10 Tips to Future-Proof Your Career

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"Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it." -Theodore Roosevelt

Future proof refers to the ability of something to continue to be of value into the distant future and not become obsolete. This concept is critical to career management. Now is the time to take on extra career responsibilities and move out of your comfort zone. Here are 10 tips to future-proof your career:

1. Speak up at the next staff meeting. Make a positive contribution to the conversation and share your ideas. Don't wait and then say, "Gee that was MY idea." How would anyone have known?

2. Schedule a review with your boss. Make her aware of your valuable contributions. It's not bragging if it's true AND your boss may not be aware of all you do. Track your results now. Go back into your emails and see how many customers praised your work. Create a "me file." Want more tips? Read: Revealing Your Personal Power in the Workplace.

3. Anticipate the needs of your coworkers — and other departments. You might be in product development, but just read a good marketing article that's on target for your company's goals. Send it to your colleague in marketing with a brief note, "Saw this and thought you might find it helpful. Thanks for the hard work on the launch of the X project!"

4. Build bridges to other departments. When I worked for a newspaper, there was a disconnect between advertising, production, and editing (reporting). I created a bridge simply by asking questions and learning more about the other departments. Cross train if your company has a program. What are some other ways you can make inroads into other departments and build a network?

5. Provide genuine compliments. "Nice shoes" is OK, but "Wanda, your help on the gizmo project was invaluable. The fact that you were able to land coverage in Wired magazine, WOW!" is better. Good compliments are specific — and genuine.

6. Mentor the newbie. What tips can you provide that will help this person succeed in your organization? And who do they need to know?

7. Take a class and build your skills. But then you won't have your MBA until you're 40 you say? True, but you'll still be 40... Why not have the degree?

8. Become a thought leader in your industry. Start a blog. Write a whitepaper. Speak at your next industry conference.

9. Network inside and outside the company. Take an active role on employee improvement teams, volunteer groups, and professional organizations. Be sure your network includes multiple generations and diversity for a broad spectrum of opinions and advice.

10. Shake things up. Think of at least one thing you can do right now that would save your department money, streamline operations or improve morale. And just do it! "But it's always been done like that" is old thinking. "How can I improve this" is new thinking.

Bonus: Build your brand! Increase your online visibility the right way to attract opportunities to you. Now more than ever, you've got to be noticed. Google yourself now to see where you stand.

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Wendy Terwelp is a recognized career expert who writes, speaks, and coaches on networking, personal branding, and career development for private coaching clients, companies, and associations worldwide. Book Wendy for your next event: call 262.241.4655 or visit https://www.knocks.com/speaking/.