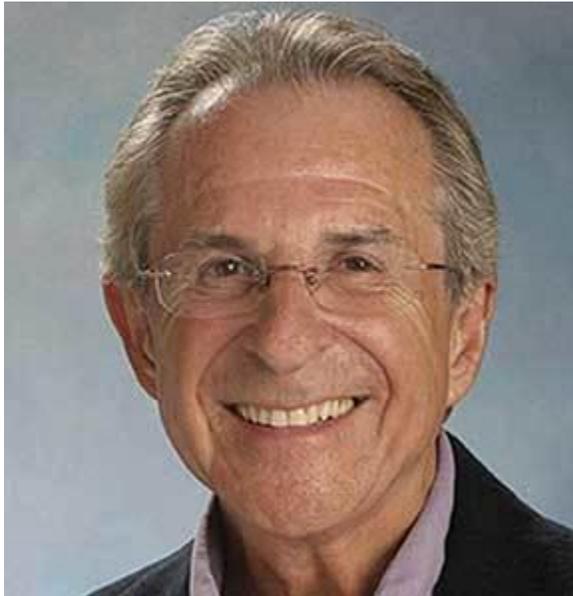


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JULY 28, 2016

## Moving Forward – Without the Promotion



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It may sound wacky, but if you're not busy climbing the corporate ladder, you've probably settled into a spot where even being considered for promotion is unlikely. Most high-risers shoot up fast; they land an entry-level position and immediately stand out as future stars. Within a year, or even more quickly, they've been bumped up to the next level. This continues until, inevitably, two rising stars are competing for the same slot. Then someone gets the short straw, possibly for the first time in his or her life. It's a shock. And it hurts.

If this has happened to you, and you're willing to grow from the experience, you've learned that you need to be aggressive in navigating your career. Until now, your superiors have promoted you. Now it's your responsibility to show why you belong.

**See also:** [Why are We Still Shortchanging Women in the Workplace?](#)

Step one: It's not a matter of working harder and longer. I assume you're already an A player. Hoping you'll be promoted solely on the basis of your current competence is like a baseball star dreaming that batting .400 will earn him a spot in the front office. Forget it. You'll need an expanded skill set. You have to make a notable impact.

Ask yourself this: "Why should the organization promote a star like me to a slot where I might fail or even just be average? Wouldn't it be smarter to keep me where I am?"



Be aggressive in navigating your career, advises Flaum. Photo credit: Wang/Creative Commons

To rise, you must convince upper management that, regardless of your current contribution, you'll deliver even-greater value to the company when advanced to a higher level. Promotions are a calculated investment.

How do you prove you belong in bigger shoes? What have you accomplished lately? Are you making your boss look good? Take a closer look at your leadership skills. Take your subordinates aside and ask them what you could be doing better. Read books on leadership. Come up with a plan for making your company's underperforming brand a blockbuster! Think and act big! Never be average!

“You may hear a good word. Or you may get bad news. That’s depressing, but at least now you know”

So, that's step one. Here's step two: Say you've done all this and someone else gets the job. After a month or so has passed, approach your boss. Say something like: "I'm happy for Katie that she got the promotion. She'll be great. But I thought I too had a chance. Did anything specifically rule me out?" Note that you're not acting hurt or angry. You're asking for — and deserve — an honest answer.

You may hear a good word: "You're doing a great job, but remember Katie's been here three years longer than you." Or, "We felt that job wasn't right for you, but be patient. Something better may be opening up soon." On the other hand, you may get bad news: For unknown reasons, an unnamed higher-up blocked your promotion. That's depressing, but at least now you know.

**See also: [Why competing agencies are joining forces to give parents more time off](#)**

Whatever the answer, by speaking directly to your boss, you'll be better prepared to get back on the track for success — whether it's with your current employer or somewhere else.

Start networking. Moving forward is what it's all about in your professional life. Go for it!

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