

HUFFPOST BUSINESS

10 Essential Tips to 'Own Your Career'

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Do you 'own your career'? The most qualified, equipped and motivated person to manage your career is *YOU!* You are the best person to determine your value-add and aspirations and to work towards achieving them. It is up to each of us to be the lead architect in planning and managing our careers. Yes, we want to empower ourselves to 'own our career'. While we cannot predict or control what happens around us, we can position ourselves to be ready and able to react to all situations we encounter.

It takes time, effort, due diligence and discipline to strategize and execute our plan. Keeping an open mind to unexpected possibilities is a must. Sometimes our journey takes us down different and exciting paths not planned for and we want to remain flexible to embracing them. These options may open up opportunities that uncover new and unrealized talents and push us in many new directions. Stay open and confident to taking risks when appropriate and push out of your comfort zone which can lead to growth and progression.

Those wonderful surprises that come our way are gems that can be found along this journey. Keep an open mind and consider new roads that could open unexpected doors. Having a plan doesn't mean being rigid. It gives you a vision and path to build upon. As you start the process of your career planning, here are some tried and true guidelines to take into consideration so you can be empowered to 'own your career'...

10 Essential Tips to 'Own Your Career':

- 1) ***Get comfortable being uncomfortable*** - be open to pushing out of your comfort zone, take on new challenges, try different things and take appropriate risks; have faith and belief in your own potential; welcome and embrace mistakes along the way as learning experiences
- 2) ***Know yourself well*** - consistently assess your values, talents, strengths, weaknesses, interests, passions, motivations, aspirations, likes and dislikes; be honest with yourself and ask for feedback from others; determine gaps, create development plan and follow through

3) **Identify personal brand** - Define, create, and enhance your personal brand - stay true to yourself, be authentic/genuine; understand your differentiators, the value you offer, how you stand apart; and work to build and articulate your brand as opportunities present themselves

4) **Establish, build and nurture long-lasting relationships** - network, network, network; relationship building is a long-term process to be viewed as laying a foundation and planting seeds for future growth and success; invest in building strategic alliances including mentors, trusted advisors, sponsors and champions as well as playing those roles for others; put yourself out there to be a resource to others, increase your visibility and share your knowledge

5) **Set goals and re-evaluate regularly** - Determine mission and vision for career with short and long term goals; write them down, create road map to achieve those goals, evaluate and adjust regularly; keep skills and knowledge current and relevant; build subject matter expertise and thought leadership; become a sought after resource and expert; work on on-going personal and professional development; know what you want; plan, plan, plan - and then go with the flow

6) **Have focus and discipline** - finding focus is the differentiator between effectiveness and ineffectiveness; prioritizing what needs full attention and when, with tremendous discipline and follow-through yields greater empowerment and desired results; stay motivated and focused

7) **Communicate through story telling** - be an effective storyteller, the most compelling way to communicate; best way to get and keep peoples' attention, influence and inspire others; share accomplishments and emphasize contributions through stories; articulate vision, strategy and actions by way of stories to be memorable and relatable; deliver with passion and authenticity

8) **Commit to life-long learning and development** - include on-going training efforts as part of personal and professional growth; further educational credentials, technical knowledge and functional skills-sets in addition to building leadership, management and other behavioral competencies required to grow and develop; tap into all potential and never stop learning and progressing; commit to being a life-long learner

9) **Exude positive energy and optimism** - role modeling positive behaviors is not only a good influence for others but makes a big difference in our approach and outlook to daily situations and stressors; we cannot control others or situations, only how we react; attitude is everything, see the positive and upside while taking on challenges and obstacles with confidence

10) **Be a giver (not a getter)** - focus on how you can be a resource and helpful to others without expecting anything in return, thank others who help you, express gratitude and initiate acts of kindness, never burn any bridges; always give back to your profession and community; not only does this make you feel good as a human being, but you can see the difference you make when

you are humble, genuine and true to your brand as well as offering indirect unexpected benefits

Remember, ***only YOU can own your career!*** It takes initiative and focus to manage it effectively and well. Identify and define the terms that meet your needs. You will see the rewards and enjoy a fulfilling career that allows you to maximize your potential, development and success!

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a national 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 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.