

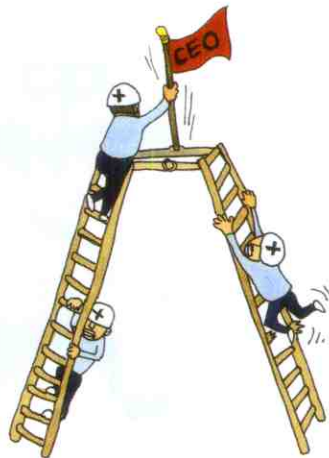
ISSUE 24

How to Get Promoted

Connections are often viewed as being the most important single factor in getting promoted. On the other hand, some people say merit — what you know, not who you know — is the key to success. Yet others say that seniority counts the most, but to achieve seniority one needs to have a long record of achievement. Maybe, in the end, everything depends upon luck.

What is the most important factor in getting promoted?

- (1) Competence
- (2) Working relationship with the boss
- (3) Popularity among colleagues
- (4) Command of a second language
- (5) Computer skills
- (6) Appearance
- (7) Company loyalty
- (8) Diligence
- (9) Intelligence
- (10) Family name
- (11) Which school one attended
- (12) Where one is from
- (13) Luck



Sample Answers

(A) There is no such thing as luck, only opportunity. Once in a while, an unqualified person will get a job or promotion but will not be able to keep it long *due to* lack of preparation. The best advice I can give anyone is to train for the job you actually want, master it, wait until it becomes available, and then *grab* it! You will be surprised how soon you will have it, once you are truly ready for it.

(B) No one can deny *packaging* is important. Unfortunately, one may have all the proper skills and still *get passed over* for a promotion due to lack of attention by the *personnel* officer. So, less *relevant criteria* such as appearance, schools attended, personal connections, or family background may serve as the *foot in the door* to being noticed and then evaluated properly.

Speak Your Mind

1. They say good-looking people are more likely to get promoted than *plain* people. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. What does “working relationship with the boss” really mean? Do you think it just means “*flattering* the boss”?
3. Does a second language have any value in the business field you work in or wish to work in?
4. What specific skill is the most important in your line of work?
5. Who is generally better positioned to get promoted, a man or a woman? Defend your answer.
6. Where does a woman have an advantage over a man in terms of employment and promotion?
7. Which do you think is more important in getting a promotion, seniority or competence?

Speak Your Mind

Speak Your Mind Helpers

1. They say good-looking people are more likely to get promoted than plain people. Do you agree? Why or why not?

(A)

It's hard to answer the question because we don't agree what "good-looking" means. It is a very subjective element. There are many movie stars who I don't think are especially attractive, but my friends *go on and on* about how beautiful or handsome they are. At least with criteria such as IQs or GPAs there are objective, universal factors to *plug into* an employment equation.

(B)

Many studies have shown a pretty strong *correlation* between success and good looks. The higher one's attractiveness rating, the better chance one has of getting a good job and being promoted faster and higher. We never really graduate from college, where popularity is *equated* with success and depends mainly on looking good and having a good personality (the may be mutually supporting factors).

2. What does "working relationship with the boss" really mean? Do you think it just means "flattering the boss"?

(A)

Only a fool would *go out of his way* to tell his boss that she was doing poorly on the job. The boss needs to have confidence in her decision-making ability; the ambitious employee needs to demonstrate how well he can help implement those decisions.

(B)

In the United States, people call flatterers "*brown-nosers*." The *reference* is to following so close behind the Big Man that one's nose is literally up his *butt*, yet the flatterer cannot be critical of the bad odor. But, despite the popular *derision*, it is undeniable that brown-nosing is a *tried-and-true* method of gaining *preferential* treatment; from the *standpoint* of the boss, it is merely a demonstration of personal and corporate "loyalty."

3. Does a second language have any value in the business field you work in or wish to work in?

(A)

I enjoy studying languages and am pretty fluent in four of them, but I can't imagine how it would help me in my job. I'm a carpenter, and unless my company gets a major foreign contract (which isn't likely), my linguistic skills will remain just a hobby.

(B)

As our nation becomes increasingly *cosmopolitan*, the *acquisition* of a second language will become ever more necessary *across the board*. Jobs in most service sectors, including restaurants, hotels, banks, hospitals, trading companies, schools, and so forth, will be more and more internationalized. As the global economy takes shape, labor skills will become less national, and people will need to spend long periods abroad just to stay employed.

4. What specific skill is the most important in your line of work?

(A)

I need to be able to *think on my feet* and quickly communicate my thoughts and decisions to my colleagues. (What do you think my job is?)

(B)

I have to keep large blocks of numbers in my head at all times and keep constant track of how they keep changing. (What is my job?)

5. Who is generally better positioned to get promoted, a man or a woman? Defend your answer.

(A)

It is still true that the vast majority of top executive positions in every field are held by men, who have the ones with the training, experience, and demonstrated ability. While women, in theory, have the same *aptitude* and intelligence as men, they are still generally lacking in terms of lifetimes spent on the job.

(B)

You may be surprised to learn that women have a *leg up* on men with *identical* résumés. This is probably due to corporate awareness of the public perception of gender unfairness and an attempt to create a more balanced workforce. In the long run, any qualified person can do the job to the same degree of ability, and gender is irrelevant, but public image definitely has an *impact* on sales.

SPEAK YOUR MIND

Speak Your Mind Helpers

6. Where does a woman have an advantage over a man in terms of employment and promotion?

(A)

Men usually do a poor job selling clothes or other personal products to women, while women often do very well selling these kinds of items to men. (On the other hand, car or *appliance* salesmen probably perform better than saleswomen.)

(B)

I would certainly guess that few male *gynecologists* or *obstetricians* do as well as their female *counterparts*. Most women just do not feel particularly comfortable discussing their *reproductive* problems with men.



→ **appliance** : machine, such as a toaster or dishwasher, used to perform a household task

→ **gynecology** : study and treatment of medical conditions and illness affecting only women

→ **obstetrics** : part of medical science that deals with the birth of children

→ **counterpart** : one having the same function → **reproductive** : relating to the process of having babies

7. Which do you think is more important in getting a promotion, seniority or competence?

F : I'm so angry I could scream!

M : Whoa, slow down. Take it easy. What's the matter?

F : I found out today I didn't get that promotion I was expecting.

M : Why not?

F : It went to some one else, just because he's been there longer.

M : Are you sure? I'm not at all suggesting that you are incompetent, but maybe he is a little more competent than you are simply because he has indeed been there longer. As a result, he has a bit more experience and so on. Wouldn't you agree that that's possible?

F : That might be true sometimes. But though he's been there a lot longer than I have, I was as good at the job in six months as he was in three years. I'm sure my aptitude for the work, or maybe just my attitude towards it, is far better than his. In any case, I've *worked my butt off* while he's been *cruising along*. I deserved that promotion much more than he did, and I'm upset about not getting it.

M : Well, if he's such a *goof-up*, this might be the best thing that could have happened to you. If he isn't very well suited for the new job, his bosses will find that out pretty quickly. Then they'll need someone to *fill his shoes*, and they'll need that person pretty *badly*. It seems to me you'll be in a better *bargaining position* than you are now. At the end of the day, you'll be much better off.

F : Yes, I've thought of that. But that doesn't make me any less angry at the moment. I still think I deserve this opportunity more than he does, and I still think it's unfair for my company to pass me over.

M : Yes, but what can you do about it?

F : Well, I can always leave and find another job. Or start my own firm. Either way, that would show them!

M : Yes it would. But I would advise you to go along with their decision this time. Show your loyalty and commitment and keep doing your job to the best of your ability. Don't criticize the new guy yourself; let your bosses realize their mistake on their own. Then, when the next *spot* opens up, let them know that if your ability isn't adequately appreciated you will take it elsewhere.

F : Yes, you're absolutely right. I can certainly see the wisdom in your approach, even though I can't help feel the injustice of the current situation. I'll try your way for a while and see what happens. If I don't get promoted soon, I can still go elsewhere later on. I don't have to quit now, but I can start looking for other options, just in case.

M : Don't be discouraged. I know you'll make it. Timing is everything.

→ **work one's butt off** : work very hard to achieve (sth) → **cruise along** : move leisurely without effort

→ **goof-up** : silly or stupid person → **fill one's shoes** : do the job that (sb) else used to do

→ **badly** : very much → **bargaining position** : positive quality to be emphasized during negotiations

→ **spot** : position