

Career Stages

Whether you are developing as an organizational leader or an individual contributor, there are different focuses at each stage of your business career. Let's identify where you are in the following Career Stages and what those focuses are for you now, as well as in the years ahead.

Career Stage 1

- **Positions:** Entry level up to Middle Manager
- **Where you are on the career continuum:** Beginning your career or establishing yourself on your career path.
- **Characterized by:**
 - Discovering your abilities, your strengths, your passions
 - Learning the dynamics of organizational life and behavior
 - Establishing yourself through your expertise and capability to work with others
 - Learning how to follow organizational directives
 - Learning how to communicate in a poised, articulate, effective way

Do's

Observe and learn the players and the rituals/taboo/norms of your organization.

Embrace coaching, training and mentoring whenever available.

Seek insight and relationship power.

Continue to develop in your areas of expertise.

Strive to be taken seriously.

Don'ts

Become judgmental about the norms or key players.

Try to be a trend-setter or maverick at this stage.

Express your excesses or quirks in the workplace. Rather, learn poise and appropriateness.

Fail to deliver on what you promise.

Underestimate the importance of your presence and presentation style.

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Career Stage 2

- **Positions:** Manager and Director levels, Seasoned Sole Contributors
- **Where you are on the career continuum:** You've established yourself in your area of expertise and are developing into a leader/influencer. Your contribution is now based more on conceptualizing, teaming and communicating, rather than completing tasks. You are becoming a known commodity among the senior executives.
- **Characterized by:**
 - Continuing to build and utilize your network of key relationships
 - Establishing yourself as someone who can make things happen and work well with others
 - Possessing organizational savvy – knowing “how things work around here”
 - Operating effectively within the system
 - Demonstrating ability and balance across all 3 Spheres of Leadership: Personal, Interpersonal and Organizational

Do's

Align day-to-day activities with strategic direction.

Assess and build key relationships, both internally and externally.

Develop conflict skills and holding power to enhance impact and influence.

Seek expansive educational opportunities to broaden your knowledge base.

Continue to refine your Inspiration Power and leadership style.

Don'ts

Don't stay mired in details, micro-manage, or become a workaholic.

Don't stay too narrowly oriented in your own functional area.

Don't become rigid, territorial, or reactive.

Don't become stuck at – or complacent about – your current level of capability and contribution.

Don't develop a reputation for “losing it” or having blind spots in aspects of your demeanor.

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Career Stage 3

- **Positions:** Senior Director, VP Level and up, Senior Staff member
- **Where you are on the career continuum:** Mature and seasoned business professional. Established and credible, your focus is now on leading change, developing others, leaving a legacy, and potentially, moving on to whatever is next for you.
- **Characterized by:**
 - Strategic thought about the direction of self, team and organization
 - Becoming a change agent – seeing opportunities and seizing them in an appropriate manner
 - Spending time developing and guiding your team; succession planning
 - Willing and able to set trends in behavior and thought

Do's

Continue to monitor appropriate use of your time and energy.

Focus on building great bench strength.

Decide what legacy you intend to leave behind.

Be the individual. Stand up and speak your truth.

Exemplify: Powerful people never rush! Communicate in a well-thought out, deliberate way. Seek opportunities to be seen and heard.

Don'ts

Don't become a workaholic, or work in a rushed manner.

Don't run out of steam for the business. Rather, pace yourself and make time for recharge and renewal, contemplation.

Don't focus on the past, or "woulda–coulda–shoulda's."

Don't be a yes man/woman.

Don't fall in love with your own press notices.

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Career Stage 4

- **Positions:** Board Member, Author/expert/presenter/consultant; Entrepreneur
- **Where you are on the career continuum:** Retired or semi-retired from an organizational career; now consulting or otherwise spending time and resources in areas of personal interest; possible startup ventures. In the world of political leadership, we might refer to someone at this career level as a “Senior Statesperson.”
- **Characterized by:**
 - Having accrued years of organizational experience and industry insights, thus considered business savvy
 - Focus is on leaving their legacy
 - Possessing the autonomy to select or accept key assignments and preferred roles
 - Are transitioning from using Position Power to Expert and Relationship Powers as a sole contributor/niche consultant/expert/author/speaker
 - May be focused on new ventures, promoting new ideas and innovation, building new teams for growth

Do's

Recognize that many opportunities may exist; choose wisely since you simply can't do it all.

Focus on your personal fulfillment, legacy work and areas of competence and passion.

Be deliberate in decision-making.

Remain curious and keep learning; expand your world and your people connections.

Analyze what's the best use of your time and resources at this stage of life.

Don'ts

Don't overcommit. Recognize that everyone may want a piece of you!

Don't trade off your autonomy by initiating multiple ideas and people all at one time.

Don't rely on your “old brand.” It's time for fresh renewal, thus you may reinvent yourself.

Don't get stuck in old routines. Look for ways to refresh your patterns and perspectives.

Don't say “yes” until you've done some analysis on the impact.