2014 Career Resolutions

Now is the time to make the decisions that ensure you are living up to your own standards.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT YOUR CAREER GOALS and resolutions for 2014? This is an excellent time of year for renewed hope by reflecting on the past year, learning from it and planning to make the new year an even better one. A wise person once said, “A holiday gives one a chance to look backward and forward, to reset oneself by an inner compass” (quote by May Sarton from the book, Everyday Greatness by Stephen R. Covey).

This article doesn’t focus on conventional goals such as increasing sales by 10 percent, closing a large account, commercializing a new product, solving a problem with a large customer, or re-organizing your computer files. Rather, it focuses on goals that are more intangible and harder to measure but ones that should enhance your career noticeably on a continual basis.

Perhaps this year an effective approach to New Year’s resolutions is to work from the inside out by initiating changes and improvements in ourselves in order to stimulate progress toward our end goals. An occasional reality check on ourselves tells us how well we are living up to our own standards.

Following are my Top Ten career resolutions for 2014, with emphasis on interpersonal relationships and the journey itself, not end results. I suggest that you pick one or two of these resolutions to focus on during the coming year, while at the same time making minor adjustments in other areas.
[1.] BALANCE
Are you satisfied with the amount of time you are spending weekly at work and at home? There is no magic formula that works for everyone regarding work-life balance. To achieve career satisfaction, figure out what works best for you, whether it's working 40, 50 or 60 hours per week.

One great approach is to develop a pie chart with desired amounts of weekly time devoted to (a.) work, (b.) family, (c.) self/down-time and (d.) other interests and obligations and then evaluate how your current time spent measures up. Sometimes we find ourselves on a treadmill as we neglect parts of our lives. It is critical to optimize our work-life balance in order to become a more motivated and productive employee.

[2.] COMMITMENT
What is your level of focus and dedication at your job, and are you committed to performing at a high level? We have all heard the saying, anything worth doing is worth doing well. Be known as the type of person who maintains a good work ethic and strong motivation to succeed, even if you are dissatisfied with your current employer. The most desirable employees are ones who persevere through rough times, are always reaching for their fullest potential and maintain allegiance to their employer until officially departing.

[3.] COMMUNICATION
Do you obtain the feedback and information from management necessary to do your job? Are you providing management, co-workers and subordinates with timely feedback and information they need to work with you effectively? Schedule meetings as necessary to improve communication flow. Regular communication is the key to critical information exchange, idea creation, keeping projects on track and avoiding misunderstandings.

[4.] TEAMWORK
Have you been encouraging common vision and teamwork? Take credit humbly for your own work but stress team efforts. Give credit to team members for their work and accomplishments. Be careful about emphasizing your own agenda within a team environment.

[5.] RECOGNITION
Have you taken steps to recognize those in your company and your industry who have boosted your career in some way? Show gratitude and try to return the favor to industry colleagues who have supported your career goals. They are likely to help again if their efforts are sincerely appreciated. Nobody makes it to the top without assistance from others.

[6.] ATTITUDE
Has your recent attitude at work been positive, responsible, flexible and proactive? Your industry reputation could suffer significant damage if your attitude slips. Companies favor hiring people with the best attitudes, and employees prefer working alongside co-workers with great attitudes.

[7.] INTERPERSONAL
Have you been able to move beyond interpersonal and political issues to stay motivated and be productive? The point is to move forward, not get caught up in politics and not let side issues take time away from productivity. Forgive co-workers or management who have affected you negatively, especially if there was no harm intended.

[8.] MENTORING
Have you recently taken anybody at your company or in your industry under your wing by sharing your knowledge and experience in order to benefit their career? Mentoring will quickly gain you a reputation as somebody who is a team player and who is interested in helping the company or the industry as a whole.

[9.] VOLUNTEERING
Have you been giving something back by volunteering time and talents within your company or industry? Volunteering is an excellent way to build relationships, network with peers, influence policy and strategy, learn new skills, contribute knowledge and talents, bolster your resume, gain visibility and build your industry reputation.

[10.] PURPOSE
Will your current career path and recent successes leave behind the kind of legacy you desire? Are you actively managing your career or simply coasting along on the most obvious or expected path? Think seriously about how you want to be remembered after you retire and examine the types of accomplishments you should be striving for.

By taking action on your career resolutions, you should improve your relationship and growth potential with your current employer. If your employer lacks the right future for you, your resolutions will at least boost your overall career status and increase your chances of finding a better opportunity with another company.

When you periodically reset your internal compass, you will likely enjoy a more successful and meaningful career and be viewed as a great employee, manager, subordinate, peer, co-worker, colleague and/or friend.

I would like to wish all TLT readers and STLE colleagues a happy, healthy and prosperous 2014!

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