

THE TAKE-NO-PRISONERS GUIDE  
TO CONTROLLING YOUR CAREER



# SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

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*Your*  
STORY HAPPENS HERE

# PART ONE

## getting clear

When you were hired it may or may not have been clear what the path to promotion looked like. Or perhaps you didn't ask. And if you did ask, you may have been given one of those buzzwordy phrases like, "just kill it and good things will happen."

Hogwashery.

Let's back up and do some sleuthing. As the saying goes, wherever you go, there you are, so before you make a decision, you want to make sure that the challenges and patterns you're experiencing in your current role don't follow you into the next.

On the next page, I'm going to start with the all-too-common refrains I hear from clients. And first, let me say, I believe you. I believe your experience. The questions that follow those refrains are designed to help you take another pass at your experience and do a searching inventory. Not so you can blame yourself—there's too much of that going around—but so you can be clear-eyed and make some good decisions.

**“I’m not being seen or recognized for my abilities and potential.”**

- Are you having regular conversations with your boss?
- Are you letting stakeholders know about your results and accomplishments?
- Are you using your influence and asking for projects and opportunities that raise your visibility?
- Have you expressed your brand story and superpowers in a way that demonstrate how you can solve your team or organization’s challenges?

**“I’m not being included. It’s a big ol’ boys’ club.”**

- Do people know who you are and what you bring to the party?
- Do you ask to be included?
- Have you expressed your disappointment about not being included to stakeholders and gatekeepers?
- Have you asked for a turnaround in behavior?
- Have you made it clear that a turnaround would benefit them and the company?

**“I am working way beyond my job description, killing it, but I’m not getting opportunities to advance and grow.”**

- Why are you working “way beyond your job description”?
- Are you saying yes to the right things, and no to the wrong things, or are you being a doormat?
- Who, besides you, knows what you were hired to do and what you’re doing now?
- Have you rewritten your job description and had a focused conversation with your boss about a promotion AND a raise?

**“I am working way below my potential and in a position that does not make best use of my strengths.”**

- How did that happen? Can you retrace your steps and decision points?
- Was it bait and switch? Bad communication? A reorganization? A promise that wasn’t honored?
- Or did you take the role hoping it would lead to bigger and better things?
- Did you express your desire/intention for those bigger and better things when you were hired or soon after?
- Have you excelled in your work despite the role feeling like the wrong fit?

**“I’ve been passed over for promotion and the roles are going to chumps and people less experienced than I am.”**

- Were the metrics or “rules” for promotion clearly expressed when you were hired?
- And does it seem as though those rules are being followed?
- Have you received clear direction about what you need to “work on” to be promoted?
- If you’ve received clear direction about what you need to “work on” are you being given the people and resources to accomplish those things?
- Are you being told things like “you’re too strong/weak” or “you’re too quiet/loud” or “you need to speak up more/stop talking so much”?
- Are promotions being given to people who look like you?

# PART TWO

## assess the wellbeing of your company

After reflecting on the questions in PART ONE, your answers may be weighted like so:

*A few of the questions made me realize I can take a little more responsibility to turn things around in my current role.*

*I've experienced and taken action on everything suggested by those questions, and nothing has worked.*

**No matter how you're leaning, let's now focus on the company you work for with a few more critical questions to help you make your decision.**

1. What do you know about the business and wellbeing of your company?
2. How is the company doing financially?
3. Is your company in a growth curve?
4. Is your company in the indecisive middle and making lots of stops and starts?
5. Is your company at the top of the curve and unsure how to innovate and stay relevant?
6. Is a buyout or merger looming?
7. Is there a revolving door of talent?
8. Is there a revolving door of leadership?
9. What are the major pain points your company is experiencing and how are they handling it?
10. What is your company's reputation in the industry and in the media?
11. Is leadership transparent or avoidant?

If you're stuck in a role that's not growing, or you've been moved laterally several times with no change in title or compensation, the reason may be tucked inside the answers to the questions above.

If you are clear about the issues and challenges and have some strategies that might help turn things around, now might be the time to make a proposal. Or, your answers may be the writing on the wall telling you that it's time to bust a move.

Again, be fearless in your pursuit of the truth and score your answers. Feel where the weight is.

# PART THREE

## back to you

I'm going to assume that you're the kind of professional who consistently tracks your accomplishments in your current role and former roles. I'm also going to assume that you know how to quantify your accomplishments (money saved, money earned, productivity or processes improved, reputation increased, etc.).

### **Wrapping your arms around all that data:**

- Do you know how to mine that data for your strengths, skills, and repeating themes?
- Do you know how to turn that data into compelling stories that communicate the value of you in your employer's hands?
- Do you know what to say when someone says, "tell me about yourself" or "what have you been working on" or "where do you see yourself in the company" or "where do you see yourself in five years"?

**If the answers to those questions are mostly no...** I suggest you stay put and do some learning about how to craft the answers to those questions before you think about moving on. Here's why: you will be asked those same questions and many more in the interview process for a new role.

### **Now, let's say you've handled all of the above. As much as you can tell, you're doing all the right things. More questions:**

- Have you been in your role longer than 2 years with no promotion?
- Have people in your organization and/or your network who are doing similar work been promoted faster than you?
- Has your compensation stayed pretty level (measly 3% increases or the like)?
- Are you running into walls and fences and locked doors everywhere you turn?
- Are you cranky and bored?
- Are your friends and loved ones sick of hearing you complain?
- Are you letting fear of change run the show?

If the answers to those questions are mostly yes...it's time to go. Your happiness and sense of purpose are on the line, and so is your financial wellbeing. Vacations. College tuition. Savings. Retirement. Charitable contributions. All of that is at risk if you stay.

# PART FOUR

## build your influence

If you want to have a great career and be seen, heard, respected, and then promoted and compensated to your heart's desire, you gotta have a plan and an influence posse—the people who have, or should have, your back.

The most important part of the planning process is sleuthing out your stakeholders' pain points. What they want, need, and fear, and how you can use that intelligence to leverage your influence—*months before you make your ask.*

It's not just a matter of showing up and speaking up, and being valuable, and trundling into your performance review for gold stars. It's also about mapping out what the power players and stakeholders in your organization really want. Really fear. Really worry about. So you can go about the business of solving problems that impact productivity and bottom lines. And your reputation. *Months before your ask.*

*Grabbing coffee with the new COO who has oversight on the project you're leading, telling her the story of what you've been up to, and being of service.*

*Grabbing coffee with that fly-in-the-ointment bro who has a key role on your project AND an influential relationship with your boss (as in golf). You know who I'm talking about. He's all talk and no action, but you've gotta make him look good so he, too, will sing your praises. (And when you get your promotion, you can help him find the exit sign.)*

*Having regular check-ins with your boss that go deeper than just accountability reporting, so you can collaborate on the goals and challenges you both have.*

I know it would be great to just do your job and hope everyone notices your brilliance and rewards you with confetti made out of 100 dollar bills. And I know that you'd love it if the bad actors would just self select and say bye bye. But that's Pollyanna. Politics are part of life. And politics are personal.

So schedule five minutes for a phone call. A half hour for coffee. And make it part of your routine. Like breathing. And when that promotion rolls around, you're going to ask, definitely and directly, for your Influence Posse's support. To have your back. To sing your praises. To tell your story.

# PART FIVE

## food, water, shelter

Sometimes, dontcha think about packing it all in and opening a day care center for dogs? Or working on an elephant reserve in Thailand?

Maybe you're itching to trade in what your career is supposed to look like for one that actually makes your heart beat. Like the marketing director for a fortune 500 company who traded her corner office for a cupcake business on the corner of Main Street and First.

**No matter what, it's a privilege to be able to even entertain those thoughts.**

And if you can think about and plan for a change like that, you're not in *food, water, shelter* mode. You're blessed with a privilege that billions on this planet DO NOT HAVE.

So think back. Back when you actually were in *food, water, shelter* mode. Like, say, when you graduated from college. Do you remember how you felt? Besides wondering where you were going to work, or whose couch you were going to surf, your *food, water, shelter* thoughts were about the future. Remember that? Your thoughts propelled you into the creation of your story. Maybe they gave you nightmares too, but everything out there in the wide open world was unknown and yet infinitely possible.

**Your life wasn't scripted yet. And guess what? It still isn't.**

Amelia, a client I had several years ago was 29, newly married, no children, in love with her job as an education content producer. And yet, as we all do, she was questioning where her next right fit might be. She was questioning her why, and noodling on all the possible forks in the road she could take, might take. She kept saying to me, "I want to have a *food, water, shelter* life."

She didn't mean she wanted to be a poor hippy. Her spin on *food, water, shelter* was to focus on what matters. To make choices that had an impact. Meaning.

So as you think about your life and career and what's next for you, maybe *food, water, shelter* is the perfect metaphor, the catalyst to guide your ascent. It could be the story that inspires you to look back and move forward. To recapture some of that juice you had when you were 22, or even 42. Maybe it's the reframing you need to get into your bust-a-move mojo.

# PART SIX

## next steps to noodle on

### Is it time to move up, sideways, or out?

Noodle on everything you've read. And then choose.

Don't let fear run the show, because fear generates stasis and keeps you looking to the past to hang the blame on. Let your best story guide you, the one that pulls the future toward you.

So if you're thinking that it's time to leave a mark on your career, up your influence and thought leadership game, and you need a strategy and process to follow to make sure you're making your next right move, **book a free Hello Call with me** to start putting legs on your leadership story.

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