



Building Your Career

As an accountant, I constantly receive the following questions: How do you advance in the workplace? How do you grow in your career? What should employees do to get a raise, promotion or both?

Building a career is little different than building a business. Keeping your customers happy is very similar to keeping your boss satisfied. In the end it all becomes a matter of managing satisfaction. We all need to know who to keep happy.

If a customer is too difficult to deal with, we let them go and replace them with a new customer. If our boss is too difficult to deal with, we should "fire them" and find a new replacement (preferably finding a good boss before leaving the bad one).

However, assuming you like your boss, how do you advance in your career? If you don't want to move out, how can you move up? The easiest way to describe it is: "have the value you bring to the company be noticed". What you do should be recognized by your boss as indispensable. When you do it, you should be seen as invaluable (valuable beyond estimation).

I have consulted with many operators and drivers. I have often met drivers who say they just can't seem to make a living. One excuse is: there are never enough miles. After a few questions I find out that they won't drive into Quebec, New York, New Jersey, BC, California etc. They won't leave Sunday evening or cross boarders, they must know their entire trip before

they leave, refuse to fuel at certain approved locations, restrict communication with shippers/receivers/dispatch, leave only when they want to leave, return only when it suites them, book time off without notice and come up with some of the most ridiculous excuses known to North American society. This type of behavior is called operational narcissism.

Many years ago, I hired a young man and paid him by the hour (with his team) to unload boxes from a truck. He literally RAN back to the truck to get more boxes. He also demanded his team to run back as well... even if I was watching or not. This man later built a great service business... and no wonder, he hustled when nobody was watching!

Advancing in your career requires sacrifice and commitment. Your boss should know your name and you as a fixer, a problem solver, the guy who gets it done and reduces the level of operational stress. Your boss must view you as a competent person, a person of value and a resource.

Once the reputation of job competence is established... kick it up a notch. Find out what your boss does not like to deal with and then do that in the way he/she wants it done. Make his/her job easier. In order to do that you have to start thinking like your boss, see things from their perspective and make their work easier.

Two things will come from that type of action. First, for a while, you will be simultaneously appreciated and ignored. Don't lose heart

because a good boss will keep his/her eye on your consistent performance. You are being "watched" over time. Promoting someone just because they have had a good week, month or even year isn't the quality of a good boss. He/she needs to be shown consistent, long term, higher level behavior and character. Make sure the boss sees your character saturating your abilities. A good boss hires character first, ability next.

Secondly, be PREPARED for growth, opportunity and promotion. Far too many competent people arrange their lives in such a way that they cannot take advantage of opportunities. Opportunities sometimes mean taking a cut in pay or even making a required investment. That means you must get your personal financial life in order. When an opportunity arises, you must be prepared to take advantage of it. Coming off the road (or any type of promotion) sometimes means an increase in responsibilities of time/effort. Be PREPARED to sacrifice.

If you wish for an opportunity to grow ON THE ROAD, keep your eyes open for ways to serve your company (Boss) with things that help him/her and the company. I have seen many operators help build their carrier by finding new freight opportunities that have been overlooked or are unknown by the carrier sales team. There are literally hundreds of situations to help the carrier that others simply will not do or think of. Prove your value to the company.

Finally, but certainly not the least important, don't produce a negative value. Emotional "blowing up", whining or just plain ornery behavior is almost universally repulsive. Showing a temper or exposing a critical attitude is simply not tolerated long term. The only type of boss who promotes an irritated

person is a bad boss, one who should be fired or replaced. Just because a temper is "tolerated" due to a serious shortage of drivers does not mean it's good for your career.

All this investment in your boss's responsibilities should produce a return. However, if you see that your boss is not a good boss... consider letting him go, provided of course you have a GOOD BOSS available to replace him/her.

Hiring a good boss requires some research and investigation. It hardly advances your position if you replace one bad boss for another bad one. If that happens, you are just spinning your wheels, you just wasted a year of your life and put a demerit on your resume as a potential carrier hopper. To compare what is out there if you are changing carriers; learn to discern a good boss from a bad one.

About the Author:

Robert D. Scheper is a leading Accountant and Consultant to the Lease/Owner operator industry in Canada. His first book in the Making Your Miles Count series "taxes, taxes, taxes" was released in 2007. His firm exclusively serves Lease/Owner Operators across Canada. His second book "Choosing a Trucking company" is the most in-depth analysis of the operator industry available today. He has a Master degree (MBA) in financial management and has been serving the industry since he and his wife came off the road in 1993. His dedication, commitment and strong opinions can be read and heard in many articles and seminars.

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