

Strategic Breakthrough Session

Important The higher up the ladder you want to go the less technical knowledge and skills you will use. Management is about Strategy and Process which means you need to be thinking and functioning in a different space to the operational get-your-hands-dirty space.

Step One – Where are you now?

Step Two – Skills Audit

Step Three – Gap Analysis

Step Four – Personal development Plan

Before you get offended at your manager for overlooking you for that promotion or not supporting you when you asked to be included in some of the decisions that affect your team - you need to develop your foundations. This is a key step that most first line managers and midlevel managers do not spend enough time doing and it ends up taking you much longer to grow through the ranks.

Here are the key foundational bits that you need to be doing before you jump into a promotion position.

Remember

1. An organisation pays for a set of skills – **the person** holding those skills is **quite arbitrary**.
2. Organisations' typically **do not** invest in **planning and developing your career**- their focus is on **filling skills gaps** as and when these arise.
3. It's **your career** take responsibility for it-do not expect someone else to develop your career for you.

Is this you?

You wake up one morning to the realisation that you have been in the same position for the past four years [maybe longer]. It's been comfortable and the money is not bad. The hours are perhaps a little crappy but hey we can't have everything can we. Quite honestly you can do this job with your eyes closed and one hand tied behind your back. In actual fact you realise that if the truth be told you are beginning to feel the first tell-tale signs of boredom. Maybe you should think about studying something...but what? Maybe it's time to chat with the boss about taking on a bit more responsibility ... but what and will they be willing to pay for that... probably not ...but maybe you can do it for the experience Mmmm "I need to think about that one. They know you can do the job your performance review was above average and you got that much needed performance bonus so that shouldn't be a problem."

How many times has this scenario run through your head. Well here is an opportunity to do something about it.

STEP ONE – Where are you now?

- Are you ready to take on more responsibility and accountability?
- Has your manager indicated in a performance review that you are ready to move within 1-3 yrs.?
- Are you an identified successor?

- What is the next step up for you?
- Are you willing to leave the organisation you are currently at if there is no vacant promotion position available?

Before you whip yourself up into frenzy about how you can do that job better the person currently in the job or the predecessor who held that position...

Here are the key foundational bits that need to be in place before you do anything else:

Clarify your current skills

You need to know what your current skills are - not just in case some asks in an interview but for your own sanity. Knowing what you can do will help you stay on track when things start to get overwhelming.

Remember the higher up the management level you the less you depend on your hands –so those hard core technical skills that got you to where you are today are not going to help you too much if you don't supplement those with some HEAD SKILLS and HEART SKILLS.

Start with understanding exactly what it is you have.

Dust off your job description – you know the one you received when you were first appointed into your current position. This will help you to cluster your skills in accordance with your company's requirements.

List all the things you know and can do that relates to your current job. You will probably find that there are a few additional things that you know and can do which are not covered in that job description however if you did not know them you would not be as awesome at your job as you are. You may want to highlight these – you will need them later.

Here are some questions to help you out

- ✓ What do I know about the process involved in doing my job
- ✓ How do I know when something has gone wrong and how do I know what needs to be done to fix a problem/
- ✓ What can I do that other people in the department or company cannot do
- ✓ What does my job require of me over and above what I do in a standard work day?

Now list ALL your strengths and ALL your weaknesses.

Hot Tip: Be honest about your weaknesses – remember the bosses already know you so reframing a weakness as strength only indicates you are not open to acknowledging areas for improvement.

List the things you find most valuable to you as a person about doing your job.

List the things you find most frustrating about doing your job.

STEP TWO – Personal skills Audit

Determine whether you have the skills required to meet the requirements of a promotion position. This is called a Skills Audit – a snapshot of the knowledge and skills you currently have. This will take the guess work out of determining whether you are ready or not.

Answer the following questions

- What do I know about my current job? It helps if you imagine you are interviewing someone to replace you. What are the questions you would ask this person to determine if this person is able to do your job and if you would hire them to do so?
- What are my strengths?
- What are my weaknesses?

STEP TWO: SKILLS AUDIT

Now that your foundations are set, you know what you want and what you have to offer. You are ready to audit your skills against the requirements for that promotion position.

Get a copy of the job description of the position you have your eye on. Your HR department will happily share this with you.

This will outline what the Roles & Responsibilities are of the position.

It will specify:

What the qualifications requirements are as well as the experience needed.

Whether there are any requirements for local or international travel.

There is generally also a list of skills required that is set out.

It will also give you a good indication of the amount of “soft skills” that are required.

Hot Tip: Don’t be fooled by this. If you are not sure about exactly what things like “budget reporting” means find out especially if this is something you have never done or been exposed to.

It will also cover what the expectations are and the reporting structure.

It is important that you understand who your new boss will be. If the position reports to someone you do not get along with or with whom you have had a previous clash you may want to decide at this point whether you want to proceed with your application.

Remember: People leave managers not companies – so be very clear about whether or not you are willing and able to work with the new boss.

You can now proceed to unpack all the knowledge and skills required for the new job in the same way that you did with your current position.

STEP THREE - Gap Analysis

This is the gap between what you know, can do and understand about your current job compared to what you know, can do and understand about a promotion position you may have your eye.

So go ahead and get a copy of that new job description – It should cover [ask if it doesn’t]

- The expected competences required (know, can do, need to understand)
- The reporting structure
- The minimum requirements’ to qualify to apply for the new position

✓ Qualifications

✓ Experience

✓ Special needs – requirements' to travel, Relocation etc

Now that you know what the new position requirements' are you can compare these to what you currently have.

This is the crunch people - the moment of truth. This is the point where your bubble is either inflated or burst.

So...You now have two critical pieces of information in front of you.

The one is the skills set you currently have and the required skill set for a promotion position. Now you compare the two.

Remember: Supervising a group of 6-10 operators is different to managing a group of 2-4 Team Leaders the complexity and management style will vary. Most importantly the accountability stops at you.

The greater the overlap of skills between your two lists the more likely it is that your skills set matches what the company is looking for.

RED Hot Tip: You may not want to acknowledge this but it is critical that you keep in mind this is not about you it is about your skills set. Any company that has a vacant position has one priority. They have a gap in their skills capacity so they are looking to – **Fill the gap of missing skills.**

When you understand this concept you will realise that not getting a job or getting a job has got very little to do with you as an individual. It is ALL about what skill-set you can put on the table.

Step Four – Personal development Plan

If you have done the step above you should have in front of you a list of skills which you now know you need to either acquire or improve on. It is quite normal to have some mixed feelings about the process you have just completed. Take a breath...you've got this.

Now start clustering these skills into sets e.g. if your skills audit and your Gap analysis revealed that you need some training in excel and power-point presentation and Visio etc. This skill-set is referred to as Computer Literacy. You can now go on-line or to your training manager (if your company has such a specialist) and start the process of getting registered to do such programs.

Remember whether you choose to pay for this yourself or have your company pay for it ensure that it gets recorded on your personnel record.

Now that you know how your skills compare to what the company is looking for you can decide how you can go about filling the gaps in your own skills to better fit a next-level-up position.

Make a list of the skills that you are lacking for the next –level. You will find some of these can comfortably be clustered together. So if you find that you need Intermediate Excel and Intermediate Word and Basic Power point skills – these are all computer literacy skills and therefore can be clustered together.

You will also notice that your cluster of skills requirements very often can be solved by one service provider.

This is where your timing is going to need to be very carefully managed.

If you have a cluster of six skills that need to be filled you may not be able to complete all of these over a single year. Remember you still have a day-job and very likely a family.

On the other hand if you know that the position you are looking at is only going to become vacant in a years' time you have a small head start. So get moving.

If you find that you are not in a position to wait that long AND you already meet ALL the new skills requirements then you have a very different decision to make.

DONE!

I mean, not done *forever*... The thing with planning and developing your career is that there is ALWAYS more to do, but my hope is that this checklist got you started on the right foot with a solid foundation to move forward with. The key with this career development stuff is to NOT overthink everything. Action begets clarity which begets confidence which begets even bigger actions - which all beget results. But you have to actually DO the things to get the ball rolling!

I go through ALL of steps in depth in 5 weeks with my Design Your Career clients. It really can happen that quickly when you give yourself the time and focused attention that you deserve.