
Relationships Under the Microscope

Me, Me, Me

My friend Janet was telling me about the boss she has to “put up with” as he continues to get promoted to his “level of incompetence.”

“Why don’t you look elsewhere?” I insisted. “Don’t you know how incredible you are? Your talent far outstrips what you’ve been allowed to do for the organization. Where is your perspective?”

“Good point,” she acknowledged. “I really haven’t done anything to see what’s out there and to understand in an expanded sense who I am.”

Then she blurted out the all-time most common statement I hear from even remarkably talented people: “I just think that 1 day they will notice how hard I have worked and realize I could do a much better job than my boss.”

“Are you secretly hoping he’ll just quit and you’ll be the obvious choice to take his place?” I asked.

At first, she was incredulous. But eventually, she admitted that’s exactly what she was doing.

“I am waiting,” she confided. “But I don’t know why or for what.”

Figuring that out will create for Janet a powerful awareness that is quite freeing. Once she knows *why* she is waiting—instead of going after what she feels she deserves—she can begin to move forward.

Likewise, getting some perspective on why *you* are marching in place can be a powerful tool that will allow you to choose your future rather than wait for it to happen to you.

It’s possible you will realize you are waiting for something that is unlikely to happen. Once you do, you create a space for movement—*forward* movement.

Are you waiting to get noticed? Or are you secretly glad you’re not? Be honest.

When it comes down to it, if you kept a running catalog of your work-related accomplishments, you probably would be astonished at how much you have done. Your boss and her boss don’t keep track of that for you. They pay more attention to your screw-ups, bad attitude days, and other negatives that can prevent your next move.

Take responsibility for letting them know about the many good, important, and amazing feats you have accomplished during your time at the organization. But before you can do that, you need to take stock of your accomplishments and triumphs. Here’s how:

Divide a loose leaf binder into 10 sections. Fill it with your back-patting, raise-deserving, promotion-worthy accomplishments!

Tab 1: your resume.

Tab 2: a list of accomplishments that don’t appear on the resume.

Tab 3: a tally of all your skills, talents, and abilities.

Tab 4: letters, thank-you notes, certificates of acknowledgment, and complimentary e-mails you have received.

Tab 5: copies of peer-to-peer and manager-to-subordinate evaluations.

Tab 6: a list of your goals.

Tab 7: the self-examination tools you have used, like Myers Briggs, Birkman, and DISC, for example.

Tab 8: your dreams.

Tab 9: your hobbies and community service activities.

Tab 10 and beyond: other categories of accomplishments that are uniquely yours.

This exercise takes time, but it’s worth it. Don’t resist the process because it is too “me focused.” I know you already know all about yourself. But others don’t. Your bosses don’t. Putting it all in 1 place helps you realize how much you have going for you and what kinds of information you should be sharing with the higher-ups at work.

It’s not your boss’s responsibility to notice you and pluck you out of the crowded work force for the promotion you know you deserve. You are responsible for thinking of creative and innovative ways to let the organization know who you are. If you don’t, saying you are “overlooked” will be an understatement.

Face it: Managers and coworkers rarely know you beyond your “task” accomplishments. Those achievements are important, but it’s not enough to simply accomplish tasks. They need to know you can relate well to others, work efficiently as part of a team, think innovatively, adapt to new environments, value differences, and behave flexibly.

Put together that binder. Take a good look at a concrete compilation of who you are, what you have accomplished and where you want to go.

Take responsibility for your perspective. This is your “me” binder. Grow it.

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