

# Manage Your Career With a Definite Plan

**By: Rita B. Allen**

In this competitive marketplace, do you have a personal and professional development plan for managing your career? When is the last time you assessed and explored your skills, abilities, competencies, interests, priorities and values to assure they are in line with your professional and personal goals and objectives as well as the requirements for success within your field?

The economy is on the rise as is the demand for accomplished, results-driven professionals with a proven track record who can add value. Only you can manage your career so having a solid development plan for yourself with specific goals and objectives is the best way to start that process.

How do you create a personal and professional development plan?

- 1) Know your competencies, skills, strengths, weaknesses, interests and values. Assess and evaluate regularly. Be true to yourself!
- 2) Do your homework and stay current in your field. What skills are in demand and sought after? Where do you fall short? Identify areas to be refined and enhanced as well as steps to execute.
- 3) Be goal oriented. Establish short and long term goals. Keep a running list of your accomplishments. Where are the gaps preventing you from reaching these goals?
- 4) Prepare an action plan that will allow you to fill these gaps – both personally and professionally. Reach out to your network of peers, colleagues, managers, contacts and other resources to assist you.
- 5) Follow up and evaluate. Be disciplined and make yourself accountable to a specific timetable. Revisit regularly and stay on track. Evaluate frequently and make necessary adjustments and follow through.

As you start the process of creating your personal and professional development plans, here are some guidelines to take into consideration.

- Network, Network, Network!
- Set goals and re-evaluate regularly.
- Keep skills and competencies current.
- Be accomplishment-driven and results-oriented.
- Seek out mentors and trusted advisors.
- Confidence and positive attitude are essential!
- Always think big picture and outside the box.
- Education is very important.
- Establish, maintain and nurture long lasting relationships.
- Never burn any bridges.
- Practice professional etiquette.
- Remember to give back to your profession.
- Network, Network, Network!

You are the only one in charge of your career. Be pro-active, focused and driven to manage it effectively and manage it well. Take charge and you will see the rewards. Most important, find and enjoy the most fulfilling career that allows you to maximize your potential, development and success.

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