

Top Tips for Stepping up to Senior Management

So, are you interested in the top job? Work through our plan and it could be yours!

Define your parameters

Do you want a top job – anywhere? Or are you keen to be the CEO where you are now?

The answer to this will guide your efforts; though it doesn't alter the strategy you still need to follow the plan.

Ask for the job

Let your boss know you want their job!

Now, you need to be reasonably diplomatic here. "Boss, one day when you retire, I'd like to continue your good work" or "When you get the promotion you so obviously deserve, I'd love the chance to step into your shoes with you as my mentor" are good examples, if a little bit too close to being a lickspittle. If your preferred approach is "I'll have your job in six months, you slacker", then perhaps you need to brush up on your diplomatic skills.

Get your boss interested in helping you to be just like them. The aim is be given every opportunity to acquire the skills and profile to become the anointed successor.

Of course, the skills you pick up are just as useful somewhere else.

Broaden yourself

Many CEOs come though either an accounting function or a sales function, which really does not wholly prepare one for a broad role. If you're a dynamic Sales and Marketing Manager and don't want some bean-counter of a CFO taking the job you deserve, find out about what she actually does. If you're a talented and cautious CFO and don't want that cowboy over in Sales to get above you in the pecking order, spend some time in sales and marketing.

Get some empathy with other divisions, and become the most well-rounded candidate.

Keep your resumé polished

You never know when you might need your resumé. You might get asked for it at a function, and you're an hour away from a four week overseas holiday. Every time you do a short course, add it that night (You can always take some off). And get it out once a month and make sure it's AOK and ready to roll.

Show Leadership

There are many opportunities to show leadership. Volunteer to be on interdepartmental committees. Take opportunities to represent the firm on industry association boards. It's great exposure, and dovetails nicely with the next point.

Know the industry

Have you ever noticed that at the bottom rungs, your competitors are fierce enemies – you'd never be seen in the same room with them – whereas in the upper echelons, the CEOs all know each other and catch up at industry functions and business meetings?

Get out there amongst it. Meet your competitors. In many industries, you could end up working alongside some of these people somewhere, sometime, and you might find out that they are not the devil incarnate as you had previously thought.

Educate yourself

Take every opportunity to broaden your education. If your firm offers support, take it with both hands. An MBA still carries a lot of weight, but decide for yourself on something that both interests you and is career building.

Add specific strategies

Some industries have specific strategies that help. If you are in a business that relies on networking, network like crazy. If you are in academia, write a book. Look at what the CEOs in your field have done, and add relevant ideas into your plan.

Following this plan will raise your profile – which carries its own challenges – and get you on the path to where you want to be.