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Ready for your next career move? Building a successful career in financial leadership involves more than great work experience; it involves a tailored career plan, marketing tools and strategically leveraging your career to enhance your profile within and beyond your organization.

CREATE A CAREER PLAN

The old adage “Keep your head down and work hard” doesn’t necessarily help you

COMMIT TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Read what your leaders are reading. Notice the reading material on your senior leaders’ desks. Commit yourself to keeping abreast of the broader issues impacting organizations and fine-tune your technical expertise accordingly. Consider the CGA-BC Certificate in Executive Leadership to strengthen your strategic planning, communication, project and team management, and critical decision-making skills.

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works. Network with other business units to find out about their financial reporting needs and how your division can better serve them. Outside your organization, use the professional networking site LinkedIn to build your network. As an extra bonus, LinkedIn is actively used by recruiters to source top talent. Lastly, join a Board (www.board-match.org) so that you can expand your network and build your leadership skills.

COMMUNICATE YOUR SUCCESS

In conversations within your business unit and with key decision makers, keep others apprised of key projects you have taken on, as well as your successes. Next time you’re in the elevator and a senior leader asks how you are doing, talk about key projects or initiatives you are involved with. For example, “Things are going well. I’ve just begun implementing new financial reporting software that will greatly improve our tracking of financial performance within our branch offices.”

BE A GREAT PEOPLE MANAGER

Advance your people management skills: ask your manager for the opportunity to manage larger teams. Look for opportunities to turn around team performance, coach and develop employees, conduct performance conversations and terminations (when necessary), and drive teams to successfully tackle key projects. Develop a reputation for building high-performance work teams and engaged employees.

Tips on building a robust and rewarding career

Strategies for Career Success

build a career as a financial leader. Instead, Recruitment Team Lead Jim Huynh of Horizon Recruitment (formerly WPCG Finance & Professional Recruitment) advises you to “develop a plan and know where you want to get in 5 to 15 years.”

BE A ROCK STAR

Do your job well and consistently outperform your performance objectives. Not sure if your performance is on track? Don’t wait for your annual performance review, ask your manager for feedback and suggestions *now* to help you develop your expertise.

SHOW INITIATIVE

Increase your profile by speaking up in team and organization-wide meetings. Suggest strategies to tackle old problems and improve processes. Volunteer to take on projects – the more complex and challenging, the better.

BUILD A SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Success rarely happens in isolation. Jim Huynh works with successful financial leaders and advises emerging leaders to leverage their careers by focusing on “building a sphere of influence while fostering connections and growing their reputation beyond their work groups.”

GET A MENTOR

The Corporate Leadership Council surveyed CEOs of Fortune 500 organizations and discovered that one of the top reasons CEOs believed they were successful was having a mentor. Mentors guide and direct you, and provide critical strategies to navigate and advance your career.

RAISE YOUR PROFILE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND BEYOND

Individuals who rise to the top typically have rich net-

Joanne Loberg, BA, CMP, CEC, provides career coaching services to professional and executive clients needing career testing; targeted, accomplishment-based resumé and cover letters; and interview practice to ensure they launch a successful job search.

LEARN THE ART OF INFLUENCING

Patricia Hazelwood, Division Director of Robert Half Finance & Accounting, specifically looks for candidates with well-honed listening skills, since "listening is important to management as you must listen to your team" in order to influence change. She is also looking for candidates who are decisive, articulate communicators without being arrogant or pushy. In her words, it's all about "relationship management." Top candidates have a track record of building strong relationships throughout the organization, which enable them to influence and drive change.

FINE-TUNE YOUR MARKETING TOOLS

Critical to career success in today's highly competitive market is a well-crafted, accomplishment-based resumé. Set yourself apart by highlighting your results, such as managing large or complex projects, implementing IT systems and suggesting strategies to improve financial reporting and increase efficiency. Where possible, quantify your results.

POLISH YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

Diane Kerley, National Practice Leader of Accounting & Finance at Aplin Professional, states it is imperative that you

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consistently put your best foot forward. She looks for a "great attitude, enthusiasm and good communication skills." If nerves get the best of you, engage in interview coaching with a career coach. If you lack confidence and clarity when communicating, she recommends attending a Toastmasters group.

Kerley also advises you to know your resumé inside and out, as well as your key accomplishments. Successful interview candidates are able to readily discuss their successes and sprinkle these throughout their interviews. During interviews, present examples of your accomplishments related to process improvement, project management, team leadership and other contributions to the top- and bottom-line performance of the organization.

All three recruiters advise that you be prepared for these commonly asked questions (which typically are poorly answered):

- "Tell me about yourself" (Ensure your answer is relevant to the role you are applying for.)
- "Why do you want to work for us?"
- "What do you know about us?"
- "Walk us through your resumé." (Talk about your key accomplishments within each role.)

Create a well-defined career plan, establish a track record of solid performance, take on new projects, develop your sphere of influence and ensure your key accomplishments are captured in your resumé and presented during your interviews. Lastly, Jim Huynh says "don't be afraid of change" in order to leverage your career and reach your goals. □

