



# Get ahead by focusing on the bigger picture

## STAFF WRITER

DO YOU want to fast-track your way up the corporate ladder but don't know how to go about it? These days, advancing your career isn't easy and just working hard is not enough to move it along.

"Most people want to be promoted but to do this and increase your earning power, you have to improve your skills and work ethic, and you have to model aspirational behaviour," says Academy of York principal, Richard Leeming.

Taking charge and making things happen is up to you. Here are eight tips for highlighting your performance and commitment to your organisation:

**Believe in yourself and be confident.** You must believe in your own power to deliver at the next level and then your employer will. Be assertive at work and go after what you want.

Daneillia Daly was recently promoted after completing two courses with Academy of York – business and performance management, and human resources and labour relations. She is now a senior administrator for transport at the Gauteng Department of Education. "I always believed I was destined for better," she says. "Nothing is permanent but once you accept your situation, it will stay that way. I was hungry for promotion and willing to prove myself."

**Let go of the gossip and negativity.** Do you stand around the coffee station or water cooler complaining and gossiping? Ask your-



SELF-STARTING: Employers recognise those who take pride in their work, meeting and exceeding expectations. *PICTURE: REUTERS*

self whether this is what the company chief executive does. Rather surround yourself with positive, upbeat people who are going somewhere. Often, your positive attitude in the workplace – or lack of it – will determine how far you can go in your career.

**Learn your firm's big picture.** Show an interest in your company's strategic direction. Ask questions, think in broader terms and step into a company owner mindset. Speaking and thinking like a leader will help you to embrace the bigger goals of your team or department, as well as those of the company.

**Be a self-starter,** someone who

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is always looking for opportunities and then making conscious decisions to pursue them. A desire to learn and exploring ways of doing things more effectively, plus the ability to constantly apply the knowledge you have learned will make you indispensable in the workplace.

**Take pride in your work.** Being driven by genuine enthusiasm and a desire to do your best no matter how small the job is a trademark of a successful person.

"There are moments when you feel extremely good and proud of yourself, but you cannot get complacent – you have to continue to work hard and improve at the same time," says Daly.

**Back your drive up with skills and knowledge.** It's important to be ready for the next step when it comes your way.

Paul Bulwana is a manager in forensic investigations who studied human resource and labour relations management with the Academy of York. "I was battling with my new role as an assistant project manager as there was no mentoring or coaching," he says. "So I decided that the best thing was to get a relevant qualification.

"At first, my bosses thought I wouldn't manage to run projects and study at the same time, but I proved them wrong – I received a certificate for outstanding performance. Since then, I have been given even more responsibilities and am now managing two big projects whereas beforehand, I would only manage one. It always feels good to assume new responsibilities and challenges to prove your worth to yourself and to your company."

**Gain an accurate snapshot of the present and figure out where you are.** Then work out where you'd like to go and by when. It is surprising how many people fail to plan for what they want. Goal set-

ting is vital to achieving personal success, as it allows you to choose the way you wish to navigate through life. Remember, goals need to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-based.

**Build relationships with key people.** Try to understand what your manager's priorities are so that you can align yourself with the right goals and not waste time focusing on what is not important.

Get to know other key people in different parts of your organisation that are involved in vital projects. By reaching out and showing an interest, you are one step closer to being in the A-team. This is the group that is called on and noticed, and always working on real business issues.

**Speak to employees who inspire you** and find out how they got started. Enthusiastically volunteer and then do an exceptional job. Becoming a key insider is a sure-fire way to fast track your promotion.

"Putting in time and effort and building strong working relationships will ensure that people in senior positions will recognise your personal contribution. By demonstrating determination, humility, honesty and empathy while delivering a high-quality performance, you are bound to succeed," says Leeming.

"These eight steps are actions you can take right now to accelerate your progress in your organisation. Master your career, set your own trajectory and reach for the stars."