

5 ways to land that promotion

By  Sarah Browning-de Villiers

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Seek and ye shall find... or at least, know where you stand and what you need to do next...



Image source: Getty Images

1. Ask (yes, really)

It's annoyingly simple, but seriously: ask. We are all busy, and businesses are constantly under pressure. There's a good chance you won't get promoted unless you make it clear to your manager that that's what you want. There's an even better chance you won't have a clear idea of what you need to do in order to get promoted if your manager doesn't tell you. Both of these things become clear when you ask.

Until you put your hand up and make yourself heard by the right people, you cannot complain about being passed over for promotion. Seek and ye shall find... or at least, know where you stand and what you need to do next.

2. Take on something scary and audacious, and measure its success

Fulfilling your job description doesn't warrant a promotion – it warrants you keeping your job. In order to achieve a promotion, you've got to prove that you can (and want to) do more than your current day to day. That means doing something outside of your job description or scope of work. It means taking a risk.

There's nothing more compelling in a promotion meeting with your manager than showing an example of how you've proven you're ready to grow in your role. As a manager, there's nothing more satisfying than having a team member ask for more responsibility – and then tackle their new project, task or challenge with gusto.



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Seek out a new project, client, area of work or part of the business that needs attention. It may not be in your immediate department or area of expertise. It may be with people you don't know. You may (in fact, quite likely) need to tackle it after hours. That's okay: that's part of proving you've got what it takes to be promoted.

Importantly, though, don't put in all that extra energy and effort without documenting your successes. Set yourself clear goals and monitor them. Understand what your manager and company derive value from, and work your goals towards these. For example, if your manager is measured by sales, add more money to their bottom line. If they're measured by how happy clients are, find out about the problem clients and come up with solutions that will transform the relationship. Choose goals that are measurable (like the client scores your company higher at the next quarterly survey) rather than something subjective (they 'seem' happier), so that you can clearly demonstrate how you've added value.

3. Identify the decision makers – and be seen by them

Has it ever occurred to you that the person you directly report to is not actually in charge of your career growth or possible promotion? Perhaps they don't have the power, or the passion, to help you achieve your professional goals.

Identify who the key decision makers are in your workplace, and intentionally grow relationships with them. Get yourself into the meetings they're in. (Even better: present in those meetings, ask savvy questions or offer insight.) Volunteer yourself onto projects or clients they work on. Make a point of showing them what you can do.

4. Do good work, consistently

I've had juniors do phenomenal work... only to slack off the next month. I've had colleagues deliver enormous clients and windfall sales, only to drop the hard work in the laps of others while they pat themselves on the back and consider their work done.

I believe that good work - and a good work ethic - gets you places. Fundamentally, if you aren't doing good work, you can't expect to be promoted.

But being promoted is about more than saying 'Congrats!' for a job well done. A promotion entails a growth in responsibility, leadership and accountability. When you get promoted, you're probably going to have to work even harder.



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It's why when I promote someone it's not about a once-off 'well done', but rather an ongoing 'I want you on my team, day in and day out'. When you do a good job, I tell you. When you consistently do a good job, I promote you.

Promoting you means I'm endorsing you, which means I'm taking a risk. The biggest way I can mitigate my risk? Being sure of your consistency and reliability.

5. Share your knowledge

In essence: be a team player. No matter how good you are at your job, no matter how hard you work, people like other people who they feel connected to. No one likes someone who doesn't participate, collaborate or share.

It's simple, really. Don't delegate without demonstrating some level of understanding or involvement. Don't take all the credit; share it with your peers. Don't check out at 5pm on the dot when everyone else around you is set for an all-nighter. Get stuck in, show you're a team player and offer solutions, ideas, expertise and understanding that benefits not just you, but the people around you.

What your colleagues, juniors and clients say about you will likely provide a more compelling case for your promotion than you ever could.

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