



TheRoadtoCEO.com

Charting Your Course to Higher Performance

The New Route to the Top

How to *Really* Get Ahead in Today's Organization

While most of us work hard to advance in our careers, a few savvy individuals seem to have a secret that moves them to the front of the promotion line. Regardless what happens in their companies or even in their industries, these rising stars move from one opportunity to another, eventually making their way to the top.

You might assume that people who get to the top fastest are more intelligent or naturally talented than everyone else. However, when you look closely at today's top business leaders, you find that few of them are smarter or more capable than you are.

So how can some people move rapidly up the career ladder, while others work just as hard, but achieve only mediocre results? And, more importantly, what can you do to join the ranks of these rising stars and accelerate your own climb to the top?

Times Have Changed

Years ago, if you had the right education, worked hard, and were committed to your company, your career success was practically guaranteed. And while everyone knows that the promise of lifetime employment in exchange for a lifetime of service doesn't exist any longer, the realities of a career in today's organization may surprise you.

In a Harvard Business Review study, researchers found a striking difference between the career paths of today's top executives and the careers of business leaders just a generation ago.



Dr. Robert Karlsberg & Dr. Jane Adler, are experts in leadership development and the psychology of business. As peak performance consultants they are sought after by executives and business leaders who want to accelerate their careers and maximize their business performance.

“The good news is, if you learn what you need to do, you can move up the career ladder more rapidly than ever before. You no longer need specific educational credentials, social networks, or tenure to be eligible for a top spot.”

They found that in today's companies top executives:

- are younger
- get to the executive ranks faster
- are less likely to have Ivy League or elite private school educations
- are more likely to move from one company to another over the course of their careers

The researchers also found that most companies no longer offer career paths, even for their most promising people.

So what does all of this mean to you?

The good news is, if you learn what you need to do, you can move up the career ladder faster than ever before. You don't need to have specific educational credentials, social networks, or "tenure" to be eligible for a top spot.

But there's also bad news...

With the increased speed of advancement of today's business leaders, any delays in your career can significantly damage your chances of ever reaching the top. In today's leaner, flatter organization, learning what you need to know to move up quickly can mean the difference between achieving a top position and being forced into premature retirement.

So how can you effectively navigate this new route to the top?

No matter what company or industry you're in, adopting the habits of today's top performers can rapidly put you on the fast-track.

Create Your Own Path

When it comes to planning your career, don't assume that your organization has a set track you need to follow, or that HR or personnel has a blueprint for your future. They don't.

Successful executives take responsibility for charting their own futures and developing the skills they need to move up. Rather than waiting to be told what to do, they seek out opportunity and advancement.

Early in his career, Jack Welch decided that General Electric's strict bureaucracy didn't allow him the freedom to develop his potential. He felt stifled in his work and unappreciated for his efforts. He had big goals for his career and he wanted an opportunity to achieve them.

Fortunately for G.E., Welch's boss and mentor, Reuben Gutoff recognized his potential. As Welch prepared to move to another company, Gutoff intervened and convinced him to stay, promising Welch the growth opportunities he wanted. Welch took advantage of every opportunity to develop and exhibit his leadership skills, and moved swiftly through G.E.'s executive ranks.

Years later, another G.E. executive charted his own career with similar plans to reach the top. But when Robert Nardelli (now the retired CEO of Home Depot) needed a general management job to prove his ability and keep his career on the fast-track, he found no opportunities available at G.E.

Instead of staying put and hoping for the best, Nardelli picked up and moved to Wisconsin-based industrial equipment maker Case. After spending the

The New Realities of Today's Organization

- The average life of a company is shorter than the expected life of your career
- In today's flatter organizations you'll need to assume greater responsibility, faster
- Fewer than 50% of today's executives spend their careers in only one company
- Only 10% of today's CEOs have Ivy League educations
- Today's senior executives are younger and get to the top faster than they did just a generation ago
- Today any delays in your career advancement can significantly decrease your chances of getting to the top

*The New Road to the Top, Peter Cappelli & Monica Hamori, Harvard Business Review (Research Report) Vol 83:1 www.hbr.org

next three years running their worldwide parts and construction divisions, Nardelli moved back to G.E., to head the company's Canadian appliance business. His calculated risk (and great results in each job) identified him as someone to watch and put him solidly on a CEO track.

Today, more than ever before, you need to take control of your career. You need confidence to stretch yourself and go after ambitious and challenging goals. You must determine what you need in order to get to the next level in your career, and then take the initiative to get these skills. Base your career decisions **not** on what's the most *comfortable* next step, but on the step that's likely to take you in the direction you want to go.

Prepare Yourself For Advancement

In your first job, your performance is all about following directives and getting your assigned tasks done. You need to be technically competent in your specific field.

As you advance, your success depends less and less on technical knowledge, and more on subtle psychological skills of:

- Managing yourself for peak performance
- Influencing and getting top performance from others
- Making effective decisions
- Projecting the image of a capable leader

Yesterday's executives used to learn these skills through experience, as they moved slowly from one management position to the next. But today, as companies reduce management layers, you need to make greater jumps in leadership and responsibility with each promotion. There's no time to gradually absorb the critical skills you need to succeed as a new leader.

If your company can't or won't offer you the opportunities you need to develop these important

skills, don't let that hold you back. Today's top performers at all levels of the corporate ladder use coaches to help them perform at their peak, communicate more effectively, and make better decisions about everything from career development to business strategy.

Don't assume that you can wait to start learning these leadership competencies until **after** you reach a certain position. With many capable candidates competing for fewer slots at each level, the sooner you can learn these skills, the better.

Take responsibility for your own career development. Get coaching. Enroll in leadership development programs. Seek a professional mentor. The time to start developing your leadership ability is now!

Focus On Performance

In the past, senior executives made it to the top by following one functional path. Marketing, finance, or consulting were typical tracks to the executive suite. But today rising stars come from a variety of backgrounds and virtually every field.

Why?

Today's company focuses almost exclusively on how each person serves the needs of the business. In other words, you can sum up what every organization wants from its people in one word -- PERFORMANCE.

Today, your career advancement is based on what you can do for your company. And your future potential is judged not by your education or connections, but by your past performance and its impact on the bottom-line.

David Lorenzo began his career in the hospitality industry as a hotel bellman. He rose rapidly through the ranks, becoming a general manager by the age of 30 and, ultimately, Vice President, running ExecuStay, Marriott's corporate housing division. His secret? A focus on bottom-line performance and continual improvement.

According to Lorenzo he always focused on how he could best serve the needs of the company and increase his value.

For example, while managing ExecuStay he created a separate cleaning service to increase revenue. Even as General Manager, Lorenzo would help deliver linens if a driver was sick, and regularly visited apartments to make sure they were up to the highest standards. In every decision and every action, his goal was to add value in the eyes of the people who mattered. You can do the same.

Today's top executives continuously analyze their actions and results to avoid confusing activity with productivity. To develop this habit, regularly answer these questions:

- What has your overall contribution to the company been worth to this point?
- How much revenue have you brought into the firm? How much money have you saved the company?
- How can you best use your time and talents, right now, to create value for your boss and company?
- What needs does the company have that are not being met? How can **you** meet these needs?
- What problems do people complain about? What can **you** do to solve these problems?

Many people try to increase their visibility and value by *talking* about what they can do. "First promote me or give me a raise," they say, "then you'll see what I can do for the company."

But this attitude just doesn't work in today's environment. Today you get promoted because you're worth more than you're *already* getting.

To stand out from the crowd, impact the bottom line. Focus on activities that make or save your company money or benefit your boss directly. Work on projects that are visible or important to senior execu-

tives. Find out where the big problems and tough issues are. Brainstorm solutions, write proposals and share your ideas. Find something that no one else in your company is doing well, and add it to your responsibilities. You'll easily distinguish yourself by proving your abilities with actions, over and over again.

Stand Out From the Crowd

Everyone knows that, to stand out from the crowd, you need to create your own "brand." You need to develop a unique identity that sets you apart from everyone else. But the point is not to develop just any brand, but to identify your strengths and then make a connection between what you do best and bottom-line results for your company.

Identifying what you do best may be difficult, but it's critical. Why? Because in today's organization, you advance for one reason. You bring clear benefits to your company or your immediate boss.

Some people will tell you that to advance most rapidly, you need to identify your weaknesses, then work to correct them. However, understanding what your strengths are and what you bring to the table, then working to maximize those strengths, is a far more effective way to position yourself for promotion.

Anne Mulcahy, who started her career selling copiers, rose through the ranks of Xerox on the strength of her dedication to service and her people skills. She branded herself as someone who was always willing to take on the toughest tasks and turn them into business successes.

Despite her lack of a business degree or any experience in finance — typical requirements for company leaders — Mulcahy's track record of performance led her rapidly into the management ranks and eventually earned her a promotion to CEO. Unafraid to admit what she didn't know, Mulcahy asked one of her financial executives to tutor her, relying on him for critical information that she needed to keep the company afloat.

By focusing on her strengths, and letting *others* fill in the gaps of her weaknesses, Mulcahy rescued Xerox from near bankruptcy and now ranks near the top of the list of the world's most powerful women.

You can rapidly accelerate your career by identifying what you do best, then using those talents to add significant value for your boss and your company. Start by answering these questions:

- What are the real benefits you offer your boss or your company?
- What is the one thing that you do for the company that makes you unique?
- What makes you a better candidate for promotion than others?
- What comes easily to you that seems to give others more difficulty?
- What is the major reason why others would want you on their team?

There's a lot more to determining how you work best and how you can maximize your talents. However, answering these questions will give you a good start. Entire books, seminars and training programs are devoted to helping people answer these questions. In fact, one of the major reasons senior executives and highly successful entrepreneurs hire coaches is to have someone help them objectively determine what they do best, so that they can maximize these talents for even higher

levels of performance.

Identifying your unique advantages is based on the same principle that companies use to stand out from their competitors. Companies determine their "Unique Selling Proposition," then use this "USP" to distinguish themselves in the marketplace.

Identifying your "USP" helps you stand out from the crowd. Once you have clearly identified what you do best and the unique advantages you can bring to your company, you'll find it easier to distinguish yourself from competitors. You can seek opportunities that highlight your abilities. Persistently seeking opportunities that demonstrate your strengths will serve as a springboard to future opportunities and even greater achievement.

Learn to Work Smarter

Today's fast-paced business environment and global marketplace offer unprecedented opportunity for you to accelerate your career and rapidly advance to leadership. The key to success is not necessarily to work harder, *but to learn what you need to know to work smarter.*

When it comes to your career, it's essential that you stay in the driver's seat, and maintain a laser-focus on results, both for yourself and for your company. Regardless what the economy may

- Take responsibility for your own career development
- Create a plan to achieve your career goals
- Focus on creating value for your boss, company and customers
- Dollarize your contributions
- Stand out from the crowd by building on your greatest strengths
- Don't wait for your company to tell you how to advance
- Learn how to influence others
- Project the image of a leader

hold or what others may tell you, the world always makes room for those who know where they're going and who maintain the focus and persistence that they need to get there.



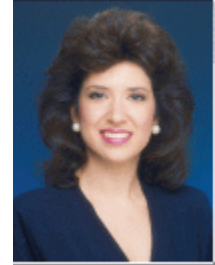
If you're a business professional who wants to advance rapidly, the skills and strategies in our acclaimed career development manual, [How to Become a Rising Star in Your Career in 60 Days or Less](#), can help you position yourself as a rising star in your company virtually overnight. These skills and strategies can help you perform better, earn more, and get promoted faster. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

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Meet Dr. Robert Karlsberg & Dr. Jane Adler...



Dr. Robert Karlsberg & Dr. Jane Adler are two of North America's top mentors to high-achieving executives and business leaders. Over the past 23 years they have worked with senior executives and business leaders in virtually every field, helping them use the Principles of Expert Performance to optimize business results.

Through their publications, radio and TV appearances, and group presentations they have helped countless executives and entrepreneurs accelerate their careers and improve the performance of their businesses.

Dr. Karlsberg & Dr. Adler are authors of *How to Become a Rising Star in Your Career in 60 Days or Less*. They founded TheRoadtoCEO.com to provide you with proven Expert Performance strategies and time-tested leadership principles, so that, regardless where you are in your career or business, you will be empowered to achieve your full potential.

For more strategies and tips on how to accelerate your career and increase your business results, as well as information on courses and coaching programs for executives and business leaders, visit:

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