

04-04-23 | CAREER EVOLUTION

You need to develop this top skill to advance your career. Here are 5 ways to do it

What distinguishes successful people is how they approach life's challenges rather than their talents, education, or innate skills.



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BY NICKY GARCEA

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One of the top **skills proven** to advance your career is having a “growth mindset.” The term was coined by **Dr. Carol Dweck** based on her research on how students react to failures or challenges. Students who focused on effort and learning rather than failure were able to perform better the next time around.

Dweck suggests that what distinguishes successful people is how they approach life's challenges rather than their talents, education, or innate skills. Those who possess a growth mindset know that something will go wrong at some point, so you must be prepared and resilient in order to turn challenges into opportunities for you, your team, and your company.

In today's work climate—particularly **in the wake of layoffs**—many people find themselves in tough spots or situations where things *are* going wrong at times. So, while a growth mindset sounds exciting in theory, how does one actually nurture and grow this skill on-the-job today? Here are five tangible examples of how to nurture your growth mindset at work.

SET PERSONAL GOALS QUARTERLY

Setting goals can feel overwhelming and intimidating, especially if you are at a new company or have recently been promoted to a new role. We can sometimes fail to reach goals because they are too big or not specific enough. Setting unrealistic goals that cannot be reached will not build your sense of growth. Setting quarterly objectives that help you reach your goal can feel more manageable and progressive. Creating a memory of reaching a goal helps build confidence to allow the next goal that you set yourself to be more of a stretch. This sequential process increases your growth mindset.

ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY WHEN YOU ARE PART OF A TEAM

Neuroscientist Dr. Barbara Fredrickson's work on team positivity suggests that you need a 3:1 ratio of positive to negative contributions. When this balance is in place, teams collectively have the brain



Working in a team where you can build on others' thoughts as well as offer critique creates an environment where it is okay to have ideas that might not work or be picked up by your teammates. Problem-solving and original thought generation are more likely to happen with teams working this way. That increases the team's chances of success.

OPTIMISM BIAS WORKS

It is now well documented that being predisposed to thinking optimistically can manifest in more positive outcomes. According to another neuroscientist, Tali Sharot, in order to develop our optimism bias we need to believe that we can do even better in the future than we are now. This belief helps to build resilience and a sense of progression and growth.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO FAIL

Part of building our resilience and optimism is knowing that in reality, there are times when we will fail and that is okay. To not try something new or not move an idea forward will prevent us progressing. As a human species we have always been learning via trial and error. At work that means trying, failing, learning, and progressing need to be encouraged.

Teams that work on "pre-mortems" that ask: "What might happen if we try this?" also benefit from identifying winning ways forward and weeding out those ideas that might not work.

Retrospective learning should also be encouraged so everyone in the team can build on the learning for the future after any idea/project/task is implemented. These are some of the foundations of a learning culture that can support employee growth.

BE HUMAN

"Bringing your human to work" as outlined by Erica Keswin's [book](#) is good advice for those wanting to thrive in a working environment. Being [vulnerable](#) and authentic isn't just good for our own well-being, but it allows others to feel like they can do the same.

An environment where authenticity is encouraged supports feedback to be given in all directions (up, down, and to the side). Without a culture of feedback positive and constructive, it is impossible to grow and develop regardless of level or salary.

One of the critical components of developing a growth mindset is that it is not static. Just because you demonstrated it once doesn't mean you have it for life. It is active and evolving and, in some cases, harder to deploy. These five tactics should be tried and experimented for growth to continue over time.

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