

# Ten Steps for Early Career Success

By Raymond Gerson

You will soon graduate and begin your professional career. Naturally, you want to experience career success and fulfillment. What follows are ten steps which will help you get your career off to a great start. These strategies and principles will also help you to be successful throughout your career and to make a significant contribution.

## **1. Know your talents and skills.**

You will be most effective in a career which uses your best and most enjoyable abilities. How can you discover your talents and skills? Look for them in your favorite achievements, no matter how small the accomplishments.

You can also find clues to your talents by analyzing things you love to do, love to learn, and even love to talk about. Consider favorite aspects of past jobs, internships, and volunteer work. If you enjoyed an aspect of a job, it is likely that you were using your favorite talents and skills.

Look at activities you love so much that time quickly slips away. Some of your talents were probably involved in those activities. Is there anything you've done in school, leisure, or work that seemed almost effortless? You will probably discover that some of your best talents played a part in those activities.

Your talents, combined with a genuine regard for yourself and others, is a potentially powerful resource for making a great contribution.

## **2. Seek a job you feel passionate about.**

How can you make a great contribution if you feel lukewarm or indifferent about your job or work purpose? It would be very difficult if not impossible to do so.

Where can you discover your passion? Ask yourself the following questions. What problems do you see in the world that you want to solve, resolve, or positively impact? What societal needs do you want to fill? What dreams or hopes of others would you like to make come true?

Choose a mission or work purpose that moves you. When you use your best talents for a purpose that fulfills you, how can you fail? You will be able to make a significant and positive difference.

**3. Determine the types of jobs and companies that address the problems and needs you've identified.**

Use public, school, and career libraries to research and identify employers and opportunities.

Conduct information interviews with people—including hiring managers—in fields of work that interest you. Join professional associations that allow you to meet and network with people in your career field. Contact employers for their brochures and company information.

**4. Find a mentor who will provide guidance and motivation.**

Seek mentors in your field of work and outside of your profession. Yes, you can have several different mentors. Choose mentors who are inspiring examples of the kind of person you aspire to be. Simply ask them to be your mentors. Most will be flattered and eager to help you.

Where to find mentors? Look at your place of business, professional associations, church, and among family and friends. Ask others for recommendations. Napoleon Hill, author of *Think and Grow Rich*, spoke of the advantages of forming a “mastermind alliance.” This is a group of people with varied skills who can help you achieve your goals. You can form a brain trust of people who support you and your dreams.

**5. Study, read, and learn everything you can about your job and career field.**

Take advantage of company training programs and local continuing education classes. If you read one book a week in your field of work, that will be over fifty books in a year. This will set you apart from your competition and you will be on your way to becoming an expert in your field. You can also listen to books on tape when you're too busy to read.

**6. Commit yourself to doing a great job.**

Be willing to go the extra mile. Work hard and show your employer that you are dedicated to your job. Be a dependable employee who can be counted on.

Become known as a person of high character and integrity. A good reputation takes time to build, but can be destroyed overnight. Establish an excellent reputation both as person and professional. It will follow you wherever you go and will bring much success and happiness.

### **7. Take excellent care of your physical and mental health.**

Maintain your vitality by eating healthy foods, exercising, and getting proper rest. Balance your life with healthy and enjoyable recreational activities, time with family and friends, and a spiritual life that provides inner strength.

### **8. Avoid drugs and go easy on alcohol.**

You need a clear mind with an ability to focus your attention on the task at hand, to be successful. No one can achieve greatness in sports, business, or any endeavor without the ability to concentrate. Drugs and alcohol scatter and weaken the mind. A clear mind produces clarity of thought which results in positive actions. Positive actions will bring you success.

There are many visualization, meditation, and biofeedback techniques that can increase your power of concentration.

### **9. Stay positive, motivated, and inspired.**

You may encounter prejudice from certain people and many other obstacles in the workplace. Avoid negative people and events which drag you down, as much as you can. It is important to learn to get along with others who have different values and who see life differently than you do. There is great diversity in today's workplace which demands adaptability and the ability to work as a team member.

Read inspiring biographies of others who overcame obstacles to success. Listen to tapes that motivate and uplift you.

### **10. Build a portfolio of your accomplishments.**

Before leaving any job or position, request a letter of recommendation from your supervisors. Keep all of your letters and performance evaluations. These letters and evaluations should become part of a portfolio that you are building. Include articles by and about you and any example of performance excellence. Take your portfolio to job interviews and present it when you are being considered for promotions.

You are moving closer to your graduation date. You and your family made sacrifices and worked hard to get you to this level of achievement. You will soon start your professional career. A new beginning awaits you. If you apply the ten steps in this article, you will increase the odds of having a fulfilling career and life.

Best wishes for making your dreams come true.

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Raymond Gerson has a masters in psychology and over forty years experience teaching personal and career development. Career counselor, job placement specialist, trainer, and former owner of an executive search business, he teaches college success strategy courses. He is the author of five books, including Create the Life You Want. Two of his e-books, How to Create the Job You Want and Effective Job Search Strategies are available for free at <http://www.raymondgerson.com> along with numerous articles on success and study skill strategies.