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3 Questions to Help You Create Your Own Metrics of Success

If you can get crystal clear on what your personal metrics for success are, you'll have the insight and goals you need to do everything possible to make your good work count.



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In my view, performance is the single biggest driver for advancement--or, at least the one over which you have control. Assessing your own performance allows you to gauge your ability to use performance as leverage. Understanding how your company views performance will also help you understand its possible impact.

If you can get crystal clear on what your personal metrics for success are, you'll have the insight and goals you need to do everything possible to make your good work count.

The shifts from one position to another, especially as you move up the ladder, require you to continuously revise what's expected of you. Your ability to do that, along with whatever other metrics you may be tracking, is an important measure of your performance. Once you're clear on the measures of success, you can set out to claim your results.

So how do you assess what your metrics for success are? Start by asking yourself these three questions:

1. Is performance emphasized where you work?

Begin by deciding if your company places a large emphasis on performance when they are looking to promote. An old adage says that what gets measured, matters--and yet sometimes what's being measured isn't always clear. Different stakeholders to whom you're accountable may have different interests, and that can indeed complicate your life.

You should be acutely attuned to how your performance is being measured and if you're not, ask your boss. If you're still not clear, do more digging. If you still can't get clarity, take a shot at it yourself--put together a list of the things you think you should be delivering and shop the list around to get a reaction.

For example, many companies like to promote from within solely based on performance. They do this because it shows young employees that they have the potential for greater opportunities if they stay with that company. It is also a great way to get people motivated to work hard. Companies that place a high emphasis on performance also give a voice to individuals who do not necessarily like to "brag" about themselves. A company that tracks performance allows the numbers to speak for themselves. Your job is to know those numbers are for you, and measure them.

2. Which performance measures will you use?

You have to decide the success measures that are right for you. An old adage says that what gets measured, matters--and yet sometimes what is being measured isn't always clear. Think about looking at such measures as: sales results, the engagement of employees at your department, the satisfaction ratings of your clients or employees, and the impact you make on the market share, your contribution to high-stakes projects, your ability to lead a strategic vision, or your development of a high-performing team.

But you're a high-achieving, high-performing leader. So let's think bigger. Beyond delivering on your current performance measures, are there goals you want to pursue?

- What's the next role you want, and what's required there?
- What have you already mastered, and how can you expand?
- Where are the gaps in your experience, and how can you fill them in?

A number of successful leaders have found that answering these questions can help them not just perform but also outperform their own expectations. Do some self-assessment about how you could measure your own performance. Find a measure of success that fits for you, and use it! Once you are clear on the measure of success, you can set out to claim your results.

3. How will you claim your results?

Claiming your results is mostly about keeping your eye on those results and never losing sight of them. Even if your company is exceptional at tracking and promoting on results, sometimes (for women, especially) those results aren't always prioritized. You may have to sing your own praises and point out how well you've been doing. You may have to advocate for yourself. Allowing your performance to drive your advancement goes nowhere if you do not claim your own achievements. Even if your company is exceptional at tracking and promoting on results, sometimes (for women, especially) those results are not always prioritized.

One comment I hear over and over from women is, "I don't like to toot my own horn." We want to know our results will matter. We want to have our good work recognized. There's only one thing wrong with assuming other people will celebrate your performance: if you don't tell them, how will they know?

You may have to sing your own praises and point out how well you have been doing. You may have to advocate for yourself. Although this part may not come naturally to some, it is a necessity for advancement.

In short, the strategy is this: Focus on performance, get the results, and make an effort to point out those results so you get the credit (and the opportunities) you have earned.

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