

L² LaunchToLead



ACCELERATE PATH • Mindset Reset

Hard Work ≠ Promotion

The Uncomfortable Truth About Getting Ahead

Before we dive into tactics, we need to rewire the belief that's been holding you back. This isn't about working less—it's about working **differently**.



5 min read

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Reflection exercise included

THE PROBLEM

The Lie You Were Told



From grade school through college, you learned a simple equation:

$$\text{Effort} + \text{Time} = \text{Reward}$$

Study harder → Get better grades. Practice more → Win the game. Put in the hours → Get the A.



Then you entered the corporate world and assumed the same rules applied:

$$\text{Work Harder} + \text{More Hours} = \text{Promotion}$$

But the corporate world doesn't grade on effort. It promotes based on **perceived value**—and perception requires visibility.



The Hard Truth

The highest performer on the team is **not** always the one who gets promoted. The person who gets promoted is the one whose value is **visible to decision-makers**.

MYTH BUSTING

5 Beliefs That Are Holding You Back

Check how many of these you've believed (or still believe):

1

"My work speaks for itself." **MYTH**

Your work doesn't have a voice. If you don't tell people about it, they'll assume you're doing the same thing as everyone else—or worse, nothing special.

Reality: Your work speaks when *you* speak for it. Strategic communication isn't bragging—it's essential.

2

"If I just keep delivering, they'll notice." **MYTH**

Decision-makers are busy. They're not watching your every commit, email, or deliverable. They notice what's brought to their attention.

Reality: The people who get noticed are the ones who make their impact impossible to miss—intentionally.

3

"Self-promotion is gross/political/inauthentic." **MYTH**

This belief keeps talented people invisible while less talented (but more visible) people get ahead. You're not helping anyone by staying hidden.

Reality: There's a difference between bragging and "Organic Broadcasting." One is obnoxious; the other is strategic communication. You can be visible AND authentic.

4

"Promotions are based on merit and tenure." **MYTH**

If this were true, the hardest worker with the most years would always get promoted. Look around—that's clearly not how it works.

Reality: Promotions go to people who are seen as ready for the next level by the people who make promotion decisions. Merit is necessary, but not sufficient.

5

"I need to wait for a job opening to get promoted." **MYTH**

This is reactive thinking. The most successful people don't wait for openings—they influence leaders to create opportunities for them.

Reality: At Level 4 of the Visibility Pyramid, you identify gaps and propose solutions. Roles get created because you made the case.

THE SOLUTION

The Real Promotion Equation

✗ WHAT YOU BELIEVED

Hard Work

+

Long Hours

=

~~Promotion~~

✓ WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

Competence

×

Visibility

=

Promotion



The Key Insight

Notice it's **multiplication**, not addition.

- **High Competence × Zero Visibility = Zero** (You're invisible, no matter how good you are)
- **Low Competence × High Visibility = Exposed** (You'll be found out quickly)
- **High Competence × High Visibility = Unstoppable** (This is what we're building)

Competence is the Entry Fee, Not the Winning Ticket

Being great at your job is **necessary** but not **sufficient**. It gets you a seat at the table. It earns you the right to be considered.

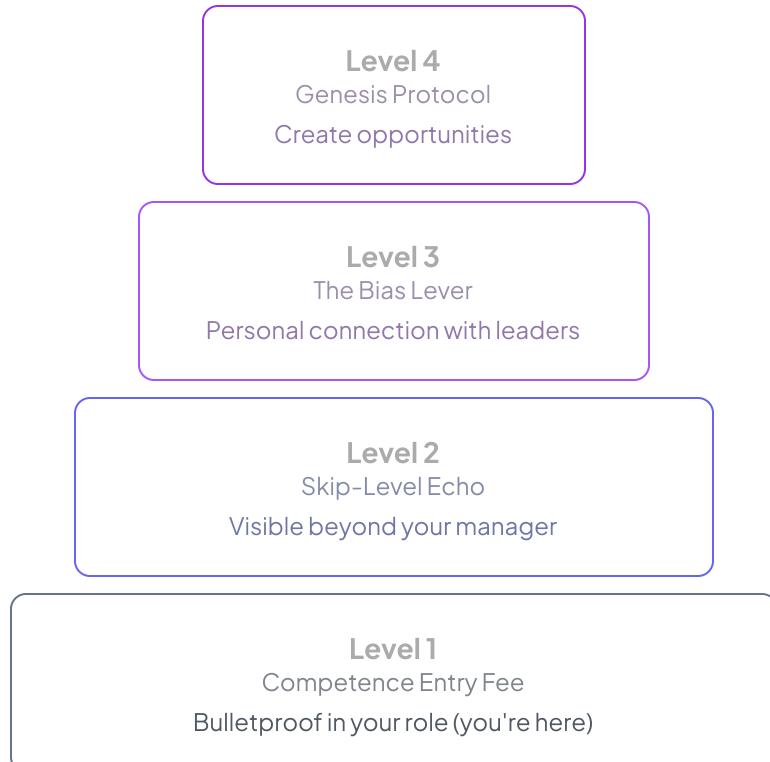
But the promotion goes to the person decision-makers *think of first* when the opportunity arises. That requires visibility—being known, trusted, and associated with impact.

Think about it: When your skip-level is in a meeting deciding who to promote, and your name comes up... what do they picture? A spreadsheet row? Or a real person they know, trust, and want to bet on?

THE FRAMEWORK

Introducing the Visibility Pyramid

This is the system we'll use to build your strategic visibility.



💡 Where Most Engineers Get Stuck

Most high-performers plateau at **Level 1**. They're competent, reliable, and great at their job—but invisible to anyone who could promote them. They keep working harder, expecting different results.

🚀 What the Accelerate Path Does

We systematically move you up the pyramid—from invisible contributor to someone who **creates their own opportunities**. Each level has specific tactics and milestones.

See the full breakdown: Complete the **Visibility Pyramid Overview** document to diagnose your current level and discover specific action items.

YOUR TURN

Reflection Exercise

Take 5 minutes to answer these questions honestly. Bring your answers to Session 1.

1

Which of the 5 myths have you believed (or still believe)?

That leaders want higher education to move into leadership roles.

2

Think of someone who got promoted ahead of you (or faster than expected). Were they the "hardest worker"—or did they do something differently with their visibility?

Visibility. Mansour is the only one I know that got a 9 before me... :)

3

If your skip-level (manager's manager) had to describe you in one sentence, what would they say? If they wouldn't know what to say, what does that tell you?

Go getter.

4

What's one thing you've accomplished in the last 6 months that your skip-level probably doesn't know about?

Building my own businesses and growing personally.

5

On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you with making your accomplishments visible? What would it take to move up 2 points?

7



The Mindset Shift

✗ OLD MINDSET

"Work hard, get rewarded"
"My work speaks for itself"
"Self-promotion is gross"
"Wait for opportunities"
"Merit is all that matters"

✓ NEW MINDSET

"Work smart, be seen"
"I speak for my work strategically"
"Visibility is a skill I can learn"
"I create opportunities"
"Merit × Visibility = Promotion"

This isn't about becoming someone you're not. It's about making sure the right people know what you're already doing.



Before Session 1: Complete your reflection exercise and bring your answers. We'll use them to customize your visibility strategy.

Questions before Session 1?

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