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Want to be the employee who gets promotions? Seven steps to gaining high-potential status

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5-6 minutes

If your career objective is to climb the corporate ladder, then you need to get recognized as a high-potential employee, or HiPo. HiPos have been tagged as the top performers in an organization and are invited to key meetings, asked for input, offered advanced learning opportunities and given plum assignments. And even when economic circumstances lead to layoffs, they are the ones who don't just avoid the axe, but always seem to endure without any scars.

So what does it take to be recognized as a HiPo? While some of it may be who you know, or luck, there are ways to influence how you and your talents are perceived.

If you are deliberate and thoughtful about showcasing your strengths and establishing your workplace value, you can, and will, position yourself as a HiPo.

Here are seven things you can do right now to become worthy of HiPo status.

1. Do excellent work

Fulfill your current responsibilities. Don't just perform well, perform exceptionally well. This is your baseline. If you can't show those who can influence your success that you are more than capable of consistently producing great work, then none of the remaining six actions will matter.

2. Step up

Show initiative and take action. If you see an issue brewing, preemptively propose solutions. Offer to take care of an unexpected setback. If there is a new project in the works, find an opportunity to add value, perhaps even by taking on a [leadership](#) role. Extend a helping hand for tasks that are outside of your direct responsibility. Volunteer for special task force teams and ask for more challenging duties. Demonstrate that you work well on your own and that you can be even more effective as part of a team. When you step up, you stand out.

3. Actively build relationships

Come to terms with this essential fact – it isn't good enough to have a solid track record in delivering results, it is just as important to build strong relationships with others. HiPos need supporters – above, below and sideways – people who can reinforce your worth to the powers-that-be. Some may call this sucking up, but rest assured that those who do, aren't HiPos. Building relationships isn't about false obsequiousness, but it is taking the time to get to know others. Ask questions of your peers and listen empathetically

to their answers. Offer to help when you can. Acknowledge others for their efforts. Set up frequent meetings with your key stakeholders to check on shifting priorities. Have regular discussions with your manager so that you keep the communication flowing. Make commitments and keep them. If you can't keep them, proactively explain why. If you're in a hybrid or virtual workplace, remember that building relationships doesn't happen unless it's done deliberately.

4. Speak out

Don't be afraid to share your knowledge and skills. Showing that you have invested in learning about your organization proves you are passionate about what you deliver. When you help by volunteering, it demonstrates your desire for your company to be successful. Sure, there is a fine line between being generous with your expertise and coming across as a know-it-all. But if you're thoughtful about [building relationships](#) at the same time, you'll be fine.

5. Be willing to admit you're wrong

Just as important as speaking out is also knowing when to bow out. Your way will not always be the best option, and it takes maturity and presence of mind to accept that. So be open to others' ideas; you may find that they are better than yours. Without getting defensive, be willing to listen to viewpoints you don't agree with. It isn't necessary to win every battle.

6. Think 'big picture'

If you want to rise as a HiPo, you must demonstrate that you have your organization's best interests at heart. There may be times when you will need to place your own personal interests secondary to what is best for the greater good. Do it. It shows you are invested in the company's success.

7. Stay positive

There is no place for negativity in a HiPo's world. Realism and pragmatism, yes, but [negativity](#), no. Take a glass half-full perspective – rather than viewing setbacks as obstacles, see them as challenges you can use to demonstrate your worth. You'll get noticed (in a good way) for taking roadblocks in stride, staying cool and being solution-focused. This doesn't mean you can't have an occasional bad day, but you don't want to be known as a pessimist or a cynic.

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