

Staying relevant in your career

In an increasingly competitive employment market, staying relevant is no longer an option but a necessity. Gone are the days of 'deadwoods' or workers who simply go through the motions of the job. These days, employers need and look for workers who can constantly add value to the organisation.

But what should workers do in order to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world of work?

According to Ms Lynne Ng, Country Manager of Singapore and Malaysia, staying relevant in the workplace demands planning and re-inventing of oneself.

Indeed, staying relevant should start even before an individual enters the job market. "At Adecco, we often meet experienced workers, including professionals, who spend years doing something that they do not enjoy. This is a shame," says Ms Ng. "The way to remain relevant is finding a job that you are passionate about. If you love what you do, you will automatically want to improve your skills and knowledge constantly. Staying relevant will not be a chore but a natural progression."

Before entering the job market

If you are an undergraduate, Ms Ng advises that you do some soul-searching and identify your areas of interest before embarking on a job hunt. What did you enjoy most while in school? Which subjects and projects were you particularly passionate about? Think about your vacation jobs or internship and pick out specific experiences that you found most inspiring. When you have all this information on hand, you will be better prepared to pick a job that you will enjoy. This should be a job where issues or problems will challenge you instead of get you down.

The initial years

The first few years on the job are important for establishing yourself. Ms Ng advises that young working adults expose themselves to do as much as possible during these crucial years. This will enable them to decide the areas in which they can truly shine. "The more you do, the sooner you can find your niche and establish yourself in it," Ms Ng explains.

Re-evaluate yourself

As you progress in your career, always take an honest look at your performance and quality of work. Are they on track with what the organisation expects of you? Evaluate your competence and skills. Are they in line with what is required in the market? If not, determine how you can improve. Use your performance appraisal to direct you. Speak to your boss and regularly ask if what you do and what you know is in sync with the department and company goals.

Continuous learning

Staying relevant involves having up-to-date technical skills. Make sure that you are competent in the new skills that are required in your job. Keep abreast of new technology available by reading widely. Make skills upgrading a priority - this means accepting lifelong learning as a principle. Take classes online, pursue your degree or attend seminars or conferences that are relevant to your job or the one that you want. Pick a course that will complement your current qualifications; for example, if you hold an Engineering degree, a post-graduate qualification in Management, Sales or Business will beef up your knowledge base, making you a well-rounded professional.

Toughen up your soft skills

Improving on soft skills or acquiring new ones is essential to stay relevant on the job. In order to move up the organisation's value chain, you need to have skills that set you apart from others. Soft skills that are sought after include those in leadership, project management, people management, communication and public-speaking.

Get promoted

A key step towards staying relevant is to get promoted. Clinching a promotion is testimony that the organisation recognises your contribution and potential. Getting a promotion is not easy, though. It requires diligence, relevant knowledge and skills, a firm understanding of the business and strategic positioning of oneself. Ms Ng suggests the following:

- Think of new ways to add value. What else can you do to add depth to your current role? Can you take on greater responsibilities? Can you volunteer for a project that no one else has the courage to take up?
- Create a position for yourself. Think about the role that you want to grow into. At your next appraisal, ask your boss what it would take for you to move up to that position; after which, work hard to mould yourself to fill that role.
- Be the expert whom they can turn to for help. Equip yourself with industry knowledge and a strong understanding of the field that you are in. Build your credibility as the person whom your co-workers and bosses can go to for expert knowledge and insights

Move on

Stuck in a rut with no room for a promotion? Consider moving to another job but always make a calculated career move. Before deciding to resign, be certain that there is absolutely no room for further growth within your current company. Ensure that your new job offers you greater responsibilities in the area of your interest and that it will add value to your career profile.