

Six career mistakes to avoid

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Don't sabotage your career growth by making one of these critical blunders

Executive business Coach Penny Holburn says getting ahead in your career requires you to be action-oriented, energetic, enthusiastic, honest, hard-working and a team player. "While we're all bound to make mistakes because we're human, certain errors will lead your colleagues and bosses to think differently of you and could have a long-term effect on your career." Here are the top errors to avoid:

1. Not learning and challenging yourself

Our world is constantly changing so it's crucial to keep up-to-date or you'll find yourself redundant. Keep learning new things and stay abreast of developments in your field.

2. Focusing only on money

Focus on long-term goals, not just the short-term ones. It's important to concentrate on building your skills and experience. To give up good opportunities for growth and experience just for money is short-sighted. While money is important, it's crucial to learn and work with some of the best people in your field, particularly in the beginning of your career.

3. Not preparing for opportunities

Someone once said: when you end up in front of the goal posts, you must score. When an opportunity arises, be it a chance to present at a meeting, meet with a senior or influential executive, work on or run an important project, it's critical to grab it with both hands and prepare and work really hard. Use each opportunity to better your skillset and experience.

4. A lack of networking

It's crucial to network in your own company and also with others outside your company. Strong networks within the company help you get promoted. In many cases, promotions don't occur unless people outside your department notice and endorse you. Networks outside your company help you stay abreast of other opportunities in your sector.

5. Don't do the bare minimum

Go the extra mile. Be enthusiastic, helpful and committed to the company. Ideally your goals and the organisation's goals should be similar, so stay involved and committed to the company's vision.

6. Be nice to people

If you don't have good people skills then acquire them. The job market is smaller than you think. Your relationships with other people, including your colleagues, suppliers, clients and bosses are very important. No one likes or wants to work with someone who is difficult to get on with so take care to treat everyone you encounter with respect.

Holburn says it's inevitable that you'll make mistakes at some point in your career. "What's important is how you handle the mistake. The first thing is to own up to the error as soon as possible as most mistakes are more easily fixed the sooner they're discovered. Admit the mistake, apologise if you need to, and come up with suggestions on how to fix it. Then put it behind you and move forward."