

# **From Technical Professional To Corporate Manager**

**A Guide to Career Transition**

**David E. Dougherty**

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## A Guide to Career Transition

David E. Dougherty

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# Preface

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This book is directed to technically oriented individuals who are pursuing a corporate career. Its primary purpose is to help creative engineers and scientists to attain their professional goals.

*From Technical Professional to Corporate Manager* tells you how to get bigger raises and promotions. It also shows you how to direct your career and to reach a higher level in the corporate hierarchy.

You can get a promotion, provided that you are willing to work for it. In most cases, it is a matter of direction and recognition, of standing out from your peers, and of doing more things right most of the time. In many cases, career planning, goals, direction, and hard work add up to bigger raises and promotions.

This book advises you how to use your company's resources for career advancement and how to avoid common errors. It provides insight into corporate practices and introduces you to successful executives and the techniques they used in climbing the corporate ladder.

Most of the individuals you meet in the following pages have succeeded in the corporate environment; they provide a living lesson in how to work effectively, how to get ahead, and how to enjoy life. A few individuals are introduced by their first names and initials, and they too have been successful. However, they are used to illustrate practices that might be better avoided in your quest for advancement.

You also encounter a few unsuccessful individuals in the following pages. Their names have been changed to avoid embarrassment. Some readers may associate their own activities with those of the unsuccessful

individuals. Those readers will see that it is not too late to change, to put past practices behind them, and to start fresh.

Selling your ideas and yourself is emphasized throughout the book. You learn to use innovation as a springboard to success and how patents and other forms of proprietary property can help you do a better job and advance your career. Actual case histories illustrate the intricacies of patents and how they can be used in selling your projects and, more importantly, yourself.

Technically trained individuals include those with a 2 year Associate of Arts degree, the professional engineer, and the scientist with a Ph.D. They are, for the most part, referred to as engineers. A large majority of engineers are members of the male sex. For this reason, the masculine form of the personal pronoun is used. No discrimination is intended.

As you read the book, recognize that each point is designed to get you a bigger raise and a promotion. For those of you who are willing to put forth the extra effort, and sincerely want to get ahead, read on!

DAVID E. DOUGHERTY

*Weston, Connecticut  
June 1984*

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# 1

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## The Dynamics of Success

*Believe in yourself. Have faith in your abilities. Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own power you can not be successful or happy.\**

\*Peale, Norman Vincent—*The Power of Positive Thinking*, page 1. Copyright © 1952, 1956, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

You can succeed in a corporate environment by applying scientific principles to the management of your career.

Pay attention to your career is the first principle of success. In time, a mentor may help in this role. In the interim, apply the rule that God looks after him who looks after himself. It will be relatively easy for you to surpass many of your peers by recognizing what it takes to get ahead, by applying a few simple rules, and by paying attention to career goals. This is so, because many talented engineers deal themselves out of the competition for promotion. Some work themselves into a rut and become frustrated.

It is not always a question of how hard you work. Almost everyone will recognize poor old Sam, who labors diligently for long hours, makes a monumental contribution to the company, and seldom, if ever, gets any recognition. Sam's colleagues complain about the company's lack of appreciation and unfair policies which favor the less talented who do less work. His coworkers attribute their lack of success to corporate politics and take macho pride in doing things their own way. In other words, they don't become a member of a team; they don't work effectively.

Take drastic action, if you find yourself among the group of complainers. Make up your mind that you can succeed and associate with a more enthusiastic group. It is not necessary to work 16 hours a day. However, it is important to direct your daily efforts toward real accomplishments in order to earn bigger raises and promotions. Sam worked hard at being a good engineer. In doing so, he failed to pay attention to his own career.

As you may know, many corporations are no longer willing to invest in long term technical projects. An era of financial controls, a preoccupation with numerical analysis, a return on net assets, and a demand for rapid payback have made the role of technical development more difficult.

Some engineers are frustrated by financial analysis and are scornful of accountants. They look down their academic noses at the financial analyst's simplistic mathematics and are finessed out of a major project.

Recognize the importance of financial management as a second

principle of success. You can learn to speak their language and to apply their concepts in selling your projects.

Almost everyone wants to get ahead. However, the vast majority are not willing to put forth the extra effort. You can capitalize on their reluctance by working a little harder and by being a lot smarter. You will stand out above your peers and get larger raises and promotions.

Enjoy your work is the third principle of success. If you do not enjoy what you are doing, you are in the wrong job and should quit before you become bitter.

Almost everyone in engineering is frustrated from time to time but you can overcome this problem by analyzing the situation. A discussion with a superior or a colleague may help, but never discuss your frustration with a frustrated individual. Seek advice from a positive thinker and work to overcome any frustration.

Give the customer what he wants is the fourth principle of success. All customers want quality, service, and value. However, you should not work for less than the fair wage, since customers will usually pay a premium price for quality. Provide the service that your company wants and give value for what they pay.

You can be anything that you want to be. Have you discussed your career goals with anyone else? If you're married, is your spouse a full partner? You are both investing in your career and should share in any rewards. Are you both willing to sacrifice to reach the top? Remember, two people working together are more productive than two pulling in different directions. If you are not married, review your plan with a confidant. Obtain an objective appraisal and advice.

Establish meaningful goals with a realistic schedule is the fifth principle of success. Most successful corporations have a 1 year and a 5 year plan. Go beyond 5 years in your career planning. Establish an ultimate goal. Do you want to be a vice president of R&D? At what age can you hope to reach that position? What are the steps along the way, and by what age should you make each step? Review your program at least once each year and evaluate your performance as compared to your plan.

Some large corporations have a dual ladder for advancement. One is for management and the other is for professional scientists. The roles are quite different and the pay scale is usually weighted toward management.



Nevertheless, if you don't like administration, motivational problems, and discipline, don't try to fill a management role.

It's not what you do, but how you do it, that will determine how high you can go in the corporate hierarchy. Work hard and direct your efforts to maximize your probability for success.

## **1.2 ENTHUSIASM**

Enthusiasm is like a whirlwind. It is a dynamic quality. And it can be acquired. You can make yourself enthusiastic, you can build enthusiasm into your personality . . .

Ted Welton is one of the most enthusiastic individuals I know. Ted, a consultant, served as a vice president of R&D at Kennecott, group vice president of R&D at the Carborundum Co., and president of Calgon. He is enthusiastic about his projects, his work, his company, and himself. His enthusiasm is infectious.

Enthusiasm usually increases as you progress up the corporate ladder. Look at the successful executives in your company. Does enthusiasm permeate the executive ranks? If not, it may be time to look for another job.

Get involved in your work if you want to be enthusiastic. Find something exciting, a project that is challenging, whereby you can make a contribution. Recognize the importance of enthusiasm to your company and to your career.

If you think that your job is insignificant, consider why so many cars fail to finish the Indianapolis 500. In 1967, Andy Granatelli's turbine-powered car held a commanding lead, with only a short distance to go. The failure of an inexpensive part stopped it in its tracks.

Get enthusiastic about yourself. Enjoy life. Look at the bright side and help others. You personally will benefit by this approach. Would you enjoy associating with a group of complainers; would you select someone

\*Girard, Joe, *How to Sell Yourself*, page 75. Copyright © 1979 by Joe Girard. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc.