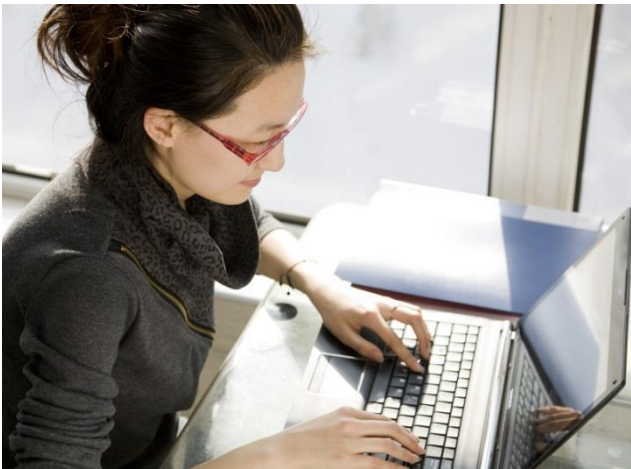




# Manage your Career

## *Phase Two: Assess Readiness for Action*



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## PHASE TWO: ASSESS READINESS FOR ACTION

### *Overview*

Gauging your readiness for action depends on thoroughly evaluating your goal in the context of your company's direction and your resources professionally and personally. Here is where you define what you bring to the table and how valuable it is to the company. In order to mount an effective campaign for career growth, you have to know your unique value. What resources will leverage you toward this next step?

Four general areas require your consideration: 1) Competencies, 2) Relationships, 3) Influence and 4) Personal Circumstances. If you are to be successful in moving forward substantially, you will engage in energetic assessment of your readiness in each of these mission-critical areas.

Reflect on what you would like to accomplish in *Incremental* and/or *Quantum* advances. Now consider what competencies, relationships, influence and culture are required in your particular company in order to translate your goal into results. Your success depends on high levels of compatibility between your goals and those held by senior management inside your company.

### *Step One: Analyze Competencies*

Start with what leadership, seeks among their rising stars. Then consider your enterprise in particular.

In his intense studies over the last 10 years of CEOs at corporations such as GE, IBM, Merrill Lynch, State Farm, Allstate, Fidelity Investments, Lanier, Abbott Labs, Pepsi, Ford, Dell, AT&T, Verizon Wireless, Qualcomm, Alltel, NCR, Alcoa, PPG, along with many smaller companies, management consultant, John Spence, notes that CEOs universally look for the following traits in high potential talent:

- Strong Strategic Thinking
- Excellent Communications
- Outstanding Team Leadership
- High Level Accountability
- Top Notch Execution

As we define each competency, consider to what extent your company values it and how you measure up on each.

### **Strong Strategic Thinking**

Strategizing occurs ideally before “doing” (implementation) and this creates far superior results, although in our business culture the “doing” gets the rewards. Strategizing is an invisible component that steers action toward enhanced results. Consultants say at least 20% of one's time (one day per week) should go toward thinking.

- Expertise - combining learning from others (research) with learning from your own experience and applying these to the problem
- Vision - seeing possibilities; defining desired outcomes; thinking outside the box
- Execution - developing a plan of action to achieve desired results

Does your company reward strong strategic thinking? Are you taking strategy courses in B-School? What are your strategic strengths and limitations?

### **Excellent Communications**

Communicating effectively inside a corporation is everything. You communicate constantly on many levels so consider these aspects of communication that can, simply, make or break your career:

- Communicating with clarity, conciseness, correctness; conveying the message you intend precisely and consistently
- Drawing upon your social/emotional intelligence; communicating and exchanging with a sensitivity to your audience
- Listening well
- Presenting well

Does your company place overt value on these communication proficiencies? Are you evaluated directly on your ability to communicate? How well do you perform? To what extent are you enhancing your communication skills in B-School? In which proficiencies do you excel?

### **Outstanding Team Leadership**

Boardrooms always require finesse in team leadership. Your success is inevitably tied to this key set of skills, although which particular team-related competencies are most critical depend on your company culture. Overall, to be effective in team leadership you must 1) demonstrate your own competence, 2) identify and attract talent to your endeavors and 3) lead that talent to deliver on measurable and mutual goals.

As you study team leadership in your own company, try to determine those leadership qualities that are valued most. Look at the individual considered to be the highly successful leader in your arena, and ask yourself what skills in particular does that individual demonstrate? How are these characteristics distinct from those of less successful leaders? Does your company directly address team leadership competencies? How do you measure up on these criteria?

Competencies to consider in regard to team leadership might include:

- Expertise - possessing the knowledge and experience necessary to lead the team toward positive results; staying current in your field
- Vision - viewing the end-goal clearly and pointing others to it
- Emotional Intelligence (EQ) - understanding your own and other people's emotional makeup well enough to move people in the direction of accomplishing your company's goals
- Social Intelligence (SQ) - getting along with others so that they will cooperate with you toward a common goal
- Decisiveness - willingness to make a decision based on the best information available and move forward
- Focus - demonstrating singleness of purpose in getting the job accomplished within the agreed upon time frame
- Persuasiveness - influencing others toward your vision

## High Accountability

Simply stated, accountability means you do what you say you are going to do. You follow through on your commitments. People who develop a reputation for high accountability are golden in organizations across the board. As with communication, accountability can be assessed on a number of levels:

- Accountability for work - following through on work assignments/goals so that you are known as someone who delivers... On time, under budget? Even better.
- Accountability for actions - developing a track record for acting ethically, in support of the company, and respectfully toward colleagues, direct reports, customers, shareholders.
- Accountability for yourself - driving your own career growth.

Accountability impacts the health of your team as well. If you are thoroughly accountable your team can attend to their own critical tasks, allowing for maximum productivity.

Consistently, top leadership indicates that they promote talent that navigates their own career development rather than looks to “the company” to do it for them. This means engaging in the very planning that you are doing right now. What am I good at? What does the company need and value? Where are we aligned? What might my next step look like? How will I get there? Who can help me? What actions do I need to take to close the gap between where I am now and where I want to go?

While companies often provide resources to assist you in exploring possibilities, you ultimately guide your own lifelong career development. Certainly pursuing your Business degree indicates that you value your career progression. And engaging your Meridian Coach as well as your manager, mentors and other champions, is essential.

## Top Notch Execution

Top notch execution means doing your job very, very well - exceeding even your own expectations. To inspire your team to follow your lead, set forth success parameters in measurable, time-linked goals.

### ***Action: Chart Your Competencies in Relationship to Your Company's Values***

Look at the general competencies we have addressed in light of those your company values. Brainstorm the competencies required to be considered a rising star within your particular division, department, company, industry. Consider competencies needed for both an *Incremental* and a *Quantum* next step. Chart the competencies that you conclude are required in order for you to achieve your goals on the Self Scored Competency Worksheet.

Be sure to note special competencies that you offer the company that make you irreplaceable, whether they are unique knowledge, specialized training, customer understanding. Next, give yourself a grade on each of the competencies provided. Wherever possible, figure in not only your own impressions but feedback you may have received from managers, colleagues, and mentors informally or through 360 degree assessments.

## Self-Scored Competency Worksheet

Ask yourself, point by point, whether you possess those competencies. Ultimately, you and your Coach will incorporate this information into your Personal Action Plan. [This exercise may be downloaded in Microsoft Word from the Meridian Career Navigator.](#)

[5=highly effective, 4=effective, 3=competent, 2=development advised, 1=development required]

	Scores	
<b>Strategic Thinking (overall)</b>		_____
Expertise	_____	
Vision	_____	
Execution	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
<b>Communications (overall)</b>		_____
Clarity, Conciseness, Correctness	_____	
SQ/EQ	_____	
Listening	_____	
Presenting	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
<b>Team Leadership (overall)</b>		_____
Expertise	_____	
Vision	_____	
EQ	_____	
SQ	_____	
Decisiveness	_____	
Focus	_____	
Persuasiveness	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
<b>Accountability (overall)</b>		_____
Work	_____	
Actions	_____	
Self	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
<b>Execution (overall)</b>		_____
Results	_____	
<b>Special Competencies</b>		_____
_____	_____	

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**Overall Total**

***Step Two: Evaluate Relationships or Who Can Help You Get There?***

Relationships are pivotal to your success in the organization. Assessing your network is, indeed, very relevant to your readiness to take action. When asked how they got to the top, leaders inevitably cite key players who helped them get there. The higher your sights, the more important it is, that you are sponsored by the highest levels of management.

Who do you know inside your organization who will help you get where you want to go? To whom do you need to sell your ideas? Who will influence whether or not you can advance to the next *Incremental* or *Quantum* level? Who will support you once you get to the next level - technical resources, competitors, vendors, colleagues? Also, who might be detractors, individuals who may attempt to block your path? How might you neutralize their potential effect on your success? Or move them to your support team?

***Action: Complete Your Relationship Network Map***

**Relationship Network Map**  
Who will help me get there?

[This exercise may be downloaded in Microsoft Word from the Meridian Career Navigator.](#)

Key Influencers/ Decision Makers/Leaders Inside Whose Support I Need

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Colleagues Who Will Support Me

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Former Colleagues, Bosses, Vendors, Who Will Support Me

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B-School Contacts (Classmates, Faculty, Alumni, Clubs, Your Coach)

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Professional Contacts (Industry Leaders, Competitors, Memberships)

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Social Networks That Will Support Me (Family, Friends, Affiliations)

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### ***Step Three: Assess Your Influence***

Next, determine the extent to which you have the “clout” to make things happen as you have visualized. Do you have the ability to influence key decision makers? Do you have special relationships with individuals who will not just serve as resources for you but who will actually promote you and your cause?

Are you aligned with informal networks, boards, committees who have influence in the arena you are targeting?

What is your reputation among the high level managers inside your company? Within your industry? With customers?

Do you have personal relationships with top-level leaders in your field, your company, your B-School who will promote you to the right people? Advocate for you?

In other words, as you evaluate your resources, take stock of both who you know and how much influence you (and they) have on your opportunities.

### ***Step Four: Consider Personal Factors***

As you evaluate your readiness to launch either an *Incremental* or *Quantum* career move, consider relevant personal factors that may impact your decisions, such as 1) family support and circumstances, 2) health, 3) finances and 4) culture.

The extent to which you can give your full attention to a *Quantum* jump, that requires huge effort depends in part on whether your family will support that decision or whether you are in good health or whether you have the financial wherewithal to support an entrepreneurial venture, for example.

Culture refers to any aspect of your world that might be considered an asset or liability as you consider your next steps - geographical preferences, ethnic influences, religious or social considerations.

Maybe your ideal next step requires relocation internationally and your teenager who has two years left in school is opposed to moving. Or maybe this is the perfect time to expose your family to an inter-cultural experience. These cultural issues figure in to the larger picture the right next step for you. Although you may be capable of undertaking a *Quantum* jump, your circumstances may contraindicate that choice immediately. You may plan to make an *Incremental* change now, with plans for a *Quantum* leap in a few years.

As you address your personal factors, talk to your family, friends and your Coach about how those factors will influence your next steps.