

Are your behaviors holding back your career success?

Making the transition from "apprentice" to "business ace" starts with a frank appraisal of the behaviors and characteristics you have and those you need to adopt, according to the authors of a new book on personal branding.

The authors of *Apprentice to Business Ace: Your inside-out guide to personal branding* - coach and trainer Carmen Parnos, image professional Helen Robinett and personal branding strategist Sue Currie - say too many people settle for "good enough", average and mediocre, remaining "apprentices" rather than scaling the business ladder to success.

They say most people want to succeed but are missing the keys that unlock the doors to business acclaim, promotion and wealth. These keys are communication, attitude, image, self-branding and personal marketing.

In her section of the book, Parnos says it is the behaviours and thoughts you choose that will determine the outcome of your success.

"The consequences of your actions are guided by your thoughts and behaviors, so be very clear about who you are and who you want to be, and make sure your behaviors follow a very disciplined path towards achieving success," she says.

To do that, you need to know which behaviors, attitudes, skills and thoughts you need to be the person you want to be, and which thoughts and behaviors are holding you back.

One way to do this is to sit down with a trusted advisor - a manager, or somebody you hold in high regard and who knows you well - and ask them what they believe are the key attributes of achieving success in the area that interests you.

Alternatively, you should note down in four columns:

1. **Characteristics and behaviors of the person you want to be.** Think about the people you aspire to be like, and make their traits your own. These may be people in your workplace or industry sector, somebody famous or who is constantly being quoted in the media.

"Start making a list of exactly what it is about their behavior that appeals to you and that makes them successful," Parnos says. "If you have direct access to any of the inspirational people on your list, think about having them as a mentor. If you can discover what makes them tick, you can discover the secrets to their success."

2. **Successful characteristics and behaviors that you already have.** Think about which positive traits you already possess. Which behaviors can you immediately identify as helpful and constructive? You may find some similarities with the answers in column one, and you may just need to work on developing these traits to make them a stronger part of your life, Parnos says.
3. **Successful characteristics and behaviors that you need to adopt.** Ask yourself: "What positive behaviors am I lacking? What traits do I need to adopt and work on and make my own?" The behavior you wish to emulate doesn't have to be an exact replica of the person who inspires you; it's important to make the behavior your own and to give it your own personality, Parnos says.

Be sure the behaviors and attitudes you want to adopt will serve you well and won't just be a ridiculous attempt to make you look bold, as "what is more likely to happen is that you will appear arrogant and egotistical".

Once you have decided on the traits you need to develop, start working on them straight away, Parnos says. "Be the person you want to be now, don't wait till the time is right or until you get promoted into management. This is how you will set yourself apart from your peers and make yourself stand out."

Parnos says that in doing this, you're embracing the "fake it till you make it" principle. "Others will look at you and think how dynamic and inspirational you are, as you display your adopted characteristics. This external admiration will give you inner confidence, until one day you are genuinely exhibiting those positive characteristics you first admired in somebody else."

4. **Damaging and unhelpful characteristics and behaviors that you need to let go of.** What behaviors, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes do you have that are outdated or not serving you well today? Parnos says you should look for a pattern of bad outcomes and how you might have approached these situations differently if you had the opportunity to try again.

"Think back to some of the experiences you've had that did not turn out as favourably as you might have hoped. How did you approach the situation back then? And what different approach would you take today, so that the opportunity would swing in your favour?"

Parnos says you might be surprised at some of the negative patterns of behavior you used to rely on in the past, and you may even pick up on a problematic trait or habit that you previously were unaware of.

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