# Unit III - Career Plateau

## Definition: Career Plateau

Career plateau are acute points in a professional's career, where the possibility of a vertical promotion is less. The position of an employee becomes stagnant with same and repetitive work and responsibilities. Because of the way organizations are shaped, the hierarchy of organizations reduces the possibility of employees to grow vertically after a point in time.

At every higher level of organizational hierarchy, the number of positions decreases. Hence upwards mobility becomes difficult with the positions not being open or with more people vying (compete) for the same position.

When the employees feel trapped and stuck in such situations, the Human Resource function of the organization is responsible to provide opportunities for lateral mobility to avoid a feeling of stagnation among employees. The current job has to be made more meaningful and engaging, and the employees have to be rewarded by alternate means in the absence of promotions.

Plateauing is an issue faced by individuals wherein they feel that their present is not progressive and their future is ambiguous. When their lives stabilize individuals can become very dissatisfied. Dissatisfied employees are a drawback to organizations and hence it is important to ensure employees do not plateau. This can be done by providing a variety of training and developing opportunities in specialized technical skills or general skills such as foreign language. Organizations also take up career planning initiatives where individual employees are given a personalized career growth plan. One major challenge with plateauing is that people may not be aware of the problem they are facing; hence it makes it difficult for the HR to address the issue. https://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/human-resources-hr-terms/1786-career-plateau.html

## Different Kinds of Career Plateau

### Structural Plateau

When one has progressed to a point where the organizational structure prevents him or her from moving up, due to non-availability of vacancies in higher grades structural plateau occurs.

### Content Plateau

When one has mastered the job and there is no longer a sense of challenge in the current position.

**Contribution Plateau**

When one has ceased growing and searching for learning opportunities to develop competencies and add value, becoming unable to respond to changing situations or to keep up with technological changes. Individuals have significant control over the forces that create contribution-based plateau; if one lets this happen, his or her value will decline rapidly.

**Damaged Reputation Plateau**

Damaged reputation plateau occurs when critical behaviours or events put a temporary stall on career progression. Sometimes these may be self-inflicted, sometimes by association with a particular department, supervisor or mission, and sometimes a combination of both. However, it is important to understand that reputation can vary overtime for the same individual and that positive reputation can be restored.

**Life Plateau**

When one experiences a loss of identity, direction, meaning or self-esteem, or when one undergoes self-doubt in his or her life, not just in the job. In many ways this is the most serious plateau, especially when combined with working in a post conflict context.

**Identifying Career plateaus – Structural and Content**

Since Thomas Ference, James Stoner, and Kirby Warren's seminal work first defined the career plateau, researchers have continued to investigate this antithetical phenomenon. This is due to the fact that many employees consider promotions and upward hierarchical movement as synonymous indicators of success at work. The career plateau phenomenon involves situations within which an employee perceives a low likelihood of increased responsibility. There are two types of career plateaus: structural and content. In **structural plateauing**, the individual becomes unable to rise further in the flattened organization's pyramid structure and reaches a point where the likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion is very low. Structurally plateaued employees who equate career success with hierarchical movement may become distressed upon acknowledging their plateaus with their current employers. These employees may take action to remove themselves from the situation, withdraw from organizational involvement, and lower their productivity. All of these scenarios provide a rationale for explaining why career plateauing often has a negative connotation.

Judith Bardwick suggested that employees also plateau when their likelihood of increased growth or challenges associated with the current job is low. When increasing job-specific task responsibility that offers developmental opportunities becomes unattainable, an employee is said

to experience a content plateau. Content-plateaued employees may already be proficient in their jobs, expect no further challenges to be associated with the job, and feel stifled regarding the job's content. Content-plateaued employees are no longer intrigued by their work and often feel they have reached a dead end. Many researchers have empirically confirmed the existence of both of these plateau types.

Over the years, career plateauing has been subject to a variety of conceptual interpretations and empirical measurements. Career plateauing has been objectively measured and defined as either age or long job tenure when comparing the plateaued employee with the average workforce member. Objective measures fail researchers in two respects. First, chronological age and length of tenure will vary from industry to industry, and these measures fail to capture the notion of a stalled career. When is one stalled? How can age or tenure be a proxy when individuals often move from company to company or through myriad industries and restart careers at a senior age? Second, objective measures fail to capture one's personal perception of being plateaued. Plateauing seems to run along a continuum where some individuals perceive being plateaued quickly, while it takes others longer job tenures to feel plateaued. Therefore, the exact time (or age) when someone plateaus varies greatly.

Plateauing has also been measured subjectively as the perception of the individual (or his/her employer) regarding one's likelihood of increased responsibility. Many have found that the perceptual measure better informs us regarding work attitudes and behaviors than does the objectively measured construct. Some have suggested that there may be different degrees of "plateauedness" and therefore that the career plateau construct should be measured on a continuous scale. While self-reported measures may cause some measurement bias, in the case of career plateauing it appears that perceptual measures truly capture one's career situation.

**Reasons for the Career Plateau**

Researchers have suggested different reasons to explain why employees may become plateaued. Once an individual acknowledges that a plateau has occurred, an attribution to explain why it happened is a common psychological process. Firms may plateau employees for either organizational or personal reasons. Within these broad terms, there are specific types of attributions plateaued employees may recognize. First, plateaued employees may perceive that they are plateaued because of the organization's negative assessment of their capabilities. Individuals may be plateaued because they are seen by the organization either as lacking in ability for higher-level jobs or as not desiring higher-level jobs. Managers within organizations

may consciously (or subconsciously) pigeonhole employees as those who are competent and willing to move up the corporate ladder and those who are not. An organization's assessment of an individual, whether it is accurate or not, may be an antecedent condition that the employee believes created his or her plateaued state.

Another situation in which individuals may suggest organizations have caused their plateaus is due to the narrowing employment pyramid. The organizational structure allows fewer and fewer employees to move up to higher management ranks. Also, downsizing eliminates many middle-management layers of the pyramid. As firms cut employees throughout the organization, the structure becomes flattened, creating even more competition than had previously existed. Since flattened organizational structures are a fact of organizational life for the foreseeable future, fewer higher-level jobs will exist at many firms. These organizational constraints may effectively plateau employees.

An employee's personal preference may be offered as a reason for being plateaued. This reason may become more prevalent given today's high percentage of dual-career couples in the workforce. Some individuals explicitly make their desires known not to be promoted further, while others send ambiguous signals to the organization or place constraints on proposed promotions. The typical employee during the 1970s was the strongly committed, ideal "organization man," whose every desire focused on staying with the company for life and progressing at a sure and steady pace up the hierarchy. Hardly any of these individuals chose being plateaued. However, few of today's workers embody the "organization man." Individuals may choose for personal reasons, such as family or health, not to seek additional responsibilities. This is true for both men and women, since both may be juggling work and family responsibilities. Also, an individual may not feel that the added stress (or income) associated with the promotion is worth what the person may have to give up to do the job. In summary, individuals may be plateaued for organizational assessment, organizational constraint, or personal-choice reasons.

**Examples of Career Plateau Reasons**

Given that two types of plateaus, structural and content, have been identified, along with the reasons one might plateau, a discussion is warranted on the typical plateau attributions an employee might give for his or her plateau status. For example, an employee may be structurally plateaued for organizational assessment reasons. An employee may not receive future promotions because management believes the individual lacks the managerial ability or skills

needed for higher-level jobs. Or the organization may believe that the employee is not truly committed to the organization or lacks the desire to rise through the ranks. Hence, the organization has made an assessment of the individual that precludes that employee from career advancement within the firm.

Employees may be structurally plateaued due to organizational constraints. The lack of positions may be caused by a poor economy, downsizing, inappropriate recruiting and staffing efforts targeted at the same population, or an enlarged management rank. In any of these examples, the actions of the organization have resulted in employees who are structurally plateaued, with no opportunity for hierarchical advancement. The employee has been plateaued in this case due to issues outside the employee's (and maybe the firm's) control.

An employee may also be structurally plateaued for personal-choice reasons. It may be that the employee does not desire a higher-level job, stemming from non-work-related issues. In these cases, the reason the employee is structurally plateaued may have everything to do with the personal choices the individual makes (e.g., not wanting/needing the stress associated with higher-level jobs, not taking a promotion because of possible need for family transfer or health reasons). This situation occurs when one makes a conscious decision and takes control of one's career and therefore may be referred to as being structurally plateaued for personal-choice reasons.

Individuals may be content plateaued for either organizational or personal reasons. When the organization has negatively assessed the employee's capabilities, the employee may not receive any further increases in responsibility associated with the current job. The organization may believe that the employee doesn't have managerial or technical skills, ability, desire, or work ethic to manage more advanced tasks. This is oftentimes deemed being "put out to pasture."

Also, the organization may place constraints on the individual's job such that no further learning may take place. These constraints may include inflexible job descriptions or unavailable training. The employee may want additional increases in responsibility but does not receive them because of personnel decisions imposed by the organization. This may cause the employee to perceive that there is little growth opportunity in the job and hence creates a perception of content plateauing for organizational constraint reasons.

An individual may decide for personal reasons that declining additional increases in responsibility in the current job is agreeable with other life domains. The additional workload

associated with more responsibility doesn't seem worth the extra effort. There may be no additional financial remuneration for the excessive work hours; family responsibilities may suffer; or physical or emotional health may be jeopardized. This would be an example of content plateauing for personal-choice reasons.

This summary of the career plateau phenomenon is meant to bring closure to the lack of consensus among researchers about construct definitions. Individuals who experience career plateaus may experience one or both of its two types, structural and content. Within these types of plateaus, there are also reasons to which individuals may attribute their plateaued states. Organizational assessment, organizational constraint, and personal choice are either external or internal decisions that affect the employee's work situation.

**Negative Outcomes Associated with Plateaus**

Career plateauing is an important issue for researchers to examine because of the potentially negative outcomes that may affect both the employee and the organization. Career plateauing has been found to produce negative work attitudes and reflects disappointments stemming from one's work domain. Plateaued employees are described as displaying low levels of job involvement and work motivation. Plateaued employees become less job involved because they believe that the organization has devalued their contributions. Employees who perceive that the organization does not care about them report lower levels of involvement in job responsibilities. The organization has plateaued the individual, and this action causes a blow to the individual's self-image. The employee responds with a low level of job involvement as a behavior that is consistent with his or her perception of the situation. The resulting behavior often involves lower job productivity, and plateauing has been found to be negatively related to performance.

Few researchers have investigated the relationship of one's plateaued type to job involvement. Structural plateauing and content plateauing have both been found to be negatively related to job involvement. Researchers have found that structurally plateaued technical specialists report lower job involvement than their non-plateaued counterparts, and state government employees who report being content plateaued also report low job involvement. This negative relationship between both structural/content plateauing and job involvement would be expected given the definition of job involvement.

Plateaued employees report low levels of job satisfaction and career satisfaction. Researchers have found that both structural and content plateauing are negatively related to

personal development satisfaction, while content plateauing is related to task dissatisfaction. Others have found that both structural and content plateauing are negatively related to both job and career satisfaction.

Plateaued employees also exhibit a greater propensity for leaving the organization. Results have shown that content plateauing has a negative effect on affective commitment to the organization. This type of employee reaction to career plateauing results in a loss of employee morale and productivity and leads to turnover, which may prove very costly to organizations. While the organization may experience negative repercussions when the employee experiences a plateau, the employee may also realize some personal consequences. Harmful psychological effects include lower self-worth due to promotions being taken away, lower skill assessment, and less acceptance by peers and superiors due to devalued work contributions. Plateaued employees may experience negative stereotyping as "deadwood," neglect by supervisors, and avoidance by coworkers.

Work-related stress and strain have been examined as outcomes of an employee's plateau state. Structurally plateaued employees have reported greater work-related stress than have non-plateaued employees. Researchers have found that both structural- and content-plateaued employees experience high levels of job strain and that structurally plateaued employees report experiencing high levels of job-induced tension. Although these studies used various stress scales, there seems to be consistency in the direction of these relationships.

It is conceivable that the reasons for structural and content plateauing could be considered work stressors. This may be particularly true when the reason for becoming plateaued is outside the employee's control. For example, structurally plateaued employees may become distressed upon acknowledging there are no more available positions; that is, there are organizational constraints disallowing further promotions. Some suggest that the mismatch between professional employees' advancement desires and available positions, due to shorter corporate ladders, is a significant source of stress. Employees may become distressed should they perceive that the organization has negatively assessed their abilities and therefore has structurally plateaued them for organizational assessment reasons. Content-plateaued employees may respond similarly when they acknowledge that their jobs will no longer be challenging or that they offer little growth, little flexibility, or few increases in job responsibility. Bardwick once noted that the end of job challenge can generate as much stress as the end of the hierarchical or structural climb.

Researchers have found that stress regarding career progression may be equal among people of various career anchors and more prevalent among early career stage professionals. Both male and female employees expect the same chances for career progression and have similar aspirations and social expectations for advancement. Since the firm is taking those opportunities away, employees may become distressed upon realization of their plateau status.

Positive Outcomes Associated with Plateaus

Although many negative sentiments have been associated with career plateaus, plateaued employees appreciate a few positive experiences. Most important, some research suggests that given the flattened organizational structures common to many companies, experiencing a career plateau may not be as embarrassing or stressful as it once was. In fact, the plateau event may not be a unique situation but rather the norm for many employees' career progressions. From this perspective, plateaus may be more common and acceptable periods in one's career than was previously thought.

Plateaus are a time when new ideas are digested. They afford highly desirable stable, secure, and restful periods. Plateaus allow for reflection and offer individuals time to regroup and plan the next phase of personal and professional growth. Plateaus permit the employee the time to assimilate new knowledge and integrate that knowledge into his or her functional repertoire. From a more pragmatic perspective, plateaus allow time to "de-stress" and also to take stock of and reinforce accomplishments. Some employees may even hope for a plateau due to their inability to cope with the stress that career mobility and progression impose. In fact, plateaued university employees have reported a greater likelihood of staying with and being committed to their organizations.

Plateaued employees are expected to invest less of themselves in the job and more in nonwork activities. According to compensatory theory, disappointments in one sphere of life tend in some way to be made up for in another sphere. Therefore, plateaued employees psychologically distance themselves from work by becoming more involved in nonwork issues. Individuals become involved in these nonwork activities in order to perform well in another domain and maintain their self-esteem. Similarly, plateaued employees may devote more time to their families, leisure interests, and community activities. Researchers have suggested that plateaued employees realize their needs are not being fulfilled within the workplace and look to other life domains for fulfillment. These studies suggest that employees experience positive non-work-related outcomes because of their plateau status.

**Plateauing lead a less stressful life**

It can be easier to explain your decision to plateau when there's a pressing need to slow down. Caring for children or elders doesn't raise eyebrows, nor does nursing an injury or other serious health condition.

But how do you explain to your boss, or to others, that you're simply content with the way things are? And that you don't feel a need to compete for promotions and bigger raises. That's what Anthony K. has had to deal with at the age of 29, his boss asked him to consider a move to a different province, to take a leading role in starting up a brand new sporting goods division. Anthony surprised his boss by saying thanks but no thanks. "My boss is in his early 40's, looking to move up the ladder. He couldn't understand why a guy my age wouldn't jump at this huge opportunity," says Anthony.

"It was hard to make it clear that I love what I'm doing right now, and that balance is key. I know my job inside out. I have time to go mountain biking, snowboarding…getting out in nature and doing my thing means more to me than going after bigger bucks, at this stage anyway." Later on in life Anthony may shift his priorities as his circumstances change.

Stepping off the fast track can be risky though. Turning down his boss's offer almost cost Anthony his job. "At first the senior managers thought I lacked commitment. One of them accused me of not being a team player," says Anthony. "I kept pointing to my sales numbers and how they were growing every month." After month three rolled by, his boss told him they had found someone else to take on the start up. Anthony adds "They decided to keep me in my current position. My dedication and performance helped them see the light. Mind you, if they didn't accommodate me, I guess I would have had to look for work elsewhere."

**Can Just Anyone Plateau Voluntarily?**

Some jobs lend themselves to plateauing more readily than others. For instance, the smaller your employer is, the fewer positions there are for you to move up into. Unionized jobs can also put less emphasis on promotions. There are seniority and other rights that govern your rate of ascent.

In any event, opting to plateau may involve varying degrees of sacrifice. Gone during the plateau are higher raises and extra bonuses, more prestigious titles, greater responsibility and the like.

Yet whatever your reason for plateauing, doing so can give you a chance to continue the work you enjoy at a wage you can live with. There may be extra time to pursue outside interests, it also reduces stress because you're not competing so much with rivals.

If you can be content with all that, then "onwards" may not always require you to move "upwards."

https://www.monster.ca/career-advice/article/what-is-career-plateauing-ca

## Making a fresh start

**A Fresh Start for Your Career**

**Susan Bryant, Monster Contributing Writer**

What do you need to do to find the kind of enjoyment or progress you want in your career? Joel Garfinkle, founder of Dream Job Coaching, a consulting firm specializing in personal fulfillment and professional transformation based in Oakland, California, offers these suggestions.

**Determine which aspects of your job you like** then find a way to do more of whatever that is. When you are engrossed in a project you like, your workday will be energizing rather than draining. You may also find that the tasks you enjoy are the same ones a coworker or boss dislikes. Find out if you can work out a win-win situation.

**Learn from the best around you.** Find out who seems to really enjoy and excel at their work in your office? What can you learn from them? People who like coming to work radiate positive energy and their spirit can be infectious. Let the energy rub off on you.

**Determine your career signature.** If you had to write down one statement that would encompass who you are (or want to be) professionally and personally, what would it say? Take some time to clarify your unique signature, and use this statement as a guiding force in pursuing what you want to do and whom you want to be.

**Recognize what you can and cannot control.** Write down the things that stress you out at work. Circle the ones you have control over, and cross out the ones you don't. Vow to stop spending energy on the crossed-out items; redirect your energy on finding solutions to the problems you can change.

**Do the jobs above your current position.** Offer to take on some of the responsibilities in the position just above you. Becoming familiar with that role makes you an obvious choice for future promotion.

**Accomplish projects that directly affect your resume.** When taking on new projects, try to select those that will most likely benefit you. Be sure to quantify the results of your work and add these accomplishments to your resume, which you should be updating regularly.

**Cultivate friendships at work.** Your coworkers can understand and appreciate what life is like in your office better than anyone else. Take the time to develop friendly relationships with them. You'll benefit personally and professionally from the time you invest in getting to know them.

**See the big picture and the little pictures.** What is the big picture - your overall vision for your professional life? Now what are the small daily steps or little pictures that will get you there? Make a small goal, like joining a professional organization or finding a mentor something you can accomplish today.

**Make sure you're on the right path.** Are you really doing what you want to do? Does what you think you should be doing interfere with what you want to be doing? None of the above suggestions will work if your career isn't aligned with your true interests, personality traits and natural abilities. If a career assessment is in order, make this your first priority.

https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/a-fresh-start-for-your-career

<div align="center"><b>Importance of Sabbaticals</b></div>

**Definition: Sabbatical Leaves**

Sabbatical Leaves are extended absence from workplace by individuals for achieving life goals. This is a benefit provided by the organizations to its employees. Sabbatical Leaves may be paid or unpaid. The trend of Sabbatical Leaves originated from universities, where paid leaves were provided to its faculty members for carrying out research work, writing etc.

In India sabbatical leaves are given to employees to perusing higher studies usually with a guarantee that they would continue working for the same company (at least for a certain period of time) on completion of study. This gives employees a strong sense of belonging and **motivation**, and increases their loyalty towards the company.

**Sabbatical leave policies**

Sabbatical leaves are leaves which are granted to employees to take a break from work and focus on their personal goals. Long-serving employees with a proven track record are only preferred as they are an asset to the company. Companies have this policy so that employees can rejuvenate and do the following:

1. Pursue higher studies & acquire new skills

2. Author books & pursue personal life goals

3. Quality time to improve their **work life balance**

However, as a part of the sabbatical leave policy, employees are supposed to:

1. Continue working for the company for a specific period post the sabbatical leave.

2. Not engage in any information sharing or activity with competitor.

**Advantages of sabbatical Leaves**

**For employees:**

• Improved relationships: Sabbatical Leaves give the perfect opportunity to spend time with friends and families thus improving personal relationships

• Learning new skills: This time can be utilized to learn new skills and brush up on the old ones. New trainings and qualifications can be perused in this time.

• Relaxation: Away from the everyday gruelling routine, one has ample time to destress and relax.

• Increased management skill: Spending a few months away on a sabbatical leave from the regular schedule helps one gain experience of managing themselves and their life in a new setting

**For employers:**

• Recharged employee: The extended leave relaxes the employees and thus their productivity increases once they are back at work

• Good PR: It increases the employee-employer relationship and can be used as a PR tool to attract new recruits

**Disadvantages of Sabbatical Leaves**

**For employees:**

• Difficulty of fitting in: After an extended sabbatical leave away from work may lead to difficulty in coming back to the workplace and fitting in easily as things might have changed at work.

• Cost: Unless it is a paid sabbatical, the cost of maintenance may be too high and may force once to take up another job.

• Career set back: Being away from work for too long may even makes the importance of the employee lesser and the earlier attention enjoyed by them may become redundant. This can also result in hampering any chances of promotion or career progress.

**For employers:**

• Cost: In case of a paid sabbatical leave, the employee is practically a cost to the organization as they are completely non-productive.

• Overburdened employees: If a teammate goes for a sabbatical leave the onus is on the other teammates to take care of his work and responsibilities. This might lead to stress among the other employees.

Hence, this concludes the definition of Sabbatical Leaves along with its overview.

**Reference:** https://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/human-resources-hr-terms/15694-sabbatical-leaves.html

As employees put more emphasis on work-life balance, companies are catering to their needs by offering concierge services, massage therapists and in-office gyms. While these company perks make the workday less stressful, they don't truly acknowledge the need for employees to escape from the office and their work-life. That's where the employee sabbatical comes in.

These work hiatuses are great for employees and companies. Employees have an extended amount of time to relax and rejuvenate, so when they return to work, they are ready to dive-in with new ideas. There are only **four** percent USA companies' offer a paid sabbatical program and 16 percent offer an unpaid sabbatical program, according to the Society of Human Resource Management.

Most company sabbatical programs offer employees who have been with the company for a certain number of years a month-long vacation. Healthcare Tech Company Epic Systems extends that offer by covering the costs for an employee to travel to a new country, but it's only company-paid if it's a never-traveled-to-before destination, according to Business Insider.

### Benefits of Sabbatical Programs

It's understandable that companies are hesitant to implement a sabbatical program, paid or unpaid, since employees are valuable resources, but companies with sabbaticals reap the benefits of such perks.

**1.** Employees return rejuvenated and often feel like they have a new job. After working the same job day in and day out, employees often experience burnout and don't feel encouraged or motivated to go to work. An extended vacation is the perfect way for

employees to recharge and come back to work with renewed focus. "They are giving us the opportunity to have some reflection time and rejuvenate," said Kelley Kirker, a concierge employee at email marketing company Emma. "There is a unique exhale when you have a month off."

**2.** Employees find inspiration for new ways to grow the business. When a MeetUp software engineer returned from his sabbatical in Berlin, he wasn't excited to be back in Silicon Valley and instead wanted to move to Berlin, a sprawling city for tech talent. MeetUp proposed that he open a software engineering office in Berlin to capitalize on the great engineering talent and expand to a new city.

**3.** Employees can focus on personal goals. During the busy work week, personal goals to start a new boot camp, learn a new language or volunteer at the local soup kitchen can fall to the wayside because work takes priority. "While on the sabbatical, the employee has an opportunity to rediscover old interests and friends, explore new ideas, travel, get fit, do retirement pre-planning or a special project, take care of family needs, and much more," says Nancy Bearg, co-author of "Reboot Your Life: Energizing Your Career and Life by Taking Break." She says, "It broadens perspective and makes personal and professional priorities clearer."

**4.** Younger employees have the opportunity to grow in their roles. When more experienced employees take a sabbatical, the rest of the team has to pitch in to do the work that the manager usually handles. This provides a great chance for younger employees to take on new job tasks and expand their skill sets. "While the employee is away, management and employees must step in, cross train, fill in, and find new ways to cooperate," she says. "All of this builds greater depth and experience and flexibility."

**5.** Employees are encouraged to stay with the company. Many young employees jump from one job to the next, often spending as little as one or two years with a company. Sabbaticals that are rewarded based on time with the company encourage employees to remain loyal to a company for an extended amount of time.

**6.** Companies show they care about what employees want and need. Employees want to work for a company that understands the balance between work and life, and the younger generation is demanding that their personal lives continue, whether personal and work-life are mixed or kept separate. "In older generations, you did everything you had to do for your company at the expense of your family," said Steve Hayes, founder of recruiting firm

The Human Capital Group. "Younger generations realize there is a balance we need to draw."

**7.** Companies experience reduced employee turnover. When Clif Bar asked its employees what perks they valued, sabbaticals ranked at the top, and partially as a result of offering time off to 7-year employees, the company has less than 3 percent turnover, according to Huffington Post.

While companies may resist the idea of sabbaticals, they provide great benefits to employees and companies. In a workplace where employees are at the center and must be valued or else they'll leave, companies must be innovative with how they're attracting and retaining talent.

https://www.cornerstoneondemand.com/rework/7-reasons-employee-sabbaticals-are-winning-idea

**Ref only**

https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/02/22/reflections-continuing-importance-sabbaticals

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**Research shows that organizations benefit when employee take sabbaticals**

David Burkus - August 10, 2017

It's the time of year when many employees are cashing in their vacation allotment, and it can sometimes seem like no one is in the office. But rather than bemoan how hard it is to get stuff done during vacation season, recent research and corporate experiments suggest that there might not be *enough* employees taking time off and even if they are taking time off, they should be taking more of it. There's an upward trend in employers offering their people more long-term vacations and sabbaticals, and the evidence suggests that everyone benefits.

While sabbaticals are still rare inside of corporate America, their presence is increasing rapidly. According to a survey from the Society for Human Resource Management, the percentage of companies offering sabbaticals (both paid and unpaid) rose to nearly 17% of employers in 2017. That's a significant gain from 1977, when McDonald's instituted what was arguably the first corporate sabbatical program in the United States.

While the type (paid versus unpaid), length (weeks versus months), and other sabbatical details vary, research suggests that the upward trend in sabbaticals is due to two primary factors. Sabbaticals and extended vacation time are not just good for employees to rest and recharge they benefit the organization by stress-testing the organizational chart and providing interim roles to allow aspiring employees to take on more leadership.

Since the concept of sabbaticals is most popular in the academic arena, the majority of research done on their effect on employees has been conducted by studying professors. One notable study compared 129 university professors who took a sabbatical in a given term with 129 equally qualified colleagues who didn't. Both groups were surveyed before, during, and after the term to assess stress levels, psychological resources, and even overall life satisfaction. It's not surprising that the researchers found that those who took sabbaticals experienced, upon return, a decline in stress and an increase in psychological resources and overall well-being. What is surprising, however, is that those positive changes often remained long after the sabbatical takers returned to work. This suggests that not only do the rested employees benefit from time away — the organization benefits as well.

The bigger benefit to organizations, however, comes in unexpected ways. Providing sabbaticals or extended leave time to leaders can actually be a means to stress test the organizational chart and give aspiring leaders a chance to grow. In one study, researchers surveyed 61 leaders at five different nonprofit organizations with sabbatical programs. Each organization had slightly different requirements, but all required at least three months off and discouraged executives from visiting the office during the sabbatical period.

The researchers found that the majority of leaders surveyed said the time away allowed them the space to generate new ideas for innovating in the organization and helped them gain greater confidence in themselves as leaders. They also reported a better ability to collaborate with their board of directors, most likely because the planning and execution of the sabbatical provided a learning experience for everyone involved.

Most intriguing, the researchers found that the majority of leaders surveyed said that the interim leaders (those who filled in for them during their leave) were more effective and responsible when the sabbatical takers returned. Many even reported that those interim leaders continued some responsibilities and made the overall leader-subordinate relationship more collaborative. Some organizations reported having much more confidence in their succession planning, since they were able to try out the role on the interim leaders to assess qualifications

and any development opportunities that were still needed. One firm was conducting a national search for a future executive director but ended up hiring the deputy director after her high performance as the interim leader.

At the very least, having people rotate out for an extended period of time allows organizations to stress test their organizational chart. Ideally, no team should be so dependent on any one person that productivity grinds to a halt during an extended vacation. And while it may look good on paper, the only way to know for sure is to test it. This is one of the main reasons behind one of the more unique vacation/sabbatical policies out there: The Motley Fool's approach, called "The Fool's Errand." Each month leadership of The Motley Fool draws a random name from the company roster and awards that person two weeks of paid time off with a catch: It must be taken in the next month. It's a way to make sure employees are getting much-needed breaks, while also ensuring that the company is prepared for unexpected absences.

Whether it's a long-term sabbatical or a surprise vacation, the success of extended time off both for the employee and for the organization is an encouragement and a warning. The warning is that most organizations are probably not giving employees enough time away. The encouragement? Extended time off pays off.

https://hbr.org/2017/08/research-shows-that-organizations-benefit-when-employees-take-sabbaticals

## Counseling out

### 'Counseling Out:' a 4-Step Solution for Bad Employees

One of the most difficult parts of being a manager is that some days, you have to fire an underperforming employee. Firing an employee is not usually a pleasant experience, especially if you like the person. In some cases, the alternate tactic of Counseling Out may be a better solution to your problem.

### What is Counseling Out?

Most managers wait too long to fire underperforming employees. It's better for the employee, manager, and company if the employee quits.

Counseling Out is the process of providing regular, candid, and honest feedback for an employee who quits before being fired. Most managers wait too long to fire underperforming employees. It's better for the employee, manager, and company if the employee quits. If Counseling Out is done correctly, your problem employee will find a job and quit before you

have to take action. There are usually two scenarios where counseling out can be used: 'Good Employee, Wrong Job' or 'Bad Employee, Really Trying.'

**Document Everything**

Any time an employee may need to be fired, you need to document all communication. Regardless of how hard you try to help your employee or be nice, there is still the risk of a wrongful termination lawsuit. To protect yourself from wrongful termination lawsuits, you should implement some basic Human Resources' best practices. If you are unfamiliar with these practices, consult an attorney to learn how you can protect yourself.

**Four Steps to Counseling Out**

**1. Establish Counseling Out Timeline**

This first step to Counseling Out an employee is to establish your timeline. Four weeks is usually sufficient. Because you want the right people on your team, do not extend this process for months. When you decide that you are going to start, put an appointment in your calendar as your deadline. If he/she does not quit by your deadline, fire the underperforming employee.

**2. Start with Honest Feedback**

Although it is sometimes easier to ignore a problem and hope it goes away, that is the wrong approach. Failing to give reviews, being falsely positive or giving undeserved bonuses leads to your team's failure.

It is usually easy to give positive feedback and bonuses, but difficult to cut someone's pay or give a bad review. Although it is sometimes easier to ignore a problem and hope it goes away, that is the wrong approach. Failing to give reviews, being falsely positive or giving undeserved bonuses leads to your team's failure. If you choose to counsel out an employee, honest reviews are vital.

Start with an employee meeting to give honest feedback. Prepare a list of the problems with examples to help communicate the message. (For example: John Doe does not follow instructions – On April 15, 2006, John Doe was asked to do X. He did Y.) Be clear that this meeting is not his/her time to defend himself/herself. This is your time to present all of the issues and let the employee know that the issues cannot continue to exist. You may consider letting him/her schedule a meeting with you on the following day if the employee feels the need to explain or defend himself/herself. After you finish communicating your list, both you and your employee should sign and date the document of problems, indicating that it has been clearly communicated. If you believe there is a chance for improvement, you may choose to offer a

performance improvement plan. Do not feel obligated to offer such a plan. There are some employees who are just not a good fit for a certain position. Finally, close these meetings with a clear statement like, "John, now would be a good time to start looking for another job."

## 3. Weekly Reviews

It is okay to encourage the employee in the job search, to ask what job search tools he/she is using, to offer your name as reference (if you have some positive things to say), and to ask if the employee has had any good leads or interviews.

Schedule weekly meetings with your employee through the end of your Counseling Out Timeline. Be careful not to share your timeline with the employee, in case you decide that an earlier than planned dismissal is needed. Use these weekly meetings to make sure that he/she is still providing atleast a neutral contribution to your company, and to inquire about the employee's job hunt. If the underperforming employee's attitude or performance is getting worse, point it out and make sure he/she understands that he/she still has a job to do. It is okay to encourage the employee in the job search, to ask what job search tools he/she is using, to offer your name as reference (if you have some positive things to say), and to ask if the employee has had any good leads or interviews. Remember to document any progress, the topics discussed at the weekly meeting, and to both sign a meeting summary before leaving the room.

## 4. Time's Up – Time to fire the underperforming employee

Hopefully the employee finds a job before the end of your timeline; but if he/she has not, you need to deliver the news that the underperformer is fired. By this point, the employee should be on his/her way toward finding a new job and may already have interviews or a job offer. It is not usually appropriate to offer a 'layoff' or severance package to someone who has been Counseled Out. While it may feel good to do so, you have already given the person a working severance of sorts. Deliver the message, say goodbye, and thank the employee for his/her work.

## True Story - 1: Good Employee, Wrong Job

"A few years ago I had an employee who had gotten into a rut after four years in the same role. He and I candidly discussed the issues and determined that we needed to find him another opportunity. I talked to other managers, recommending him for a few open positions; and within a month he was on a new team. On that team, he has performed extremely well, is much happier, and is making a great contribution to the company."

**True Story - 2: Bad Employee, Really Trying**

"Last year, I had an employee who was underperforming. I noticed the problem after only a month of employment. Because the job was difficult, I decided to keep encouraging and training, rather than making a quick dismissal. Although she was really trying, she had trouble getting the job done correctly and efficiently. After a few more months of problems, I decided to start four weeks of Counseling Out. She did not quit, but had interviews and good job leads by the time I fired her. Although she pretended to act surprised in our final meeting, she confirmed to former co-workers that she already had another job offer. I did everything possible to help this employee find a new job and felt good about the decisions."

http://rismedia.com/2008/01/29/counseling-out-a-4-step-solution-for-bad-employees/

**Executive leasing**

**Why leaders don't brag about successfully managing stress**

James R. Bailey October 29, 2014

Imagine what it's like to be General Motors CEO Mary Barra. In her brief tenure, GM will have recalled almost 28 million automobiles worldwide. Her firm is besieged by allegations of having a culture of carelessness and a dysfunctional bureaucracy.

Surely these problems crowd her thoughts. Her body is no doubt dumping cortisol and epinephrine at astonishing rates. Both of these neurochemicals can cause a host of physical ailments, such as high blood pressure, as well as cognitive ailments and depression. The longer the body is exposed to these chemicals, the greater their toll.

Of course, stress can sometimes be a positive force, focusing a person's attention, boosting determination, and energizing action. It can help us buckle down and hold fast. It encourages clear-headed prioritization and resolve. But it can also hobble us. The question is when and why it does so, and what to do about it.

The most important question for executives under stress is whether or not you have Barra-level responsibilities and how to counter its corrosive effects. Over the past three years I conducted interviews with 127 executives from 18 countries to explore senior executives' sources of renewal in the face of relentless tension.

To renew themselves, executives take a number of steps, which fall roughly into four categories. The first is taking care of health, including exercise, sleep, and diet, is the most common type of renewal. Second is what I call "removal" is the next most common; removal is

anything that whisks you away from work's struggles. Concerts, sporting events, theater, movies, TV, and fine dining were mentioned, as were stopping by the spa or the tavern. Family time fits here too.

The third category is intellectual activities, such as puzzles, games, the study of history or botany, reading, bird-watching, and hobbies like model building. The fourth is introspection: Transcendental Meditation, prayer, breathing techniques, setting aside time for reflection, therapy (including Neural Feedback Training), and participation in support groups.

These executives are on the right track. Past research has shown that the harmful effects of stress can be at least partially counteracted by spending just 20 to 30 minutes per day engaging in renewal activities.

This is clearly an area where organizations can help their executives. Companies should be making deliberate efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of renewal and should be helping executives establish regimens of such activities. An example of how to do this well is financial services group USAA, whose campuses include meditation rooms and outdoor game areas, and encourage walking by placing colored mile markers around headquarters.

Yet for the most part, this isn't happening. While 79% of the surveyed executives say they recognize the importance of renewal, only 35% say their firms have programs to encourage such activities.

More surprising is the finding that executives who recognize the value of renewal don't do much to encourage their own direct reports to follow their example. Only 50% say they encourage renewal activities among their staffs.

Https://hbr.org/2014/10/why-leaders-dont-brag-about-successfully-managing-stress

## Sustaining a marketable career

**Marketing skills for the future -** By Lori Jazvac.

According to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, data and analysis of trends in the labour market can provide valuable insights. By forecasting future labour market trends, people can detect certain patterns. Knowing these patterns enables them to make better choices about the direction, growth, and development of their careers.

Staying up to date on market trends helps individuals determine how to position themselves a valuable resource for years to come. By identifying relevant and changing trends, professionals can pinpoint locally, nationally and globally relevant data that aligns with their interests and abilities, the type of education and training required, and the steps needed to maintain a competitive edge.

Understanding marketable skills is important because in today's fast-moving world, the demand for various skills rapidly shifts over time. New occupations often appear while older occupations disappear. Understanding these patterns promotes more educated and informed career choices.

**How does this really impact someone?**

The labour market offers a wide variety of career choices spanning full-time or part-time employment or self-employment. By analyzing the labour market, those looking for opportunities can make better career development decisions. For example, Ontario's unemployment rate hovers at approximately 7.0%. Almost 7 million Ontarians work in different occupations – as health care professionals, web designers, engineers, financial analysts, technicians, plumbers, machinists or chefs, just to name a few. By understanding where the jobs are, a person is more likely to find the right opportunity.

The number and types of jobs available to workers can change due to economic growth, technology changes, demographics, and consumer behaviour:

- An aging baby boomer population has increased the need for health care workers in the nursing and medical field.
- 'Ecotourism' is a relatively recent development due to growth in tourist attractions which has produced many jobs such as hotel clerks, managers, tour guides, and recreation consultants.
- The real estate market is also significantly developing throughout Canada. Therefore, professionals in real estate, debt management, investment, finance, and property management are more in demand than ever.

Knowing trends can help determine skills requirements. For example, according to The Financial Post's article from Randstad Canada, technical fields will be in high demand. In the future, "Blue collar" jobs of the past will be gone and new "white collar" jobs will emerge. Employers' expectations will change. At the same time, Generation Z is arriving into the workforce. This will require employers to shift their thinking to accommodate younger workers.

All this information implies that young graduates may need to evaluate their skills gap and adopt more in-demand skills that may be outside of their comfort zone. Older workers may need to become more comfortable working in environments that require new soft skills and hard competencies.

**What skills are marketable?**

"Marketable skills" are abilities that are in demand in the job market; they are useful for tasks that are valuable to employers. As labour market trends constantly evolve, marketable skills also change and evolve. However, marketable skills are always changing in conjunction with the changes in demand in the job market. Determining marketable skills is an important first step in the job search cycle.

In order to manage a career long term and leverage a competitive edge in the workplace, developing and maintaining a set of marketable skills is essential for success. Here are ten marketable skills that are deemed important in the workplace today.

1. Passion
2. Continued Learning
3. Communication
4. Adaptability
5. Work Ethic
6. Problem Solving
7. Willpower
8. Networking
9. Ambition
10. Attitude

These traits are all inherently dependent upon one another. For instance, without a passion for your work, you will less likely engage in continued learning and creative problem solving. This will then clearly be reflected in your attitude and your ability to effectively network with other professionals. However, these days exhibiting passion is not enough, as the platform for maintaining a competitive edge increases when positioning yourself against other candidates. Further, one characteristic common to many of history's greatest minds is a great desire for continuous learning, which entails independently developing skills outside the traditional classroom setting.

**Why are marketable skills so important?**

People who lack marketable skills will have difficulty making an impact in the workplace. They will also find it challenging to adapt to the myriad of changes that they encounter, thus, enforcing them to utilize a delicate balance of hard and soft skills. Those who have difficulty to adapt to changes in the workplace will experience a challenge in enhancing their growth.

For example, an IT professional who has been downsized and has spent the last 15 years programming in a certain software language possesses skills. However, because he/she has worked with a language that may soon become obsolete, the programmer will need some additional training to acquire the marketable software skills necessary in today's marketplace. Employers are always more likely to hire candidates that have marketable skills than those that do not. What is required is knowing what is the best fit for an employer and having the courage to make personal changes when necessary.

Unfortunately, many people have difficulty identifying the skills they possess, and as a result, miss opportunities to display these abilities during job interviews. Others may choose jobs, or are stuck in jobs that do not allow them to improve their marketable skills, which stagnates their personal career brand.

**What skills do employers want?**

What tasks are valued in today's marketplace and what skills are necessary to perform them? The U.S. Secretary of Labor and the Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identified foundation skills and basic workplace competencies that are critical for employment:

- **Basic Skills** – Reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, speaking, and listening
- **Thinking Skills** – Abilities to learn, reason, think creatively, make decisions, and solve problems
- **Personal Qualities** – Individual responsibility, verbal and written skills, self-esteem, self-management, and integrity
- **Resourcing Skills** – Allocate time, money, materials, space, and staffing.
- **Interpersonal Skills** – Participate in teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- **Information Skills** – Acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information.

- **Systems Skills** – Understand social, organizational, and technological systems; monitor and correct performance; and design or improve systems.
- **Technology Skills** – Select equipment and tools; maintain and troubleshoot equipment; and apply technology to specific tasks.
- **Transferable Skills** – Basic skills that transfer from one job to another, which include communication and interpersonal skills of managing, organizing, coordinating, and writing.
- **Adaptive Skills** – Personal characteristics that develop through life experiences. Although these skills may not be specific to any one job or career, they are extremely important to employers and to sustaining employability; therefore, they are very <u>marketable.</u> Examples: flexibility, leadership, patience, responsibility, maturity, decisiveness, commitment, and enthusiasm.

**Skills that need assessment**

Every occupation requires a set of crucial, "job-related" skills that all workers must possess to complete the work. Job seekers and workers should review their experiences to determine skills developed throughout their career and then determine which of these skills help them perform market-value tasks. Quintcareers.com breaks down job related marketable skills into five main categories:

1. Communication
2. Research and Planning
3. Human Relations Skills
4. Organization, Management and Leadership skills
5. Work Survival Skills

**Implications for career practitioners**

Due to the changing landscape of technology, the rapidly shifting nature of work, and constant flux in the economy, marketable skills are continuously evolving, enforcing jobseekers to continually develop themselves especially in the areas of social media and technology and to learn new competencies.

Skills are not only developed in the classroom, but at work and through real life experience. Performing one's job requires more than just basic skills; to shine, one must have a wide spectrum of marketable skills that allows capitalizing on career opportunities and advancement while developing strong professional relationships.

As career practitioners, we must be able to identify the latest labour market trends and coach clients on the marketable skills they will need to enhance their career growth. Marketable skills that are becoming critical for survival in the 21st century are:

1. **Socially intelligent** – your ability to engage in conversation, get to know someone personally, and develop meaningful relationships will provide a competitive edge

2. **Adaptable** – coping and managing change in the face of adversity

3. **Able to work on a virtual team** – effective project management via technology.

4. **Bilingual or multilingual** – knowing how to speak a second language- e.g. French or Spanish

5. **Cross-culturally adept** – adapting to different cultural norms; embracing diversity

6. **Multidisciplinary** – possessing knowledge in more than one subject area

7. **Analytical** – sorting through and assessing research and its implications from different perspectives; quantitatively and qualitatively

**Strategies for job seekers and workers**

The best way to empower yourself is to continuously set goals and develop and build your toolbox of skills, talents, interests, and experiences. Whether this means becoming bilingual or multilingual in a diverse job market or improving a challenging skill, the unique intersection of various skills will enhance career success and personal growth. The key is to keep developing marketable skills and personalizing your brand.

1. **Identify what skills would bring you an advantage.** This refers not only to hard skills (technical skills), but also to soft skills (e.g. communication and time management). Explore what skills are valued in your desired field, both today and in the future. Network with other professionals in higher level positions about what skills would be beneficial to you, your organization, as well as career.

2. **Conduct an honest self-assessment of your current skills.** Look critically at your strengths and weaknesses. Identify the gap in relation to your skills that require development.

3. **Decide whether to focus on solidifying your strengths or improving your weaknesses.** Look clearly at a weakness that could potentially limit your career and find ways to resolve that weakness.

4. **Dedicate the time and commitment to develop your skills.** There are plenty of resources that can help you develop new skills or solidify existing ones, from online education

courses to conferences and webinars. Start from your core skills and develop adjacent ones.

5. **Showcase your newly-developed skill set.** This applies to both pursuing new opportunities as well as building and maintaining your personal brand. For those early in their careers, this helps to establish an effective professional online presence with a work portfolio and positive testimonials from colleagues.

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