

How to Keep Growing Professionally Without Changing Jobs

Everyone's career path is different, but each one contains a series of steppingstones. Within the past couple decades, changing roles every few years has become the norm. It's the way we build up our experiences, skills, networks, and compensation.

But sometimes, you may feel ready to move on to the next step a lot sooner than what is realistic. Maybe it's because you're bored. Or maybe you think you're ready for a more challenging role. Or maybe you just think you can be learning and accomplishing more.

While it's important not to become complacent, it's equally important not to rush into a new job for the sake of switching. Each move you make should be a strategic step towards reaching your long-term career goals.

Fortunately, if you find yourself stagnating in a role, there are still ways to keep growing professionally without changing your job.

Take an online course

E-learning is a great way to continue your education without having to show up to a classroom at a designated time. The online course you take, if it's a good one, will teach you valuable lessons which can make you a better professional.

Regardless of what role I've had at work, I've made a habit of investing in one online course a year to keep me growing professionally. Some courses I've taken were directly related to my industry.

Not quite ready to commit to a comprehensive learning experience? Try enrolling in a one or two-day workshop. You'll still learn tons without spending a lot of time or money, and it can mentally prep you for the larger undertaking of a full course.

Pro tip: If the course or workshop you are interested in is related to your industry in *any way*, try pitching it your boss to see if they will compensate you for completing it! Many employers are willing to invest in their employees if it's a tangible skill that will benefit the business.

Cross-train at your company

Just because you're not ready to move to another position doesn't mean you can't learn more, even if you know all your duties backwards and forwards. Ask your manager if you can shadow another department or even cross-train in a different role to assist with overflow.

Doing this will not only impress your manager for taking an interest in other areas of the job, (who will likely flag you as a candidate for promotion) but it will give you a more cohesive understanding of your own role and how it contributes to the success of the business.

Read a lot

The New Yorker published an article a few years back about a study that suggests reading about experiences is nearly as good as actually experiencing them. I'm inclined to agree.

We can learn tangible skills or new mindsets from reading. We don't have to learn from our mistakes, we can learn from reading about *other* people's mistakes. Reading inspires and motivates. It expands your mind in a way almost no other activity can.

Reading also improves your attention span and sharpens your cognitive skills. To this end, it almost doesn't matter what you read as long as it's something you enjoy! (I personally prefer a mix of fiction and self-development.)

So whether it's a literary novel or a book on how to make more money, all of it is worth the investment of your time and will make you a more educated, intelligent professional.

Find a mentor

Having a mentor can be an excellent way to continue growing your skill set. They can help you set goals and hold you accountable for reaching them. Their own personal experiences can help you avoid setbacks and inspire you to try things you wouldn't have otherwise.

While finding a mentor can be a challenge, it's definitely worth the effort. You can start by choosing someone more experienced from your work whom you respect and feel you could learn a lot from. But your mentor doesn't have to be from your place of work. Anyone who has the experience you seek might be a good fit for you. If they are agreeable to mentoring you, try meeting for coffee once or twice a week. Or if they are remote, schedule weekly Skype calls.

Contribute to the workplace culture

This would include things like organizing charity drives, fun extracurricular events for the office, or participating in other committees that benefit the company's employees. It's a shame that many people working in a corporate environment don't understand the benefits of putting in this kind of extra work.

For one, helping organize events or programs will get you on senior management's radar for a promotion. There's no quicker way to prove to your employer that you're committed to the company brand and ready to go above and beyond.

But more than that, it's an excellent opportunity to hone your teamwork and networking skills, (which is particularly valuable for introverted types, like me!)

You can learn other new skills as well. For example, I volunteered to start an employee newsletter for the office I worked at, and that's how I rediscovered my love for writing. If it wasn't for that newsletter, I might

have never started freelance writing, a venture that earns thousands in extra income every year.

Staying Motivated

When you're doing the same job for a long time, you may find your motivation flagging. If and when that happens, carefully consider if it's really the right time to move on or not. In the meantime, these actions can help keep the momentum going on growing professionally and achieving new goals.

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