

NAVIGATING YOUR CAREER

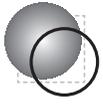
*Increasing Visibility*

*Produced by:*



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## INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is an important element of a sound career development plan for all employees.

- If you are early in your career, a mentor can help focus your vision for future opportunities while providing sound advice and guidance for maximizing your impact in your current role.
- At midcareer, a mentor can help in assessing your skills acquired through varied experiences and create a meaningful plan for your next steps in the organization.
- Late in your career, a mentor can help you review your accomplishments and assess and plan the legacy you wish to leave behind.

Although “formal” mentoring programs are common in many organizations, most employees find that their opportunities for mentoring occur through a more “informal” process of selecting and engaging in a mentoring relationship outside of a formal organizational program.

This series has been designed to provide all employees, regardless of their participation in a formal program, with a framework for establishing and getting the most out of their mentoring relationships. Each module provides you with suggestions for organizing your plan for mentoring and suggestions for conversations to have with your mentor, as well as practical steps to take to develop your skill set.

Other modules in this series include:

- **Building Working Relationships**
- **Influencing Others Through Leadership**
- **Learning Partner Toolkit**
- **Sharing Organizational Knowledge**
- **Your Career Journey**

Each module provides a framework for self-paced reflection with prompts and suggestions of areas you may wish to talk over with your mentor. The prompts are designated by this symbol:





## INCREASING VISIBILITY

This module, *Increasing Visibility*, will challenge you to think about ways that will spotlight your day-to-day activities in positive ways.

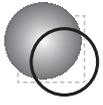
### GOALS OF THIS MODULE

Through your dialogues with your mentor, you will explore:

- The connection between initiative and visibility.
- Your challenges related to increased visibility.
- The risks and downsides related to increased visibility.



Individuals who have high visibility are most often the same individuals who take the initiative to add value to their organization and their co-workers. In Robert E. Kelly's book *How to Be a Star at Work* he calls it, "blazing trails in the organization's white spaces." He defines "white spaces" as the areas poorly covered, or not covered at all, by job descriptions or organizational charts that add value to customers and the organization's goals.



## BECOME A VALUE-ADDED CONTRIBUTOR

AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY

**Initiative** *n.* *The power or ability to begin or to follow through energetically with a plan or task; enterprise and determination.*

Value-added contributors add to the bottom line of the organization by taking the initiative to go beyond their job description to serve customers, or to serve those who serve customers. They get attention by recognizing issues that need to be addressed and then making sure that something is done about them.

In the early stage of a new role, the most important aspect of the job is to learn the tasks associated with that job. A value-added contributor adds to the bottom line of the organization first by excelling at their given role. Once an individual has gained proficiency at day-to-day tasks, he or she can add further value by taking the initiative to go above and beyond the given job description. High-performing contributors strike a balance between excellence in the requirements of their role and innovation to address needs that are not currently being undertaken.

While doing this, they make sure that their co-workers, managers, customers, and others know what they have done, not by grandstanding but by gaining a reputation for contributing to the group's or organization's performance.

It's really about being seen as the person who others know they can count on and as someone who delivers. It's about integrity and credibility.



*Talk to your mentor about day-to-day activities that are seen as adding value to the organization. Focus on activities that may not be written in any formal procedure book.*

*Talk about what highly visible individuals do and how others know that their value-added tasks are being accomplished.*

*Ask your mentor to provide a personal example of how he or she provides value-added contributions.*



## BECOME A VALUE-ADDED CONTRIBUTOR *(continued)*

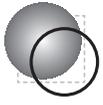


*Talk about what more you might do to be seen in the organization as a value-added contributor.*

*Think about:*

- *Sharing knowledge:*
  
- *Team interactions:*
  
- *Expanding the scope of your job:*
  
- *Navigating the “white space”:*
  
- *Serving customers (internal/external):*

*Determine who needs to know about your activities and identify appropriate ways to let them know.*



## GET CREDIT FOR YOUR IDEAS

Part of increasing your visibility is making sure that when you have a good idea, you share it with others, while at the same time taking credit for its origination.

### GETTING CREDIT

1. Go beyond merely suggesting ideas. State your ideas clearly and in detail. Provide the benefits and supporting factors.
2. Demonstrate your ownership. Don't give your ideas away. Let people know that this was your idea.
3. Find a sponsor to help carry your idea.
4. Get other people involved and excited by telling them about it.
5. Pass ideas around for input to build support and let people know what you are proposing.



*Talk with your mentor about the fine line between making others aware of contributions and grandstanding. Ask them for suggestions and strategies for what will work at your organization.*



## OUR INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

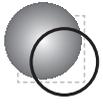
More than any other factor that impacts your effectiveness in taking and receiving credit are the issues related to cultural diversity. Here is why:

- First, consider your cultural norms. Are you more naturally relationship or task focused? Do you believe in humility and modesty or are you more outspoken about achievements?
- Next, observe the culture of your work group, your business area, and the organization. How much energy do you spend adapting to a culture that is different from your “personal culture”?
- Think about your communication style and personality type. Are you comfortable in the spotlight or do you prefer others to notice your hard work without having to say something to them?



*Talk to your mentor about getting credit for ideas in terms of one or more of these topics:*

- *Your cultural norms around visibility. Talk about what feels “right” for you. Make a choice as to what you are willing to do.*
- *Your status in the organization. What are your challenges in taking credit and receiving credit for your ideas?*
- *Your “difference.” Talk to your mentor about what that means in terms of being credited for your suggestions. Talk about being heard, appreciated, and how you are viewed.*
- *Your style and how you would go about taking credit for your ideas.*



## RISKS AND DOWNSIDES

When taking the initiative to go beyond your job description to make value-added contributions, there can be downsides and professional risks.

- By taking on the extra responsibility, you may affect your ability to meet deadlines easily.
- You may not have the best training or experience to do the task, so you could fail.
- You may be seen as an opportunist by your colleagues.
- Your reputation is on the line so you must keep your promises.



*Talk to your mentor about what you can do to avoid, or at least minimize, these risks and downsides as you build your reputation and increase your visibility. Ask for examples of things that have worked for your mentor.*

(NOTE: You may want to link this discussion to some of your personal reflections from other modules.)



## PERSONAL REFLECTION: INCREASING YOUR VISIBILITY

Think about increasing your visibility within the organization.

1. What are some insights that you gained from your discussions with your mentor that you will consider as you reflect on your actions?
2. What strategies will you take to increase your visibility as you navigate your career?  
What will you:

Change?

Modify?

Stop doing?

Start doing?

3. Identify one goal that you will work on immediately.



*Be prepared to talk to your mentor about these items at your next meeting.*



