

“Career Strategy for L&D Pros”

Not every career journey is about climbing a management ladder—and that’s okay. Consider which of these six distinct career strategies most aligns with your values, strengths, and life circumstances. Whether you're aiming for advancement, seeking mastery, or prioritizing balance, consider these strategies as you choose how to move forward in your chosen career path.

Six Career Strategies



ADVANCEMENT

Preparing for increased responsibility in one's current (or related) area of expertise.

- More responsibility
- More complexity
- Broader scope
- More results expected
- More compensation (usually)
- Different challenges



MASTERY

Expanding one's breadth and depth of expertise in one's current role.

- More complexity
- Broader scope
- More skills
- More subject matter expert (SME) prestige
- Becoming more of a go-to expert
- Similar challenges, but more and deeper applications



BROADENING

Developing knowledge, skill, and experience in an additional area beyond one's current job role.

- Similar complexity, but more breadth of scope
- High focus on learning
- Usually an additional duty
- Often starts as a project team member or “apprentice,” moving to greater responsibility
- Boundary-spanning challenges “How do I use this here?”
- Time and priority management may be a challenge



BALANCE

Staying up to date in knowledge, skill, and experience to be current in one's current job role while one's "whole person" focus may be on other things outside the current job role (usually but not limited to personal or family commitments).

- Keep the same responsibilities
- Keep workload, scope, and challenge the same
- Acknowledge a focus and responsibilities outside of work
- Focus on meeting expectations and staying up to date
- Especially important to manage expectations
- Learning outside the job may bring unexpected benefits

LATERAL

Preparing for a lateral move to a different or new area of expertise at one's current level of responsibility.

- Often follows exploration done with Broadening
- Preparing for a change of responsibilities
- Gaining broader perspective and skills to cross boundaries
- Often highly valuable for long-term advancement
- May be opportunistic, rather than a planned move; "I've seen you do X.... I bet you could also do Y."
- Requires a learning mindset and focus; "willing to be bad, first"

MENTORING

Focusing on transferring knowledge or developing others inside the organization

- Often takes place as preparation for retirement or a career change
- Must already have significant experience and lessons learned to share
- Keep the same responsibilities, scope, and breadth
- Capture organizational knowledge and history; share and transfer best practices
- "Highest, best use"

How Do I Choose?

- Where do you get energy or excitement as you consider your current and future career?
- Where do you feel the pull of purpose hooked up with a practical "yes, this makes sense" feeling from your wise inner self?
- What feels right for you for now, recognizing that you can change your career strategy when unexpected opportunities and changes show up?
- What do you feel is your "Highest, Best Use" now and in the future?

Conversation Guide for You and Your Manager or Coach

Subject: Current Career Strategy for [yourname]

Purpose: Get input and support in setting (or confirming) my current career strategy, goals, and actions.

Agenda:

- What I learned about career strategies (explain)
- Which strategy seems to best fit me for right now (dialogue)
- Ideas and suggestions (manager/coach gives input, both explore)
- Support I would like (ask, agree)
- Action steps (commit)

Resources

- [Perspectives from the Profession: Coachability: A Defense Against Disruption](#), *Inside Public Accounting* (article)
- [Defining and Achieving Professional Goals](#) (LinkedIn Learning, 28 minutes)
- [Having an Honest Career Conversation with Your Boss](#) (LinkedIn Learning, 1 hr)
- [Be Bad First: Get Good at Things Fast to Stay Ready for the Future](#), Erika Andersen (book)
- Technical training and certifications (for example, search "Microsoft certification tree," or products like Articulate 360, Camtasia, Captivate, etc.)