



Get recognised at work

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Many of my clients have found that getting recognised in the workplace can be difficult. In fact, it is a skill you need to learn. Especially if you were a straight A student and got great marks while you were in the education system. When you are a high performer in school or university or college, it is easy for everyone to see. You write exams, you submit assignments, and you get marks throughout the year and a final mark at the end of the year. Pretty much everyone knows who is doing well because in education, your marks are the indicator of your success. When it comes to being in the workplace it is not so obvious. And a lot of people who are used to being successful in the educational system struggle to understand why they are not moving ahead in their careers and wonder how they get to shine in the workplace.

Now often in the workplace there are marks. Many companies have a performance agreement with staff, and there is a mark at the end of the year which serves as your performance rating. And, also often serves to determine your salary increase and bonuses. However, the performance rating is usually always more subjective than an exam score, and a large part of getting a great performance rating comes down to what your manager and other senior managers in the organisation know about your work. In order to get recognised as a top performer in the workplace, below are some suggestions. I am going to give three main factors to consider.

1. Know what work is valued in the workplace.

This means you need to know what the strategy and objectives are for the company. If you do work that supports the company strategy and helps the business achieve its goals, then you will be rated as a great employee. If you are not in a senior position, then you need to know the goals of your department. If you help your department head achieve the department goals, you are on your way to being recognised as a valued employee and high performer. This means you need to find out what the company strategy and department goals are. And if you are not given them, which you probably won't be, then you ask. Asking in itself will draw attention of the good kind to yourself. Once you have asked your manager (or even another more senior manager) what the strategy and goals are then ask that person how you can, in your role, help achieve those goals. It is possible to spend a lot of time working really hard on things that don't really matter. So, in your job, make sure you know what outputs matter to the organisation.

2. Make sure senior people in the company know what you are doing.

Unlike exam results, you can be doing really well, and it is possible no one in the company knows what you are doing. Don't even assume your boss knows what you are doing. You need to communicate upwards the work you are doing. This means you need to build relationships. And build them at all levels. Having a strong network of the right people (influential people who are respected in the business) will make a big difference to your success in the company. Once you have your network, you need to talk about what you are doing. In the absence of exam marks, the only way people know you are doing a great job is if you talk about the work you do and the achievements you have been responsible for. You need to market yourself. Sometimes this is very difficult for people to do because they have been taught that this is arrogant. It is arrogant if you do it in a boastful, self-centred way or you lie about what you have done. But if you talk about something you and your team achieved, your contribution to it, and seek the opinions of others, you won't come across as arrogant and boastful. Communication, according to a lot of organisation surveys, is not usually good in an organisation. You want to be communicating and letting people know what is going on. And if you do it in the right way, which is informative, updating people on projects you work on, seeking their opinions and advice and how your work impacts them, you will be highly regarded in the workplace and your achievements will be known.

3. The third factor is time management

Often I only talk about the first two when I am working with clients. However, a reality is that time is limited. So, you need to prioritise what you spend your time on. Increasingly as the economy has become challenging people are being given more and more work to do as positions are not filled and retrenchments seem to continue unabated. In most cases people simply have too much to do in the workplace. Which is why you need to be smart about what work you do. While burnout is quite common, it is not something you want to experience. It is also not something which will help your career. While many companies are sympathetic to people experiencing burnout and give time off, there is always some concern in senior managers' minds if you succumb to burnout. If you cannot manage yourself, are you capable of being a great leader? Part of being able to lead is being able to manage yourself. And that means being able to manage your time and your health. If you want to get ahead in your career, then know what work to turn down. Get yourself onto the projects that will get you noticed and help you build skills that are important in your career and for the company. Don't take on everything and assume that is good for your career. If you are not good at saying "no", then take some assertiveness classes. Being the company slave is not going to help you get ahead at work.

A lot of people who have done well in formal education find it hard to shine in the workplace. For that matter, so do a lot of people who did not do well in formal education. Succeeding in the workplace requires a different set of skills, specific skills, that you need to learn and apply to move ahead. And these skills are not just academic or intellectual skills. Once you reach adulthood and move into the world of work, interpersonal skills, as well as personal skills such as self-awareness, self-reflection, confidence, and action-orientation become a crucial part of what it takes to succeed. The sooner you work on all your skills, your intellectual and your interpersonal skills, as well as personal growth, the better you will do in the workplace and your career.