

## 5 WAYS YOU CAN IMPROVE IN YOUR CAREER



**Summary:** Focus on customizing your professional development and ensure success by adopting these five tips.

When you type "customized" in a search engine, an entire list of secondary words populate for you to select from. However, "professional development" is not one of your options. It can be difficult to advance in your career if you struggle with implementing great advice that does not work well for you. Identify the best way to customize your professional development by adopting these five tips.

### 1. Embrace Technology

Are you always anxious about knowing what the newest technology is? Or, are you always anxious about having to use new technology? No matter where you fall on this spectrum, when it comes to advancing in your career, becoming an expert user with the technology at your workplace ensures both the leadership and clients trust your abilities. Once you have become an expert user, not only does your personal accuracy and productivity improve, but you are now in a great position to help others improve their skills as well. Volunteering to help others without being asked demonstrates maturity, motivation, and an investment in the organization's goals. Having excellent technology skills and an eagerness to help others is an effective way to gain positive attention and recognition. Be sure to add these skills to your resume, as well as discuss your actions and the successful outcomes in your next performance review, interview, or meeting with a potential client. If you struggle with technology, take a class, read online articles, or watch video tutorials to become more tech savvy.

### 2. Get Some Feedback

Asking the right people for feedback is a helpful way to identify what may be holding you back from advancing in your career. You want to be selective about who you request feedback from. Seek out professionals you frequently interact with, who you consider to be successful, and who communicate their observations in a productive and helpful way. Take notes during your conversation. This will be useful when you want to recall specifics that were discussed. If the feedback you receive causes you to feel stressed or upset, be sure not to respond defensively or try to explain yourself. Take time to quietly absorb, concentrate on writing your notes, and communicate positive verbals and non-verbals. When you have finished conversing, demonstrate what a professional you are and thank them for helping you. Once you have a few days to process and reflect on the feedback you received, start doing research on how to improve in the areas discussed. From your research, write a summarized note that reminds you what to focus on; tape the note to your monitor, or snap a photo of the note and use it as your phone background to ensure the reminder is visible.

### 3. Show Appreciation

Maintain an increased awareness for recognizing when someone has helped you. When someone has recently helped you, take a few minutes to send them a thank you message. Express to them how much you appreciate what they did to help you. For example, once you have a success story from the feedback you received, send the individual a thank you message and share the success you are now realizing from the help they provided. When possible, send a hand written thank you note. A hand written thank you is old fashioned, but it is something physical they can keep for a short time to remind them they made a small, but significant difference. People love to feel appreciated, and people are more likely to help you again in the future if they know you value their efforts. The more people you have helping you advance in your career, the faster you will achieve your goals.

### 4. Manage Procrastination

Depending on how you function, procrastination may be harmful or helpful. Identify if you should embrace procrastination, or if you should avoid it. You should embrace procrastination when you use it as a tool to jump start motivation and hyper-focus in order to meet a deadline. You should avoid procrastination if it paralyzes you and reduces your ability to meet a deadline. An excellent way to manage procrastination is to *not* clear your calendar. This sounds counter-intuitive, but you are actually more motivated to get started and finish a task when you know there is limited time on your schedule. If you clear a block of time to work on an assignment, you may end up convincing yourself that you have plenty of time to work on the assignment, resulting in further procrastination.

### 5. Identify Employer & Client Priorities

Being a perfectionist seems enticing, as you may think that providing your employer or client with the highest quality deliverable is the best way to give them what they want. However, being a perfectionist impacts productivity, can cause you to miss deadlines, and can leave you exhausted once the task is complete. If you can provide a deliverable that impresses people without it being perfect, you are still providing your employer or client with what they want. Instead of focusing on making the deliverable perfect, focus more on understanding their priorities. Keep your secret safe and do not point out things you would have done differently if you had perfected the deliverable. No one except you will ever know what the deliverable is lacking.

*What career advice was most helpful for you to improve in your career? Share what you learned about improving in your career in the comments below the article.*

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