

Frustrated at your current level of progress?



By [Douglas Kruger](#)

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They all suffer from the same basic problem: The successful executive who wonders why his social life is in disarray; the office worker who always produces but never seems to get promoted; the artisan who is magnificent at his craft, but fails to generate any business; and the intellectual with three advanced degrees who wonders why much stupider people are in charge of the operation.

The issue is this: They are focusing an enormous amount of mental energy on the wrong things.

Let's start with the successful executive with no love life. *Why*, he wonders, *is he still alone, downloading meaningful relationships from the internet, when he has so much going for him?* The simple answer is that the skill-set required for a successful social life is completely different to the skill-set that has ensured his success as an executive. He's good at the wrong things.

To be effective in the world of dating requires social and networking skills, an understanding of body language and charm, the ability to converse and connect with others; a sense of humour. The guy working behind the till at Pizza Hut, who intrinsically *gets* how to do these things, is eminently more qualified.

Focusing on the right things

Yet this concept will continue to baffle the executive, who will wonder why less successful people are enjoying greater success in the dating world than him. The reason is simply that they are focusing on the right things. They are doing what works.

Next case: The staff member who works hard but never gets promoted. This scenario is as common as soap, and sadder than the single hair you find on it.

This person will tend to feel cheated and underappreciated. Their excellence at what they do; they contend; should be rewarded by promotions and pay increases. After all, they've spent years consistently doing their job well.

It doesn't work that way

Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Success in the corporate world is very rarely about how technically capable you are at doing your job. In fact, the more technically capable you are, the less sense it would make to move you up. You're useful in that position.

Moreover, the more consistently you are excellent at what you do, the less your excellence will tend to be noticed. You become invisible *because* you are so proficient. There's no noise from your department; no banging of drums; and so nobody notices you.

As with the executive who is missing the point, this person tends not to realize that real career growth depends on a completely different skill-set.

Skills that will help you get ahead

So which skills *do* help such a person to get ahead? To move up to the next level, you will need some, or all, of the following:

- Leadership skills
- Assertiveness skills
- Public speaking skills
- Networking skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication skills
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Personal branding (the capacity to bang the drum and get noticed).

Think of it this way: If you are astonishingly good at fixing the warp drive on the Star Ship Enterprise, you are always going to be Scotty. However, if you have leadership and problem-solving skills, and if you can communicate confidently and assertively with a team, you could be Captain Kirk. But no one is ever going to give command of the Enterprise to Scotty based on how effectively he fixes the warp drive. It just doesn't work that way.

Different skill-sets required

The artisan who is gifted at his craft but has no customers also needs to realize that he requires an additional and completely different skill-set. He has to learn sales and marketing skills. He needs to add the basic principles of business to his understanding of his craft. No degree of artistic excellence will create a successful business. But add an understanding of business, and it's a different story.

And, sadly for the super-qualified academic, degrees do not necessarily equate to wealth or leadership. In fact, they have almost nothing in common. Becoming wealthy requires a completely different skill-set to the one used for attaining degrees, and being placed in charge of an operation is not about knowledge, but once again, about the ability to lead, communicate and solve problems.

To the great shock and horror of the highly qualified person, a *less* qualified person with stronger leadership skills and a more prominent voice can, and sometimes should, be placed in charge of them. Captain Kirk may not know how to fix a warp drive. But he knows how to get Scotty to do it!

Focusing on the wrong thing?

Is there a chance that you might be focusing all your energy on the wrong thing? Do you need to invest in a new skill-set, in addition to the one you already use, in order to move up?

If you identify with any of these scenarios, the smartest thing to do is to act quickly. You can spend years lamenting how unfair the world is being to you... or you can invest the next year in changing your scenario entirely. *And of course* it's going to be hard. But it's also going to be worth it.

ABOUT DOUGLAS KRUGER

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