



Career Management Column as published in Leadership and Management Books, L&MB - [Rita Balian Allen](#), Author of *Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself*

“Eight Ways to Thrive in 2016 ”

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Happy 2016!! We have all kicked off a new year and started to build momentum for the months ahead. As we move forward, it's a good time to step back and be very deliberate and mindful of our approach. Creating a plan for ourselves, personally and professionally is essential for managing a successful career and life. There will always be situations, circumstances and events that we cannot predict or control, however, we can empower ourselves with a plan that enables us to manage through this journey including the peaks and valleys. Keeping an open mind, being flexible and embracing all that comes our way can be quite exciting and lead to unexpected growth and opportunities.

Ultimately, we all want to thrive in life and career and set a strong foundation for success. Everyone's definition of success will and should vary and can be quite different. There is no one-size-fits-all picture of success. What is your definition and do you ensure you create and follow your path to success? Although we will all have a different vision and plan for achieving that vision, there are commonalities that will help us all thrive. The following includes some of those commonalities:

Eight Ways to Thrive in 2016

1) Optimism - stay positive and be happy; always have a positive and optimistic outlook; be thankful and grateful; make a choice to be happy every day, control self talk and exhibit

behaviors that are aligned with positive thinking and an optimistic attitude; manage and nurture your mind, body and spirit setting a strong foundation for positivity and happiness; our ability to embrace change in addition to on-going expectations and demands will require us to maintain a positive attitude and outlook even during adversity; and when we do so, we are able to uncover different approaches, tap into unfound potential in ourselves and others, as well as manage stress effectively; positive and optimistic people leave strong and lasting impressions, they get promoted and advance in their careers consistently growing and developing, not only are they content and fulfilled, they are moving forward and successful.

2) Self Awareness - continuously assess and inventory your skills, strengths, weaknesses, needs, values, priorities, motivations, interests, aspirations and goals; identify your differentiators, define your personal brand, continuously build it, effectively articulate it and enhance it; know your value-add, your worth, what you have to offer; conduct personal due diligence and self-exploration on a regular basis; ask yourself the hard questions and be reflective to uncover your answers, know yourself well, build self awareness and inner strength.

3) Leverage Strengths - clarify your true talents and continue to build upon them; we will yield better results if we leverage our talents and capitalize on the areas that we excel, emphasize and celebrate talents; embrace talents, invest your energy in leveraging your strengths in everything you do to further develop them even as you push in different ways and work on areas of development, build upon a foundation of strength rather than against weaknesses.

4) Goal-Oriented - know what you want, have a vision for your career and specific goals you aspire to achieve in realizing that vision; determine both short and long term goals along with potential obstacles and an execution strategy that creates a road map to get there; establish strategic plan for yourself...and then remain flexible and open to unexpected opportunities that may come your way; continually follow up to review, evaluate and adjust goals, if needed.

5) Push out of your Comfort Zone - get comfortable being uncomfortable; the best learning experiences occur when we push out of our comfort zone to explore new options, behaviors, approaches and/or opportunities; managing our careers requires on-going growth, development and learning; challenging ourselves requires us to push in new directions and gain a variety of experiences within different situations which enable us to uncover unrealized potential, acquire new skills, competencies and connections; embrace the possibility of making mistakes which is inevitable and shouldn't hold us back from trying.

6) Support System - surround yourself with a strong support system of people you admire, trust and respect, both personally and professionally; proactively establish, build and nurture these long lasting relationships; ask for and be open to honest and insightful feedback and advice; be sure to include mentors, advisors, friends, family, managers, leaders, sponsors,

champions, professors and other colleagues who you will reach out to support and will do the same for you; be of service to others without expecting anything in return and don't wait for them to ask for help; practice professional networking etiquette and leave positive impressions.

7) Focus - finding focus can be the differentiator between effectiveness and ineffectiveness; assignments, responsibilities and projects have different timelines and being able to prioritize what needs your full attention today, then distinguishing the big items from the smaller items can help determine how much time you need to dedicate to each on a daily basis; focus your energies on the right things at the right time so as to maximize your productivity, performance and effectiveness; know when to say yes, no or not now; ask for assistance when necessary and own only what is essential for you to own; be accountable to yourself and others.

8) Fun - keep it all in perspective; life and work can be serious, challenging and demanding; know the things that bring you joy, inspire your creative and fun side, and be sure to practice those things on a regular basis; smile and laugh often, ignite fun in others too; take care of yourself emotionally, physically and mentally in order to truly enjoy every day to its fullest; find your passion and allow yourself to experience the things that make you whole both professionally and personally; and finally, be sure to celebrate and appreciate all your blessings.

Here's to a fabulous 2016 for all us - let's practice these eight ways to thrive in the next twelve months and beyond! Enjoy the journey!

Ask Rita: Do you have a career question and/or a career story to share? Email your questions or stories to rita@ritaballenassociates.com

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the newly released book, "*Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment*". Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal .