

## Introduction

This obviously isn't a full book, but I don't need 200 pages to give you my very best advice about what to do and what to avoid in order to get promoted as fast as possible.

If you're in public accounting and you're at a medium to large firm, promotions usually only happen once or twice a year.

So... you want to be at the top of your group at all times, because missing promotions can mean staying staff or senior for another year.

Being one of the first in your group of hires to be promoted has obvious benefits- and it seems like anyone with a brain would know and understand this- but at every firm there is a clear distinction between staff members... some are go-getters, but most don't put any extra effort in.

So, let's get into what you can do to get promoted Superfast. This list includes do's and don'ts.

## Be Proactive

Saying "be proactive" encompasses a lot of things. If you've never read "[The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#)", I highly suggest you buy a hardback copy(or Kindle copy) and read it until you've internalized it.

The main idea behind being proactive is taking control and responsibility for your life and the results you get.

For example, you can't control how crappy the client is you're working on, or that you've been assigned a crappy audit to work on, but you can control how hard you work, how fast you get your work done, and how much value you provide to the audit team during the engagement. You may not get any recognition for your stellar work on one job, but always being proactive and productive adds up fast and people notice.

## Seek Out More Responsibility

Everything else stripped away, this is really the #1 thing you can do to get promoted faster. Companies and firms want people who are invested for the long-term, and the best way to show that is by looking for opportunities to take on more responsibility.

Not only look for opportunities, but you need to ask for them. There is some common-sense that comes into play with this... if there is a manager that will gladly give you more responsibility (and more work), but won't go to bat for you or never mention it to upper management or partners, you're not doing yourself any good.

These managers exist, so you have to be careful. While I'm at it, there are also "black hole" partners and managers. These are people who run their staff into the ground, don't give

them any credit, and also like to work with the same staff over and over again. And usually the other partners and managers don't really like the black hole partners, so it really is career limiting if you get pigeon-holed and end up working almost exclusively with one of these people.

I will say that hard work and going a great job can transcend working with a black hole partner, but it's harder. One way of getting more exposure to other partners is to request to get experience in another industry or specialty. Usually firms are accommodating at giving staff at least some experience in a field they're interested in, so this can be a way out of working exclusively with a black hole partner.

### Don't Create Or Be In A Little Clique of "Haters"

This happens at every firm. Maybe not a very small firm where there's only 2 or 3 staff members, but definitely at medium to large-sized firms. There's always a group that forms that "doesn't care" what the partners think, openly talk trash about partners and how stupid they are, and on and on and on. This falls in line with "don't complain", and the reasoning is the same... it just doesn't get you anywhere. Everyone has a job, everyone has a boss, it sucks sometimes to not be running the show, but that's how it works and you're no different.

The same goes for your co-workers. There will definitely be people you work with that drive you crazy, but constantly talking bad about them behind their back will really rub everyone else the wrong way that has to listen to you.

Even if you have "buddies" at work that turns into a "hater clique", it won't take long for you to become labeled as such, and that is not a good thing for your career.

Talking trash can be therapeutic and even fun after a few hours of doing accounting work, but it is just one of those things with no upside and a huge downside- so avoid it at all costs.

### Be Drama-Free and Easy to Get Along With

If I haven't said it yet, your first year at any new job really sets the tone for how you are perceived by your co-workers and management/partners, and whatever label you get in that first year is really hard to shed after that.

There was a female co-worker that was in my hire group, and she quickly got a label for being high-maintenance: she would "work from home" at least once a week for unknown reasons, and at least once a month she would just not show up at a job and wouldn't let anyone know. Besides that, she had a reputation for talking crap about everyone at the firm, so anyone listening to her talk crap quickly realized that she probably talked crap about them when they weren't around. She really seemed like she had something to prove, and was almost combative over accounting policies or discussions with the audit team. She quickly became isolated, and when promotions were coming up it was clear she wasn't even in the running because her reputation was simply ruined at our firm.

## Attend Company Events

This one can be tough, or it is for me personally. A lot of times that last thing you want to do is leave work and go hang out with people from work again. Especially partners. But... this goes along with the rest of my advice... people notice this stuff. Especially the partners. It makes you look like you care about the firm and are going to be around for a while. And that you care about your position at the firm and are invested in the future of the firm. This is a simple thing that can have very positive long-term effects.

## Be Nice to Everyone, And Have Everyone Think They're Your Friend

Here's some real-world advice for how every company works: Management promotes people they like, period. There's probably a few managers and definitely some partners that don't seem like the sharpest tools in the shed, but they probably have great people skills.

This one is pretty easy and arguably has the highest long-term payoff. You simply need to engage in short, positive conversations with everyone at your firm. You don't need to stop by everyone's desk every single day, but you should have some interaction with as many co-workers and superiors as possible on a weekly basis.

If you want a Master's degree in getting other people to like you, read "[How to Win Friends and Influence People](#)".

## Clarify Expectations, and Then Meet or Exceed Them

This is another piece of advice straight out of "7 Habits", and it is #1 driver behind the "label" you get at the firm, whether good or bad.

The most clear-cut example of this is when partner gives you a task to do, and believe it or not, most people just say "ok I'll do it", and then they do it whenever they get around to it. What to say instead is, "ok, when do you need this completed by?" Whatever timeline they give you, try to beat it. But at the very least you have a deadline, so that you don't go past that.

It might not be fair, but I hear partners talking all the time about how some staff member took way too long on project that was "easy", or something similar. And unless you ask, you usually don't get a timeframe for when the partner is expecting you to finish something by, but they always have some expectation in their head. So unless you ask and clarify the expectations, you can go past their imaginary deadline without knowing it, and then you're on their bad list.

And it goes without saying that if you're always completing things a day or two before they are due, your goodwill with management will continually increase.

## One Last Stealth-Suck-Up Tip

This is actually 2 items of advice in one that go hand-in-hand.

First, it's just a good practice to read a new business book every week or so. I'm a freak and I actually like doing this- although it's not always just business books. My favorite thing I own is probably my [Kindle Paperwhite](#). This is also actually the "7<sup>th</sup> Habit" in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. He calls it "sharpening the saw". You're just investing in your self-education and your overall awareness of how things work in the business world. So I second Stephen Covey in recommending that you spend a little time each day on self-improvement reading.

So, the second tip this ties into is that partners and managers read a ton of this stuff- and they love to talk about it. An easy way to bring it up without sounding like a complete ass-kisser is something like "well isn't that kind of what Jim Collins talks about in Good to Great?" I'm not advocating that you bring up some business book quote in every conversation you have with a superior- this is just something that all managers and partners will have some experience with that you can then have in common with them if it happens to come up- not to mention the personal benefits of reading this type of material on an ongoing basis.