

How to Give Your Career a Boost—From Home

By **Helen Burnett-Nichols** - November 18, 2020



For certain types of professionals, the move to remote work in 2020 may have blurred the work-life balance lines, but it may also have boosted productivity and allowed them to develop skills that perhaps weren't part of their repertoire.

But without your colleagues and managers physically around to notice your latest wins, are these achievements ultimately invisible behind email or Zoom?

Fear not, say executive coaches. In spite of the lack of actual face-to-face time with your boss, it is possible to be noticed (and even promoted) in an environment where everyone is working from home. A proactive approach is essential when it comes to being seen – here's how to work towards advancement in an online workplace:

Say 'yes' and overdeliver: In the current climate, says Joanne Loberg, certified executive coach, career strategist and principal of JL Careers Inc. in Vancouver, many managers are stressed and under pressure. This makes it an ideal time for employees to find out what key issues supervisors are dealing with, be the person who volunteers to take on more responsibility or do additional research and follow it up by delivering quality work.

"When management says 'we need help with something,' use that as an opportunity to step in and step up, because they are going to ask for more and more support," says Loberg. "As much as you can, say yes to things — but say yes to things that matter to you, so you're excited about what you're working on."

Speak up and share: The etiquette around self-promotion at work is similar, whether everyone is working remotely or in the office, says Eileen Chadnick, certified executive and career coach and principal of Toronto-based Big Cheese Coaching. In either scenario, while you might assume your accomplishments are speaking for themselves, this is usually a myth – you need to be sure to bring wins and ideas forward.

For those working online, this can involve suggesting a weekly, or biweekly check-in via video chat, for example, in order to stay connected with leaders in the organization.

"Within those, he/she can say 'I've completed this project, we had fabulous results and I would love to share that with you.' So, don't wait to be asked or invited, do it from a professional way of just keeping those that need to know in the loop and take initiative to communicate."

Take control of your path: In the current, more 'remote' work environment, being direct also needs to apply to conversations around your personal career aspirations.

As Chadnick explains, those that tend to get ahead make their career goals known to their supervisor and have conversations around how to ensure they're meeting the requisites to be promotable.

"There's nothing wrong with stepping up and saying 'hey, I'm exploring some new options, and I'd really like to develop my skills in X or Y or I'm realizing through COVID I've been stepping in, I've developed this skill, I'm stronger at leading team meetings — if a stretch assignment comes available, someone's going off on leave, I'd love for you to consider me for that opportunity,'" adds Loberg.

Learn and implement new skills: Have you been researching and gaining expertise in a new area of interest? Attending a few webinars? Maybe you're starting a new certification – if you have the bandwidth, says Loberg, this may be the ideal time to invest in filling in the gaps in your resume and integrating these new skills into your role.

"This is a really interesting time also to be just looking at yourself and what strengths do you want to develop and going deeper into those areas and promoting that in a way that people know that is something you can do," she says.

"Once you're actually raising your profile and you're developing new skills or you're building into new teams, people start to recognize you in a different way," she adds.

Ultimately, pandemic-related curve balls affecting many workplaces have required employees to pivot, innovate and step up, explains Chadnick, creating opportunities for them to shine from their home offices.

"Even if it's from home, doing your best and finding ways to be connected with those that you need to connect with, those that need to see what you're doing and appreciate [it], then I think it shouldn't be a barrier," she says. "But you have to take initiative, you have to own it."

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