

Working outside of your comfort zone

All of us will have times in our lives when we find ourselves working outside our comfort zone. It can be a daunting time, but if handled well it can also be a perfect opportunity to fast track our career development.

The experience of being outside your comfort zone can come about for many reasons. You may be called on to help with a project during busy times or you may be asked to cover for a superior during a time of their absence. Or perhaps you are facing the challenges of leadership responsibilities that have come with a recent promotion. Whatever the reason, here are some simple steps to help you thrive under these challenging conditions.

The ideal way to achieve career goals is to break them down into smaller goals - this helps to maintain a momentum of achievement which makes the end result easier to reach. Once goals are safely realized, it is then time to set new ones. It can be easy to forget these principles of setting goals when you find yourself "thrown in the deep end". You may suddenly be leading a team, or you may be called upon to be a key decision maker, and unexpectedly have greater autonomy and responsibility than ever before.

The most important thing to remember when in this situation is to keep calm and take your time when tackling difficult tasks or making difficult decisions.

Try not to take unnecessary risks or let yourself be rushed. It's a good idea to develop your own method for working through these challenges. Your method may be something as simple as putting your thoughts down on paper in the form of pros and cons, or it may be that getting outside the office and going for a walk helps to clear your mind.

When faced with a difficult decision, don't be afraid to ask for guidance from others. Ideally, you will have a mentor who you can go to in times of difficulty. Find someone you trust and respect and don't be afraid to ask for help - it is not a sign of weakness and should not be perceived as one. Asking for feedback on the way you handled things is often the best way to learn.

You will probably have disappointments and setbacks. You will be required to do things you have never done before, and this means not always getting things right the first time. Setbacks won't be much fun at the time, but once you have achieved your goal you will look back and appreciate them for the invaluable learning experience they provided. Achieving your goal will be much sweeter if it took considerable effort and resilience to get there.

Working outside your comfort zone is a time when great things are often achieved. Like anything in life, it is only when we are faced with adversity that we find out what we are truly made of.

A little courage can go a long way to helping you achieve your career goals.

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