



How to fast track your career

by Clare Johnston

Building the foundations of fast tracking

Focus on the here and now – ensure you perform consistently well in your current role and always aim to go beyond the call of duty and exceed expectations. Once you have built a strong reputation for delivery, identify your personal long-term career objectives. Think about how you can best achieve them in incremental steps. This will include assessing the types of roles to take, the best companies to work in and the ideal times for moving between jobs. You must take ownership of your own agenda. For example, ensure you receive the training you require for your own personal development and that you are given opportunities that will offer you early responsibility, the chance to shine and have maximum visibility within the company. Keep up to date with the market and build up a strong personal network. The key point, however, is you are only as good as your last job. Therefore focus on excelling in your current position – real talent will always be identified.

Key skills of a fast tracker

To be a successful 'fast tracker' you need to be a self-starter – someone who will always look for opportunities, seize them and exploit them to their full potential. You need to be results-oriented and driven by a desire to excel. Simple, yet often overlooked, is having the ability to listen – whether it be to colleagues, clients, mentors or subordinates, always be receptive and open-minded. Possessing an appetite for learning and challenging the norm, coupled with the ability to constantly analyse and apply that knowledge is vital. Furthermore, effective communication and presentation will allow you to not only build strong working relationships but also to ensure those in influential positions recognise your personal contribution and that you are duly rewarded.

To fast track your career you need to exhibit determination, humility, honesty, empathy and always deliver a high quality performance in every role.

The importance of a coach or mentor

Whilst a 'fast tracker' is often self-confident and ambitious by nature, it is always advisable to have a personal contact with which you can share ideas and seek advice. It is possible that person may have experience in the industry or type of career in which you wish to fast track. Not only will they be able to forewarn you of potential pitfalls, they will have their own network of useful contacts to harness. They will also have the ability to see the bigger picture and offer impartial advice. Regardless of how senior you are, someone else will have had similar experiences from which you can learn. A good mentor is invaluable.

The importance of networking

Don't be an island – having a strong network of people in relevant industries and in a diverse range of companies, roles and levels is essential. You need to be in a position from where you can hear about opportunities and leverage contacts to seize them. Whilst talent speaks for itself, the old cliché still has value: it's not what you know, it's who you know.

Assessing your progress

Benchmarking your career progression against your peer group is a good method of assessing whether you are fast tracking. Look to those with whom you went to university, those you work with and also those more senior to you in the organisation. Set regular career development objectives and evaluate whether you have achieved these and analyse the reasons for doing so. Talk to headhunters, recruitment companies, and career advisors to gain industry comparisons and an impartial opinion on your personal development.

Do and don'ts of fast-tracking

Do work hard, exceed expectations, seize every opportunity, be open-minded and receptive to ideas, constantly reassess your approach and seek better ways of working.

Do talk to people, seek career advice, network and monitor the market.

Don't fast track at the expense of other people – it will come back to haunt you. Build strong peer relationships and aim to let the quality of your work speak for itself without comparing it to or downplaying colleagues.

Don't focus too much on the long-term and ignore the here and now. You must ensure you get the most out of every role and experience, as they are all building blocks for the future.

Top tips

- Consistently match or exceed expectations in every job
- Ensure you are given the recognition you deserve and by the right people
- Be proactive in seeking additional responsibility or new opportunities
- Build strong relationships and constantly network with those in your industry



Clare Johnston

BYT

0207 313 2563

cj@byt.com

BYT specialises in tracking
and recruiting commercial high flyers,
find out more at www.byt.com