational email. Remember, the shorter and more interesting a read, the more likely the employer will notice you.

**Hunting**

Online job postings have developed a reputation for being a “black hole” for applications. This assessment is not entirely untrue and is built off of a few inevitable factors. The post-to-apply model of hiring has existed for decades. It has been directly mapped into current hiring practices without consideration of the affect of the Internet. Forbes reports that HR professionals have recently complained that the Internet brings with it a huge influx of applicants, but “a dearth of talent.”

Part of this has to do with the open nature of job application sites, but also the “imbalance of what the position means and what it pays” in job descriptions. As a result, managers are using talent management software and applicant tracking systems to regulate the huge amount of resumes. What’s more, a hiring survey posted by Jobvite reported that 60 percent of long-term hires are made through in-house referrals. Multiple studies on recruiting sites have found that only about half of all open job positions are advertised publicly.

So, what does this mean for your job hunt? Well, dedicating hours to applying to online job postings and painstakingly building cover letters for each inquiry may be the most inefficient way to go about it. The reality is that there are jobs you will never learn about unless you ask directly, which means contacting companies you want to work for, or even asking your current company if they’re considering hiring for a position that is similar to what you want. If hiring managers are more likely to look at referrals and internal hires, than online postings might be the path of most resistance, and therefore the most difficult.

**Tools To Discover Job Openings**

While online postings may be a “black hole,” the Internet is still one of your most valuable tools, especially in research. Companies are more socially active than ever. Between blog posts, Facebook pages, and sponsored events you can find evidence of the direction of business intent and whether or not companies are expanding. Most will have hiring information, postings, and encouraging rhetoric for career development directly on their websites. Engage with it and sign up for a newsletter where possible. Even if the company website doesn’t list any open positions, that does not mean they aren’t hiring. The least you can do is try to connect with them.

**Recruiters**

As the online market has changed the way companies are hiring, the recruiting and head hunting business has grown to compensate for the negatives of job boards. Especially in start-up and tech, recruiters have made successful head way in becoming a resource for employers not
only in finding applicants fast, but finding the right applicants for the position. Looking up a recruiter isn’t overly difficult, in fact most of the time they will seek you out. I want to discuss some do’s and don’ts when it comes to recruiters as you will likely encounter them throughout your career, but still may never be explained how their jobs exactly work.

Do’s

While you have made a point to plan and prepare for the hunt, it is also literally a recruiter’s job to help you. Most of the time, you’re not paying a recruiter, as the company that employs you will, so their services can be very useful at no cost. They will already have contacts within companies that they know are hiring, which bypasses the need to reach out. However, you should let them know specifically what companies you’re most interested in. That makes the process easier for them when it comes to prioritizing your wants.

Go ahead and speak with more than one recruiter. It might seem disloyal to have more than one person hunting for you, but it’s the same as speaking to more than one vendor when considering a product. The person who gets you the best deal will win your business. Recruiters know that you will probably contact more than one, but it’s not necessary to share that with them.

Recruiters are there to help you streamline the process by finding positions that you are more likely to fit. However, they are not many recruiters for entry-level jobs. A remedy to this may actually be to reach out to a recruiter about a position set as a goal for the future after you gain some experience. This serves a little bit as a cheat code, because we already know that it’s likely the recruiter will respond with a polite turn down of your business. However, they may also provide insight into the path to gaining the skills for a future position. You’ve also established a relationship with intent of someone who may be able to help you farther down the line.

Don’ts

Recruiters are interested in getting you hired in the quickest amount of time. For them the more hires they get, the more commission. Therefore, you should never allow a recruiter to determine your salary, because they will likely sell you for less than your worth in order to speed up a hire. If you’re entering a new job and have no idea how much you should make, look it up. Glassdoor and Payscale.com post the median salaries for any position, and the rate change based on experience and location. Tell the recruiter what you intend to make and don’t let them talk you down.

A recruiter or recruiting agency is motivated by getting you hired at any cost. They might try to push you into positions or companies that don’t make sense for your career plan. Don’t let them push you down a path that doesn’t interest you. After you’ve been hired the recruiter walks away and is no longer related to your new job, so make sure it’s one you want to keep.
Finding The Hiring Manager

In the same amount of time it takes to fill out 10 applications to jobs online, you can find at least 5 hiring managers for the specific job you want. Use Google and LinkedIn to search for Lead Managers, Department Heads, VPs, or anyone who you might directly answer to the position you want, even if it doesn’t exist. Then email them. This isn’t a sure fire way to get in contact with exactly the right person responsible for hiring. Don’t let that stop you from reaching out. If your resume fits, then it’s unlikely you’ll just be cast aside. If you email someone who ends up as not quite the right contact, they will still be able to pass along your information, or give you the name of the right person. If they don’t, try another person on their team.

An email to a hiring manager should follow the same email guidelines I’ve gone over in the previous chapter. Don’t be afraid to be persistent, but always remember to be polite. Below is an example for an introductory letter to a hiring manager. You will find it similar to the introductory letters when building out your network that I have given before. This is because the meat of this email is your resume and cover letter, which should be catered directly at the company and the job.

[name],

I’ve been following your writing on LinkedIn for [company name] and have found it insightful in answering recent business challenges. [Add in more detail if you have it]

I am in the middle of a recent career move and would like to send across my resume (attached) and cover letter as a way to impart my continued interest in your company’s mission.

Please feel free to reach me anytime at the number below.

Thank you,
[your signature]

In my practices as an entrepreneur, sales professional, and instructor for business development there are a few reoccurring ideas that I stand by. One of these is at the core of all business relationships are people. This means that the people involved will predictably act in emotional and very human ways. You have already applied this strategy to building a network between friends and acquaintances. Now you can carry over some of those skills to the job hunt.

The hiring process can be just as frustrating and tedious as applying. Making a human-to-human connection can create a familiarity that helps the hiring manager see you as a person instead of just a resume. It’s already more likely for employers to go after references or internal applicants. Being more perceptibly human and approachable makes it easier for employers to follow up with you and engage.
You should also consider utilizing social networking research as a way to further connect with a hiring contact. Either through LinkedIn or the company website, finding the name of the right person means being able to possibly find their Twitter, blog, or personal website. Since they’re probably going to look through your online presence anyway, go ahead and follow them and scan for common interests. The example email above starts out with a reference to the contact’s writing for the company, which is knowledge that would have to be acquired through research. Starting out an email with a common interest in a podcast or charity affiliation with throw off the feeling of a typical applicant email and allow the person to remember you specifically.

The ideas above may seem familiar to those who have worked in sales before like I have. Making your email and connection stand out from the rest is just as important in selling a product as it is in selling yourself. In sales, it’s important to believe in your product and remain transparent about it. In this case, you already believe in the product of you!

Promotions

Maybe you’re not fresh to the work force out of college, or have taken a hiatus for one reason or another. Maybe you’re currently in a career that no longer interests you and are looking for a change into a new field. Hunting for a job from this point of view can come with its own challenges on top of the latent issues of online job boards and hiring contact silence. This is especially difficult when you have little to no experience in your newly set career goals.

Don’t be discouraged by the idea of “starting over from scratch,” because some employers might even find this action commendable and an example of your resilience as a worker. However, in this case it might be beneficial to consider a lateral move or promotion to set a better pace to your ultimate goal. This doesn’t entirely cancel out my guidance from the sections above, as the practice of reaching out to hiring managers and recruiters should still apply as a way to shop around your options. Recruiters may have even have connections and ideas for openings that bridge your current experience with that of a new career in ways that you haven’t considered.

But first, let’s talk about the possibility of taking a lateral move, which carries less of the risk of moving to a new business all together. The familiarity of staying within the same network, while having new responsibilities can be a better option if there’s little room to lose salary or challenges within the job experience itself. Remember that employers value well-rounded and diversified workers. So seeking to move and displaying interest in another position is not a negative and will ultimately add merit in the eyes of your employer.

A Lateral Move

Much like in the resume building section of this chapter, a lateral move takes some reverse engineering. It’s helpful to gather together a list of the skills needed for the job you want and compare it to the job you currently have. Finding the gaps in skills between the two is where you can begin to take extra steps to rectify it. The best way to do this is to let your supervisor
and those on your team know that you’re willing to take on projects outside your job description.

If we take the example from before of someone trying to move from publishing administration to tech project management, then we can first build parallels between the two different industries and move between them. Find a position that’s similar in your current company. If you forge a relationship with that person, then you can learn the steps that might shortcut you between the two fields. A publishing company is likely to have a project manager, and in this case reaching out and expressing an interest to offer help or learn more about the position will likely be welcomed. People rarely turn down help from co-workers who are eager and positive about learning. If you’re able to put in a little extra time on top of your normal day, then you’ve not only gained knowledge and experience; you have again fostered a great networking connection.

An in-between milestone to consider could also be a new position at a comparable salary to your current job. If you’ve moved between two different skill sets in the same business, there’s plenty positive to be sold from that success in your next career move. The idea that you’ve easily diversified and adapted within the parameters of one company and gained experienced two-fold is a benefit to be sold in a promotion, or possibly in a new job. If the goal of the example is to eventually move out of one industry into another, the skill of quick adaptation will already have been proven in the internal career move.

Creating Your Own Promotion

If you’re working towards developing diverse skills, new experience, and delving into projects outside your job description, then you are ultimately doing a harder job than the one you were hired for. Traditionally, promotions emerge when someone has worked at a position long enough that their value increases and employers are less inclined to lose them, so the promotion acts as an incentive to stay. Alternately, a promotion can also result from a higher up leaving and an internal experienced candidate taking on a role they’re already familiar with.

But then there is creating your own promotion based off self-action and defining new roles. As you bridge yourself between multiple roles or involve yourself across departments, you might find “fixes” that have yet to be addressed. Department separation exists to create efficiency among teams, but more and more frequently companies find difficulties in communication and execution between projects. For you, this might mean an entirely new, non-existent position that only you have the experience to handle. Selling this new position to a manager or executive means proving that your knowledge and work can create a positive change, which if you’ve already been working on in this capacity. If you’ve also coupled in a continued education, volunteer hours, or valuable network connections into your value, then the standards for salary and responsibilities in this new position will be higher.

Promotions and lateral moves are based in a firm understanding of your value in your current position. The exercises in building a resume and representing numerically how you have affected business can help to spell out your worth to yourself and others. Don’t forget what
you’ve done in building a foundation to make smart and effective moves to boost your career forward. As the opportunities, new positions, or new projects start to present themselves, you’ll be prepped to grab them and integrate them into your value.

**Interviewing**

Many people mistake interviewing as competitive talking points. As if saying exactly the right things and having the right grip in a handshake will get you the job. Employers who need to sit through many interviews will tire of hearing the same “right” answers to their questions. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t practice and be prepared for possible questions, but the mindset of the interview shouldn’t be that you’re against the other candidates.

Instead, think of an interview less as an audition and more like a research meeting. The employer wants to learn about you. They’re curious to know how you make decisions, solve problems, and plan for goals. They want to learn if you’re the right fit for them, not if you are better or smarter than anyone else. Don’t be afraid to make small talk, ask questions that are important to you, or even ask the employer about themselves. Good or bad interviews won’t be the only element that determines if you get the job, because there are a number of other factors at play. However, all interviews are chances to gain knowledge about the job you’re going after, the environment of the company, and the people you might work with. Much like with networking, be engaged and care about what is being said.

**Common Questions**

Before going into an interview, prepare and research about the company and its values. Research the requirements of the job and mark where you might have some weaknesses in your experience. Think of how you plan to get around those weaknesses, instead of how you will justify that an employer look past them. Write down questions you legitimately want to ask them. Is the position challenging? Do they need someone who will try out new ideas? What do they expect for turn around time on projects? These are answers you need, not just questions they want to hear.

Below are three common, simple questions that will likely be asked in one form or another in an interview. Consider the lens in which you view these questions and prepare yourself for answering them.

1.  *Can you do the job?*

   Can you? If you fit into a number of the qualifications, but have never done the job before, be honest about it. Even if you’ve never done it, maybe there’s a reason you know you can. Maybe you’ve gone through it with co-workers who have offered help and experience outside of your qualifications. Maybe you don’t fully understand how the job is done, so you can ask the interviewer exactly
what is required and how that applies to you. This is also a great chance to not answer, “I can do anything,” and instead talk about what you have done and how you think it’s related to what they need.

2. Do you have a passion for the job?

You should, and at this point you should be able to articulate why. Based on the research and self-evaluation that has been done up until this point, you should have a strong, positive answer that doesn’t read like desperation.

3. Will we be happy with how you do the job?

The answer to this is not “Everyone likes me.” Instead, think about how you will deal with their unhappiness. Examine how you deal with issues among team members, with supervisors, and with customers. Explain your goals in being an effective worker, and not trying to make everyone happy, but instead trying to make everyone’s job better.

Questions Of Your Own

Remember that the interview is a two way street. It’s your chance to learn if the company is right for you. Asking probing questions during an interview that directly correlate to what you want from the job will help you manage expectations. This will also show your potential employer that your interested and engaged in the details of the work. Questions about the specifics of the job will also present that you understand the position and the industry. As many candidates go on about their tendency towards hard work and leadership, discussing the details and how you understand them or want to execute them is a great way to stand out. It also plants an image in their head that you’re already prepped for the position. Below are some great questions to ask during an interview, and what to look out for in the answers.

• How would you describe the culture here? What type of people tend to really thrive, and what type don’t do as well?

  *This question at its core hints at the values of the company. Often an answer to this will reveal whether a company values quality work over long work hours, or teamwork over following individual projects. You will have an assessment of how you fit into each situation and can match your own values with the company’s.*

• Can you describe a typical day or week in the position?

  *Again, an interview is just as much a chance for you to learn about the specifics of the position as it is for them to learn about you. You may need to choose between taking a different offer or negotiating pay, and the details from this answer will help you make that decision.*
- What are the most immediate challenges of the position that need to be addressed in the first three months?

  Only referencing yourself in an interview will not establish any idea of what will need to be done the first day of the job. This question will help manage preparation and expectations, as well as give you information for overall industry procedures that may apply to other interviews.

- What would a successful first year in the position look like?

  An employer is almost always looking for a permanent long-term fix. Even in the case of an internship, many “temporary” positions are geared towards being turned into an in-house hire. Asking this question sends the message that your goals of the long-term will help meet the needs of the employer.

- What can you tell me about [company name]’s plans for growth over the next 3-5 years?

  Industry research and network connections may not be enough to know about the goals of a particular company. Instead of guessing where the company might want to go and where you fit in, merely ask. This question can lead to a discussion about how you can help the growth and move that conversation faster than guessing at their plan.

- What are the career paths in this department or prospects for advancement?

  This question again shows that you’re invested in the job, not just for an immediate result. Long-term commitment is often what an employer will use to choose one qualified candidate over another.

- Why do you enjoy working at this company? What keeps you here?

  Engage with the person interviewing you on a personal level. It will not only help create a connection helping the person feel more comfortable, but it will also give you an idea of how happy you will be at the job. Most people are not great at lying in face to face conversation. If the interviewer is not convincing about their happiness in a position, this will give you a clue as to how happy you will be in the job as well.

- What is the most unique aspect about your company, perhaps something you are proud of?

  Here you can understand part of the company’s mission, as most answers to this question will address the company’s core principles and how they differ from other industry leaders. This is great information when choosing between two similar positions.

- Has the company faced any challenges in the industry, if so, how have you worked to overcome them?
For your own self knowledge, it’s great to know if a company is taking innovative, smart steps to tackle industry problems. Too many times I’ve actually heard employees say, “the company doesn’t want to do anything about that.” Perhaps the answer to this question is that they are open to a new approach, but don’t have anyone to head up the change. Depending on the answer, you will be able to envision possible upward mobility and advancements, or you may see a stagnancy you may want to avoid.

• Thank you so much for your time today, what are the next steps...?

Always leave an interview with an idea of what to do next and when. You will be following up with the interviewer and want to start that conversation with, “As mentioned at the end of our meeting...” Ask for a timeline of when you’ll hear back from them. Even if it’s a vague, “some time next week” you will still have a deadline to push for an answer or expect to move on.

The Follow-Up

Before you walk out of an interview, make sure you have the contact and name of every person you met. Even the scheduler who managed the appointment and introduction. One simple point person may be able to give a response faster than the person responsible for making the final decision.

No later than the following afternoon, you should send a follow-up email to each contact. It’s not necessary to create a complicated argument of why you’re the best fit. These emails are a respectful courtesy and a small nudge to express your appreciation of their time. As I’ve pointed out, the interview process can be arduous for employers. The follow-up email is way to connect the memory of a great interview with a name.

Below are a few examples of follow-up emails that can be modified for your purposes. I want to emphasize that these emails should be customized to each person and the conversation specifically. This is what helps them remember you, otherwise you’ll be lost in the generic emails and minutiae of the workday.

[Name of contact],

It was a pleasure meeting you yesterday, and I appreciate you taking the time to interview me. Your company’s business model meets my values, has inspiring people involved and offers promising growth. I hope to assist you in contributing to the leadership structure, development of the company, and to further carry out [company name]’s 3-5 year goals as you explained.

I look forward to our next correspondence as I'm highly committed to joining [company name].

Best,
[Your full contact signature]
[Name of contact]

It was a pleasure meeting you yesterday. I appreciate you taking the time to interview me. While I have sought advice from mentors, family, and friends about working in promising start-ups with different stages of venture funding, I have found honesty and transparency are the top two of my "most important traits" list. My conversation with you was particularly enlightening and confirmed my beliefs that [company name] is the place I want to grow professionally.

From day 1, you will get everything I have, and I will prove my contributions will be significant. I thoroughly enjoyed our discussion and look forward to speaking again!

Best,
[Your full contact signature]

The above follow-up emails differ in subject matter, but share similar qualities and intention. Both are succinct, professional, and enthusiastic. They both reference a particular point that was mentioned in the interview, reiterating the discussion as it fit into being the right candidate. This simple practice will impress sincerity and provide a marker that keeps you in the mind of the interviewer.

**Being The Best Candidate**

One mistake made by many new to the workforce is the outright eagerness to get a job, any job at all. The difficulty with this is not only that it reads as desperation to potential employers, but it also seems as if you don’t care about the work itself as much as the paycheck. It’s not necessary to disingenuously rave about how great a company is or how much you love your job. If your reasoning for applying is that you see the opportunity to gain experience towards a goal, then you can be honest and say that.

Thank anyone you connected with who may have helped direct you to the right person or scheduled the interview. People on the sidelines can have more influence in the decision than you think. Keep in touch in the interim in ways that are not just constantly checking up on the job status. New people you’ve met in the job hunt will likely end up moving companies or changing positions.

Consider all of this as learning opportunities. Keep the resentment of rejection out of it. Employers dislike sending rejection notices, or confronting why they didn’t chose you as a candidate. Be gracious in rejections. Thank them for valuable feedback, and even offer up how you are considering building the skills they might have given as a reason for passing on you. You never know if the person they chose to hire will work out or not.
Master The Position
Standing Out & Becoming The Go-To Employee

After all the networking, job hunting, and interviewing, the job you want is finally landing at your feet. It wasn’t easy, but now it’s all over. But how can you tell if it’s too good to be true?

“After reviewing all of the candidates, we’re happy to say that we would like to bring you on. If we send over the offer letter tomorrow, will you accept the job?”

Pushy, but surprisingly common verbiage in the hiring process. The motivation behind this kind of proposal could be that the company needs you in the position right away, or that they haven’t been able to meet the salary specifications you’ve asked for. It’s not meant to swindle or trick you, but is sometimes considered an efficient way to get the hire moving.

It’s uncomfortable to spend time persuading hiring managers and employers as to why you’re the best candidate, only to turn down their offer later. But, you might have to if it doesn’t fit your career needs. The key here is they are your career needs. If a company requires someone in the position as quickly as the statement above suggests, then they will be willing to negotiate in order to keep you. Renegotiating is much less painful than re-interviewing candidates. However, if they’re unwilling to move on the offer and it doesn’t match your needs, don’t feel guilty turning it down. They will find someone else, and you can find a job that better fits your career goals. You’ve already been offered one so far!

I mention this part of the hiring process because it is often overlooked. A dream position could turn into a nightmare if you are not able to properly negotiate upon taking the job. There will almost always be room for movement on both ends. Go into salary negotiations positively, without ignoring the factors altogether or seeing them as signs of a bad deal.

Before we go into the nitty gritty of charging into this new career, I want to reiterate what has been built in the pursuit of this new venture. Behind you is a network of knowledgeable, supportive connections. You’ve combed through and perfected your resume and personal brand. Don’t forget when heading into this next era that keeping up with these other elements will still help guide you. Remember to steadily foster business relationships and build useful skills to careen you towards that corner office.

Building Your Productivity

Kudos on landing a great new position! It’s gratifying to finally reach a milestone that denotes the start of a new productive career. Let’s start with that term “productive” right off the bat. It’s a concept that the business world has grappled with since Henry Ford organized his factory
with the infamous assembly line. Teams, companies, sociologists, and even governments have sought ways to measure productivity, and then find ways to improve it.

Computer scientist and award-winning author, Cal Newport, coursed through an anthology of studies on “productivity” in his book Deep Work. He found curious results, specifically how the idea that technology and connectivity increases our production is an unfortunate misconception. Recent amplified connectivity has actually been proven over and over to hurt our productivity in many case studies. Researchers in the last decade have investigated the effects of technical advancements, specifically social media, to worker efficiency and found evidence of a growing detriment. Technology has certainly helped us produce more efficiently in many ways, but Newport’s argument suggests that we may have reached a breaking point.

Some big corporations have recognized this and reacted by developing new ways to curb the negative aftermath. Best Buy took a leap to implement “ROWE workplace” guidelines in 2004, which involved cutting almost all email communication and group meetings in order to increase efficiency. ROWE stands for “Results Only Work Environment” based on the idea that unnecessary meetings and repetitive emails yield little results. The experiment created some positive increases. Subsequently, many other companies, including the aforementioned Gap Inc. and Yum! Brands adopted a similar pattern of workplace management. Other studies have focused on the effects of music to worker productivity, word phrases used by management, the influence of competition, the amount of breaks allowed, etc. Even office lighting has been studied to try and change overall worker productivity.

In summary, a “productive” worker is a valuable worker. However, not all of the proposed answers and methods will work out for you. Individual productivity is really just about self management. Before applying these new practices, I believe it’s important to take an audit of what you think makes you “unproductive.” This means outlining your bad habits. You may have already run into some of these habits in your job search and can recognize what might have held you back. Great! Once you list them out it’s easier to modify them to work for you, instead of against you.

For example, here is a possible “bad habit” that can be turned around. Perhaps you’ve made it a “bad” habit to sit with a cup of coffee in the morning and read through news before getting any work done. However, throughout the day when you lose motivation, you’ve found you can easily slip back into this mode and browse the news again. Then you feel guilty for not getting certain tasks done earlier. If you personally find pleasure in the time at the beginning of the day to browse and drink coffee before getting into tasks, then don’t just try to cut it cold turkey. Schedule 15 minutes at the beginning of the day to do this as part of your routine. Time it. Then when the timer goes off, know that you’ve fulfilled that need and you can’t do it until the next day.

There are plenty of methods in this chapter that could apply as a blanket solution and might help someone become more productive. However, none of these methods will work if you don’t first acknowledge the things that you think are holding you back. You need to address how to deal with them first. There’s nothing wrong with giving into “bad habits” as long as you don’t
let them control you. Rethink how your brain falls into unproductive behaviors and address them with structure.

**Tackling The Inbox**

The email inbox can be a huge source of distraction, anxiety, and a feeling of inadequacy. A recent study in the UK found that a rise in the frequency of email notifications throughout the day can cause a direct increase in anxiety. A US study was able to link the hours used on social platforms, including email, with the occurrence of depression in adults 19-34.

The busier you are, the more action your inbox will see. Even CEOs have their own hardened tactics in handling the inbox demons. Kevin O'Leary and Ariana Huffington both insist on avoiding the inbox all together in the early morning, and instead opt for planning the day or spending time with family before opening a single email. Alternatively, Tim Cook and Jeff Weiner note that they prefer first thing in the morning as the best time to parse through the hundreds of emails. Even Harvard Business Review published a report claiming that early morning email sessions were the best for tough decision making. However, they also cited the inconsistency of this statement depending on the job.

Consequently, there are plenty of suggestions, methods, and even applications designed to help with email management. Through all of these options, I have found 3 practices that reappear over and over.

**Three Golden Inbox Rules**

- Ignore the number of “unread” or new emails.
- Schedule time to read and answer emails. Do not interrupt other work to answer emails.
- For emails you cannot answer immediately, schedule them.

The “number” of unread emails is arbitrary. You might have 500+ unread emails, but only 30 of them need to be answered. Or possibly, 100 of them need to be answered. Spam mail, CC’ed, conversation threads, and just irrelevant emails will pile up and seem important, but only add unnecessary anxiety.

One radical way to handle this issue is to practice “email bankruptcy.” Coined by the CEO of Hootsuite, but used by a number of other business influencers, the idea of “email bankruptcy” is to archive every single email and start with an empty inbox. For starting a new job, this is a great way to get a handle on immediate work correspondence. The likelihood of needing to review an email from more than 30 days ago is rare. Even if you do need to look something up, if you have archived everything, than you will still have access. Yet, now the stressors are out of sight and out of mind.

If your inbox is overflowing, don’t think about the time it will take to get through ALL of them. Set aside the time you can spare that day to start from the top and don’t be concerned with
finishing. It’s also important to schedule the same amount of time at an exact time everyday. You can check emails first thing in the morning, or if that proves difficult you can try after lunch. The idea is keeping a routine that will not only help you manage responses, but also influence others to know predict they will probably get an email from you.

For example, let’s say you sequence through your inbox from 9:00am - 9:30am and then from 3:00pm - 3:30pm. Your coworkers will probably notice this and realize that if they miss the 9:30am window, that you’ll answer later in the day, and alternatively if they miss 3:30pm, they’ll get something first thing in the morning. This regularity makes you both reliable and keeps you sane. If someone needs an answer immediately, they will know to call you directly instead of waiting around for an email that misses your regular deadline.

Inbox To Task List

The final factor that repeats in all email best practices is the concept of immediate action. This idea has been conveyed in a few well known ways. Whether it’s TIO, “Touch It Once” from productivity expert Thanh Pham, or “Eat That Frog” from self-improvement guru Brian Tracey, the idea is that if you can answer an email within 2 minutes, then do it right away. If you can’t quickly write a reply, then schedule it for later or move it to a task folder.

Outlook has a built-in setting using right click to create an “Outlook Task” where you can schedule a reminder or follow-up alert. Ramit Sethi swears by Evernote as a way to build email reminders and task plans straight from his inbox. Both Gmail and iCal allow for building events and reminders from emails and contact information. The point is to not utilize the inbox as a way to file your “answer later” or “deal with another day.” The influx of emails will keep this method from being organized.

Applying these simple steps and fitting them to match with your work day will make the inbox seem less sinister. These practices will also make you more reliable in communication than if you just stared at your inbox all day.

To Do Lists and Task Management

Albert Einstein was not known for being incredibly organized. Much like his hairstyle, his office and desk space were cluttered and chaotic. However, Einstein was a workhorse who was able to calculate and theorize some of the most complex math even by today’s standards. I’m not advocating an absent minded approach to getting things done, but there is an important aspect to consider about Einstein’s work habits. Largely, focusing on the most important work alone and getting it done.
Harvard Business Review recognized five psychology studies that back reasons for the failure of to-do lists:

1. “Option anxiety” which keeps us from choosing which task to do first.
2. “Complexity of fluctuation,” where some tasks will take much longer than others.
3. “Ignorance of priority”, in which many tasks will be ignored based on their unimportance, but still remain on the list.
4. “Lack of time context” for how long a task list will take to complete in total.
5. “No commitment devices” are inherently built into to-do lists, which ultimately means less motivation to complete the listed tasks.

In fact, Forbes and iDoneThis researchers surveyed variable office workers and found that 41% of to-do list items are never completed.

I say the To-Do list is flawed. You don’t need it. If you’ve remembered that you need to finish something, then do it right away. If you don’t have time to do it, then schedule it in your calendar and make a note of how long you need to finish it. If you don’t have time to schedule it, chances are it is not as important as what you are doing in the moment, which deserves your undivided attention.

Productivity is often sourced from focus. A To-Do list will deter your focus. Generally as you work, you will have an idea of what is the “most important” project. Just start it. You can figure out how long it will take to finish and schedule breaks or set deadlines for specific tasks within the project. But putting it on a to-do list won’t bring the project any closer to being done.

A great plan of action stolen from Kevin O’Leary, but certainly practiced naturally by many successful people, is to take the time every morning to think of the three most important items for the day. Once you have decided on them, then you can take them with you throughout your work day. This helps instill the knowledge of what needs to be finished, instead of paying attention to small items or distractions that might come up.

Einstein likely woke up every morning knowing what he wanted to focus on for the day, even if it was one equation at a time. No amount of dusting, filing, or getting a haircut was going to keep him from finishing his most important work.

**Productivity Hacks**

**GID “Get It Done” or ETF “Eat That Frog”**

I’ve already covered the concept of attacking the most important item first. There are a few ways to execute this mind set, but most of it is based in learning to prioritize what matters and what doesn’t. Many have utilized the 80-20 rule, which requires getting the hardest part of the project done first. Even if you struggle with deciding what part of a project will be the hardest, or even picking between two projects based on which is the most time sensitive. Just start. The
most important element is starting on anything “hard” right away. Once you’re finished, then you can move on to the next needed item. Avoiding the difficult or important tasks for later won’t help you in the long run.

**Pomodoro Technique**

This method is known for helping with tedious and repetitive work. If you’re most important project will take hours and hours for a seemingly dreary task, a great way to break it up is through the Pomodoro Technique. Setting a timer for 25-minute intervals and allowing a 5-minute break helps to keep your workload from burning you out. After 4 breaks, you can take a 15-minute break, which adds incentive to push through difficult work. Studies found this method to be very effective if followed strictly.

**Batching**

Tim Ferriss made famous the idea of taking many little tasks at once and “batching” them together. As a method of productivity this can work out great, because repetitive tasks that might normally be performed once a day, such as reports or pitch emails, can be scheduled and completed all at once. By using apps that allow for scheduled emails or creating templates, using the “batching” method will free up larger pieces of time in other parts of your schedule.

**Ritualizing and Deep Work**

Some work requires intense concentration and focus, such as writing a blog, learning a difficult skill, or solving a complex problem. Cal Newport’s work studied the behavior of our brains in performing tasks that require intense focus. One important factor that inhibited people from being able to accomplish difficult “deep” work was the power of distraction. Whether from messages, emails, or tiny multi-tasks, the presence of “distractions” can make it almost impossible to train our brains to focus.

Sometimes it can be difficult to focus on one thing at a time, which is why it’s also important to allot yourself “rituals.” For example, say you needed to focus intensely on building a business plan for a new company enterprise. It would be difficult to jump right into the long hours of research, planning, and writing when you are fresh from a meeting that previously took your focus elsewhere. Find ways to ease your brain into intense work, whether by free writing, silently thinking through the project, or rereading the criteria. This will help bring your mind into serious work mode. Focusing on the time that goes by in ritualizing will prime the brain for distraction, so prioritize learning the best way to find focus.

All of the tools and hacks above highlight ways to boost your productivity and therefore your value as a worker. These will carry into every step of your career and help you gain experience faster. The adage of “working smart, not working hard” applies to the practices I’ve outlined here. However, that doesn’t mean you won’t work hard to figure out how to best utilize your own learning and working habits.
The idea of this book in total is not only to grab the job you want, but also to be the best at it. Investing in these practices is not only going to turn you into a huge asset as a worker, but will also help to distinguish yourself from your peers. However, the competition in your peer group should be healthy, and you should take the time to learn from them too.

**Learn From Your Network**

Between online courses, books, and research you have probably already learned a lot on your own. But study and application never fit perfectly together. Guy Kawasaki denotes the first 90-days of a new job as a critical point for employers and coworkers to develop an impression of your value. Therefore, he advises a few first steps in this time period to stand out as a rockstar.

Most elements of Kawasaki’s advice involve learning everything you can in the surrounding area. Study the company website, publications, and social media accounts. Research the executives and your immediate team members. Think about how higher ups might deal with projects or business problems. Even reach out to your manager and ask them what they would focus on first if they were in your position.

Kawasaki also suggests “sucking up” to the administrative assistants, security guards, and normally disregarded employees. Since everyone who has worked there before you will likely know something that you don’t. Regardless of status, the input they share will be worth paying attention to. The idea is to be open to learn, ready to ask for help, and respectful of what everyone and anyone has to teach you. As a first impression, these tactics will help co-workers and employers gain trust in you and expect you to learn quickly.

**Your Peer Group**

It’s wrong to assume that anyone with the same position is your enemy or competitor. It’s also a mistake to think that your direct peers are cohorts against the big bad boss. A productive work place is when everyone’s motivations are focused on the good of the company. Sometimes the peer group surrounding you won’t follow this precept, which you need to recognize right away.

A great peer group will support each other in a number of ways. They will encourage learning between different skill sets. They will support trying new projects. They will hold each other accountable for deadlines and deliverables, without placing blame directly on any one person at a time. Of course, not all work environments will be built this way. However, where you find a flaw in a group not supporting each other or not communicating needs, it’s a good chance for you to step in. “Stepping in” doesn’t mean pointing out the flaws, but behaving positively to curb effects of the flaws.

For example, if your new work team has been practicing a compartmentalized method of getting work done, applying a “not my job” mentality to certain aspects of a project, then you
have a chance to act to improve it. You could ask to learn overlapping skills that will pull the
team closer together. On top of that, you should ask if someone is willing to help you AND
others in the group understand their specific skills. Opening the door to cross training others
will seem less like you want to “steal” their job and more that you want everyone to understand
the needs of one team member. Your goal is to show how the team can help ease each other’s
specific workloads.

Everyone has a part of their job that they loathe doing. Sometimes it’s a specific type of
paperwork, or an email chain that needs to be maintained. If you find this in another team
member, then you have a chance to volunteer help and learn part of the mechanism. Using
“batching” or productivity hacks to master tedious tasks can aid you in helping a teammate
bogged down with work. Perhaps you can even turn around and help them to segment the task
closer. Most people will not refuse offered help for something they don’t like doing. And in the
end you’re being supportive while gaining a new work skill.

The more positive and team oriented behavior you express, the more you become indispensable
to the company. Being indispensable is what you want in the end. This is how you can parley
your experience and work influence into the next promotion or opportunity. You don’t
technically have to be friends with your peer group, but being a dependable resource of help
and good work will keep you around longer than your personality.

Find A Mentor

Similar to the benefits of relationships in your immediate peer group, but almost more
important is the advantage you’ll gain from finding a great mentor.

It’s possible to have more than one mentor at a time. A mentor doesn’t always have to be an
older figure that’s pointing out every baby step to you. In fact, those types of mentors are rare.
Cultivating one person from the ground up is a huge commitment that most people aren’t
willing to take. However, many people are surprisingly willing to help an upstart with specific
questions and ideas, even if only for a moment of their day.

Let’s start with the “don’ts.” CEO of Learnvest, Alexa Vontobel, pointed out recently that a
mentor is going to probably be someone who is willing to take a quick phone call for advice, but
not necessarily be at your wedding. Therefore, when you’re reaching out to someone cold to
possibly build a mentorship, if you start with “What should I do?” or “Where should I start?”
you will probably get no response. Be more specific. It’s also inadvisable to reach out to
someone who’s light-years ahead of you in their career. The farther away they are from you, the
less they will be able to relate. They will also be much busier.

Instead, think of someone who is a just few years ahead of you with a little more experience.
These mentors will be more willing to help because they’re still in a stage of learning themselves
and will appreciate the respect and admiration. Ask specific problem solving questions and
relate to them as a person, instead of vague guidance seeking questions. Below is an example for how an email to a mentor might be written.

**Subject: Understanding your new start-up mission.**

Dear Possible Mentor,

I was inspired by your article about the changes you’ve made to your start-up philosophy and how you implemented them to your company. I have been re-thinking non-stop my own start-up’s vision, because of it. (company link)

I want to alter my approach to (specific problem) based on what you’ve written. Could you provide me any advice on handling challenges in this area? I’d love to grab a coffee to discuss it further or schedule a call when convenient.

I’ve admired your work since starting in this industry, and again would value any feedback. Thank you for your time.

Best,
Possible Mentee

This email shows research and knowledge of the person’s interests. It follows many of the same facets I’ve gone over in networking emails. By asking about a specific problem, you’re not asking to have this person mentor you for the rest of your career. However, with a positive response then you have built the beginning of a helpful relationship. Remember that giving is also more important that getting, and in the event that someone does help in a mentor capacity then you should repay them and maintain respectful correspondence.

Often great mentors will be apparent, as bosses or executives within your own company. In these cases it’s likely they will already be offering help and tell you, “to come to them anytime with issues.” Do that. As a boss, they are resources to their employees and great bosses want to see everyone succeed for the good of the company.

However, sometimes a mentor might not be easy to see and you’ll need to do some digging to find them. One great way is through LinkedIn. Using “2nd Connections” is an easy way to lead you into finding a mentor without it being a complete stranger. In Advanced Search you can filter your 2nd connections by industry, position, or even interests. Then look through the profiles of people who may be a little farther ahead of you. The great part about this method is that reaching out is gifted with an introduction of “I saw that we’re connected through (person).”

**Become Invaluable**

We have already touched the idea of becoming an indispensable employee by learning skills outside of your job description and becoming a team player. But what exactly does it mean to be an invaluable and critical employee?
An entry-level or early career position is rarely considered irreplaceable. Truthfully, even highly skilled positions can easily be refilled or reallocated. Someone considered a critical asset is less about their job description and more about their history of efficiency, reliability, and unique perception of problem solving. These characteristics define an employee that businesses will depend on and be reluctant to give up.

Your work efficiency will be determined by how you manage the assembly line of your brain. As you continue to work on productivity and new skills, your level of efficiency within any job will no doubt increase. The best silent side effect of these practices is learning how to organize yourself. As you work through simple actions, such as finding the easiest email schedule or balancing your focused time, you are also learning to decipher what environment is the most productive for you personally. When you learn how your brain works within certain routines, you can then hack the system and find gaps to improve. The result is your best work in the quickest amount of time.

Working well with your team and building relationships within your peer group will support the image of reliability. Your well managed inbox and response strategy will also add to this reputation. Reliability is not always about being at work on time. Certainly, you should be on time, but it’s more about being known as the employee who hands in consistent, quality work and pushes others towards improving the company overall. You’ve already learned a lot about self-management in your job search and network building. Being a reliable employee is merely about answering to others with the same passion and diligence as you have answered your own personal goals.

A great work ethic is more rare than people think, but it’s not impossible to find and coach hard work. The key ingredient that will pull you ahead towards your biggest goals is your unique perspective on solving problems. This may seem elusive, because aren’t you learning the same skills and solutions as everyone else? Wrong. By crossing training skills sets and learning outside of your job description you have built these unique qualities. Branching different disciplines will be the impetus for new ideas and innovations. This is especially more apparent if you’ve moved from one industry to another. We can source this concept back to the examples of the publishing administrator breaking into project management, or the employee building a promotion between two disconnected departments.

You have developed ways to think independent from precedent, so tap into that as new business problems emerge. Use everything you’ve gained from careers of the past, advice from mentors outside your field, or even learned skills in helping colleagues. If that’s not enough, know that you have the ability to find a solution through research and learning.

Last, don’t be afraid of making mistakes. The advantage of the first 90 days of a job is that you can make every mistake in the book and ride on the excuse of being new. As you take big risks, learn from them. Try to find ways to not only do it again right, but better. The beginning of your new career is an incubation period. Mastering the job is within reach and sets you up for your next big goal. Because once you have a foot in, it’s time to aim for the top.
Surprisingly, people often look ahead with fear at the possibilities of their career. If the road to success seems long, then they see more opportunities for failure. This is why many people never move forward. Even if you’ve made it into a hard earned position or moved in a positive direction, the thought of wanting to become a CEO can tap into this feeling of reluctance. Bigger goals will naturally sprout up as we accomplish smaller ones, but also means addressing the fear of failure.

This book has already provided a long list of tools to plan and execute the start of your path to success. However I haven’t completely addressed the tools for getting past the fears in moving forward. Because they are more abstract than practical, there aren’t scripts or tables to equate with these measures. Yet, conquering the fear of failure is something that will reappear again and again. So let’s talk about how to handle it whether as an intern or a CEO.

First off, the presence of fear proves passion. We aren’t afraid of losing things that we don’t care about. Therefore, if you’re terrified of never getting the job you want, then the energy is there to build motivation from the pressure. Dale Carnegie famously proposed a useful method of asking yourself, “What’s the worst that could happen?” The worst thing that could happen from failing to get a promotion or having an unsuccessful business is you are left back at zero. That’s back at zero, not behind zero.

Say, you have reworked and rewritten your resume, then sent it off to a bunch of different job opportunities. Along the way you realize you’ve made a few spelling errors. This might feel embarrassing, but the “worst thing that could happen” is employers notice them and don’t regard you as highly as they could. Plenty of people send out resumes with spelling mistakes. This could be a chance to wow them with a cover letter, or even send an email that gives a humbled correction, which uses the mistake as a way to engage in a conversation.

Consider that you’ve just started at a position and find out that you flat out can’t do the job. Either your ill-prepared or the work load is just beyond what you can handle. This situation is what many fear the most in taking on a new job. So then, what is the worst thing to happen? Realistically, your employers will work with you to fix the problem, whether through training or shifting of responsibilities. If you’re truly making the best effort to do the job, then it’s unlikely you will be fired for not matching with the workload immediately. But ok, let’s say you do get fired. If you did everything you could to get the job done within your skill set, then the job was probably never going to work out. And now you’ve learned more for the next position. Again, failures lead to knowledge.

The point here is that making big career moves can be scary. If you’re still psyching yourself up for the next big thing then use the tools from this book to conquer your reservations. However, once you’ve gotten over that first step, seeing yourself in the corner office and running the show
can seem even farther away. It’s not. The only thing between you and getting there is a little fear and a few failures. Be up for the challenge.

**Learning New Skills**

Since 2012 millions of people have downloaded and used Duolingo, a revolutionary free app that teaches users to learn a second language with a game interface. Even with its popularity, there’s no evidence that a huge swath of people suddenly became multilingual through the application. Why wasn’t there a phenomenon of learning based on the ease of access to this skill? Well, mainly because learning new skills is difficult. Most people lack the motivation to do so or find the learning process takes too much time.

I believe that if you tackle new skills with the right mindset, then you’ll master them faster. Trying to learn a new language with the lingering thought that it will be too hard will stop you from ever learning it at all. We should never dread hard work and equate it to pain. Focused time on something difficult will reap huge rewards in the long run. Therefore, you should try to keep a thought of the benefits with you in the difficult parts of your new career.

The process to learning any skill faster is two-fold. The first will come in identifying the toughest parts to learn and doing them first. This aligns itself with the productivity tool of the 80/20 rule, and I’ll get into how that works best. The second part involves hacking how you learn and exploiting how your brain absorbs information. Combining these two systems will create a powerhouse method for approaching new skills.

**The 80/20 Rule**

A popular reference with Tim Ferriss and entrepreneurial writers alike, the 80/20 rule comes from an Italian engineer and economist, Wilfredo Pareto. Actually, the mathematical rule itself is flawed, as frequently the numbers don’t always match the 80/20 split. However, the idea has proven applicable for many business solutions. Essentially, roughly 80% of your results will come from 20% of your work. This 20% is usually the most challenging and difficult part of the whole. In line with the philosophy of “eating that frog,” the 20% is what you prioritize.

Anything considered the 20% task load is characterized by taking the most time to learn or accomplish. In the case of a new language, you might be great at remembering vocabulary, but slow at conjugating verbs. Therefore, all of you attention should be focused first on mastering verb conjugation. Let’s say you’re learning how to write daily reports for a new position. You may find you it easy to analyze the data, but have trouble tracking deliverables. Again, focusing on tracking deliverables and mastering that skill will make the entire process faster to learn.

It’s not always the most pleasant route for learning skills, but brings the biggest rewards. Notably, this method will also make you a quick learner all together. Your brain will adapt to solving tough problems that you normally avoid and each skill thereafter will develop faster.
Hack Your Learning

Psychology in education studies out of CalTech, Harvard, Yale, and UCLA have focused on the different types of “learning styles” and how to distinguish them. Between all of their findings, one common conclusion emerges. If you teach a person based on their preferred learning style, they will learn faster. Researchers argue over exactly how many learning styles exist, some even counting up to 70. However, below are four main styles that have reoccurred since the beginning.

• Visual Learning: direct response to images, demonstrations, and spatial organizations.
• Auditory Learning: direct response to music, lectures, or audio direction.
• Reading/Writing Learning: direct response to text explanation or writing out analysis.
• Kinesthetic Learning: direct response to doing an activity or physically mimicking direction.

You might already have an idea based on this list as to what your learning style could be. However, you should know that researchers find adults often wrongly diagnose their own learning style based on misplaced conditioning in their education. It might be a good idea to take the time to find out for sure how you absorb information. There are online tests and questionnaires to help determine your specific style. You may also want to source trial and error by testing out alternate ways to learn different skills and discovering what works best.

For visual learners, the best response tends to be from detailed images. Projects plans and agendas can be drawn out in charts or maps to better understand the flow of work. You could watch video demonstrations of specific tasks. Simple office tools like dry erase boards or colored highlighters can heighten up a visual learner’s ability to retain information.

Auditory learners comprehend the most when listening to information. Technology has a number of gifts for auditory learners, from podcasts to audiobooks and even apps that will read through articles out loud. For meeting and team brainstorming, this might mean recording sessions on your phone to re-listen to later. Even recording your own voice and talking through problems could be useful to revisit and a great way to access the problem solving patterns of an auditory focused brain.

Reading/Writing learners should carry a notebook with them or make heavy use of the Notes app on their phone. With the increased access to information, the world is ready built for reading/writing learners. Picking up books or following blogs that apply to your work is a great resource, along with adding notes for reference. If this means stacks of notepads and loose papers in your desk drawer, embrace these materials as part of your skill improvement.

Kinesthetic learners will want to get their hands dirty. Often this means getting experience on the job and following someone who can already do the work, then copying the action. Kinesthetic learners should make an effort to offer help to coworkers, or volunteer for projects they may not know how to accomplish yet.
Depending on the skill being developed you could be a mixture of these learning styles. Wherein one style might work for learning a new program, but another style works better for retaining information from business meetings. Experiment with how you record information and practice skill building to keep your work at the highest quality. Once you have a grasp of the manner to which your brain will retain the most information, you can apply it to the 20% that you know will be the most difficult to learn. This formula provides the quickest way to go from no experience to excelling at anything.

**Become A Leader**

When you’re in your new job or starting fresh in an industry it’s going to be hard to imagine yourself as a leader right away. Alexandra Levit, business management author, relates that often new workers are “hesitant” and “feel that they don’t yet know enough to take on a leadership role and would rather take a few years to absorb the expertise of those around them.” This is a fair assessment of a brand new work environment, but becoming a leader doesn’t always correlate with time learning specific job skills.

Taking on leadership characteristics does not mean commanding and delegating work to others either. That’s what a boss is for, and those two terms are not mutually exclusive. A boss may not act like a leader and a leader does not necessarily have to be a boss. Being a leader often means providing encouragement and help to the team when it’s desperately needed. A leader is an employee who hears, “we should be doing something about this,” and responds with, “what can I help to do about this?” Sometimes this means taking on the hard work that everyone else is shirking or trying to solve problems that everyone else is afraid of. Leadership is more about shouldering the burden of a problem to ease others than it is about having others take care of problem.

James Altucher, venture capitalist and acclaimed writer, sat down for an interview with a famous “boss” of one particularly tough industry. Specifically, Rapper Rick Ross, who spent a good portion of his life running a highly dangerous and lucrative drug running business, that he eventually went to jail over. Criminal activity aside, Altucher did find some valuable advice on being an effective leader in Ross’s interview.

One facet was encouraging others who work with you to “be more successful than you.” Altucher writes that a great leader shows an interest in the success and learning of those around them, and tries to help in any way they can. Another fascinating rule of Ross’s strategy was absolute honesty with his partners. The trust built within his network was how he sourced dedication and hard work. Finally, Ross gave back to the community he lived in, even though he was ironically bringing more crime into it. It’s a complicated relationship, but Ross understood that the environment that enabled his business to flourish would need support in return.
Altucher obviously doesn’t approve of ventures into selling drugs, but uses this interview as an allegory to illustrate specific leadership skills. Caring about those you work with and the community around you will gain more benefit than working only for your own needs.

Seth Godin’s writing also supports this theory. In describing “the difference between management and leadership,” Godin emphasizes a leader’s interest in people over results. “Managers work to get their employees to do what they did yesterday, but a little faster and a little cheaper,” where leaders know the goals and long term intentions of those around them and give “those they lead the tools to make something happen.”

Gary Vaynerchuck describes his company, VaynerMedia, as “human based,” and expresses the importance of leading people based on “their own specific wants and needs.” Vaynerchuck further explains, “everyone is driven by different goals and aspirations,” which means that they need to be supported and led with these goals in mind. This type of leadership can bring the best results along with the most loyal employees. We know now that if someone is personally invested in the long-term success of a company, then their work becomes more valuable.

I’m referencing all of these big thinkers and notable leaders so that you can borrow their tactics. Even as a beginner to a position, using these strategies to deal with coworkers and department goals will signify you as a leader from the start.

If you notice that your own boss is mapping some of these strategies too, then all the better. Each company will have its own style for how it handles encouraging employee success. Start-ups are known for being laissez faire and allowing their employees to problem solve in experimental ways. If that’s the environment around you, then map it by pushing yourself and coworkers to try new and radical solutions. Be easy with mistakes from others, as this type of culture will see more failures.

Rather, corporate environments will be more strict in implementation. If your employers respond well to thoroughly structured plans, then emulate this and help others to perfect their own work at these standards.

**Focus and Direction**

Every single career will hit a plateau. Even space travel can get boring. Astronaut Scott Kelly once stated, “No matter how beautiful the Earth is, when you’re doing it for a year there is still the factor of trying to keep yourself engaged and interested.” As exciting as a new job can be eventually they’ll be a point where the new skills become old and the problems seem less challenging. When this becomes the case, then you are ready for the next step.

Think about your long term career goals you started with before you ever made this move or started a new venture. This should be the source of your focus and direction. The minutiae of your everyday and routines should fall in line with this distant aspiration. The moment you think, “I have to do another one of these projects” or “I have to write another one of these
emails,” just consider the thousands of baby steps needed to get where you really want. At one point in time you started with step one, so don’t be discouraged by step 10,000. It’s much closer.

The great part about this stage is the opportunity to pay back the dues you gathered in the climb. Here’s a chance to take on mentoring positions to anyone wanting to just start out and in need of advice. Maybe even passing along this book as a piece of structure and inspiration. Explore your network and find people that you can help out and offer up some positives, especially to those who might have helped you along the way.

**What’s next?**

At the end of a plateau is a change in altitude. For you, this means making a change and another positive forward move in your career. It’s time again to reassess, realign, and rebrand yourself. The profile and resume you built for the last step will need an update. Your network will need to be refreshed in preparation. You’ll need to gauge and catalog your skills, finding gaps where the next step might call for an element you haven’t learned yet. It might be time to go through all the examples of projects, accomplishments, and measured goals that you’ve surpassed.

An ear to the ground for promotions or lateral moves might be the simplest way to move forward. The road to the corner office isn’t going to be a straight line. The moves that you may have imagined years before making the first step might seem irrelevant in the face of your new reality. The mechanisms of planning are built into your habits already and the next move won’t be any less stressful or challenging than the last. Chances are you will be able to learn the new skills required faster than when you first started, and here is where the launch from position to position picks up speed.

The tools developed throughout this book will translate for each of your steps to the top. The verbiage in your cover letters, confidence in interviews, and access to contacts will become stronger over time, but the basics are the same. Great leaders and successful people are always striving to learn and become better. I’ve developed a way to train yourself and encourage focus throughout you career. You will move faster towards the goals you strive for, and find ways to hack your own work habits for the better.

Supercharging your career isn’t about one boost that gets to the best job at the time. There’s always room to learn, ask for help, and new challenges to conquer. This is about training your career lifestyle to serve you at every advancement.