

10 Tips for

# **SUCCESSFUL CAREERS**



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# HELLO...

I'm Michelle Unger, Head of Group Business Line Education Systems & Services at ROSEN Group.

I've had the privilege of working alongside many people developing successful careers, which has helped to shape my perspective on professional growth and fulfilment.

I've delivered my keynote presentation "*10 Tips to developing successful careers*" to many audiences and I'm always asked to share it afterwards. So I presented my tips in a series of LinkedIn posts during May-June 2023.

I wanted to share my experience from developing people in the pipeline industry, and help others to develop their careers.

Here is a compilation of these posts where I explore my own journey, and invite you to reflect on your own path to success!

## 10 Tips for Successful Careers...

1. Keep learning
2. Have a plan
3. Find a mentor/coach
4. Surround yourself with clever competent people
5. Identify the competencies you need to reach your next milestone
6. Don't be afraid of change or challenges
7. It is only down to you
8. Avoid the comparison
9. Remember it is not just 'luck'
10. Consider developing as a brand



# 01

## Keep Learning

Formal or informal education - we are always learning!

Learning has been a key part of my career - a passion - something that brings me joy!

I learned English and German in my teens, gained my MEng in Civil Engineering, MSc in Pipeline Hydraulics (University of the Andes) in my twenties, a PgC in Advanced Studies and Academic Practice (Newcastle University) in my thirties, and a Knowledge Management degree with The Open University, as well as lots of training in pipeline integrity, in my forties. Now my latest education goal is in Executive Coaching here in Hult Ashridge.

Keep learning! It's not only a key to career development, but also a great way to challenge your mind, and stay close to your passion!

So what are you learning now? What is your next learning goal? Are you inspired enough?

# 02

## Have A Plan



Planning is essential to every project if we want to ensure success.

We carefully plan our holidays, the next new car, the house move, a new investment – anything that has an impact in our lives.

Our career development is no exception.

Thinking about where I wanted to take my career at different stages of my life has allowed me to align personal and professional goals. I thought about my purpose, and then planned a career that fulfils my 'why\*'. I've had the pleasure of working with many professionals over the years, and supported their career planning. This alignment has given them the most rewarding experiences!

Have a plan! Your career is an important project, one that sometimes does not get the attention it deserves. Be prepared to be flexible – redefine your goals accordingly. Remember, it is up to you to identify what competencies you need to develop to be able to get there. This is one project than can really affect your whole life!

Do you spend enough time planning your career? How do you do it? What is next for you? Where do you want to go?

\* I recommend the great resources from Simon Sinek on 'finding your why'.



# 03

## Find A Mentor/Coach

Most people have had a mentor and a coach. Why?

- because you don't need to do it all alone when you are building your career, and
- because it is lonely at the top!

A very important element of competence development is 'mentoring': learning from others is at least twice as important as any other form of learning.

I am very grateful to Dr. Phil Hopkins for being the most fantastic mentor in my early career in pipeline integrity. He has also been a mentor to many other pipeline professionals who would - no doubt - agree on the benefits of having someone who supports your professional development.

More recently I discovered the benefits of having a coach to help build a successful career. Special thanks to my great coach for challenging me to have those conversations I never had.

Whether you are just starting your career, or have already achieved a lot, find a mentor or a coach or both... you don't have to do it all alone!

If you are the mentor or the coach, you will get as many benefits as the person on the receiving end.

Here's some mentoring insight I received from my mentor:

"The first thing a mentor looks for in a mentee is 'chemistry' - mentors tend to pick people they like, who want to learn and progress.

The next thing is to build up trust (both ways) and be honest and confidential. This allows mentees to listen, challenge, and act quickly. The mentee drives the relationship, which leads to a particularly easy informal mentoring process.

Inevitably, as time progresses, your mentee starts to become wiser than you! This brings an additional benefit to the mentor and rapidly develops the mentee's own mentoring skills. The mentee is now an even better mentor. A great skill to have."

- *Dr. Phil Hopkins*

So have you had a mentor? A coach? Are you willing to help other more junior professionals? Can you be a mentor in your organisation? Would you like some more tips on mentoring and coaching\*?

\* I recommend Dr. Peter Chee, Marshall Goldsmith, and Erik de Haan for more great advice on career goals, career tips, and coaching.



# 04

## Surround yourself with clever competent people

We are lucky to be able to work with very clever, competent people during our careers.

It brings us so much value in terms of learning opportunities and building our professional network – some connections just happen naturally, for others we need to develop the relationship over time.

Starting my career as a Civil Engineer with limited knowledge in pipeline integrity, I was very lucky to be surrounded by clever, competent people - my early pipeline community.

In my most recent projects, I've been able to count on the experience from experts in my network to contribute great value to our competence development model: The Competence Club.

I'm proud to be part of a global pipeline integrity community. It is an invaluable source of professional support, and opportunity that helps me, and others, develop our careers.

Learning with, and through, other people in a social way is a powerful mechanism for personal growth. That's why 'communities' are so popular these days. They're great for knowledge sharing, networking with others, and helping us achieve our goals.

... and this way we are passing on the torch of experience to the next generation of young pipeline professionals who will shape the future of our industry.

Growing your learning community with clever, competent people is an investment towards a successful career – once again you don't need to do it all alone.

So are you a member of a learning community? How do you build your network?





# 05

## Identify the competencies you need to reach your next milestone

Whether you have just joined your company, progressing in your role, or preparing to retire, there is always something you are planning to accomplish next.

Identifying key competencies to support your professional development will help you reach your next milestone successfully.

Regardless of the path – technical or leadership – there are many opportunities to grow, and most professionals are willing to accept that challenge with open arms.

I have worked with professionals following different paths. The common thing: there are always key skills to develop now that will set you up for, and take you towards, your next milestone.

Here are some examples of key skills for different pipeline integrity professionals:

- the updated technical skills to work with hydrogen pipelines, or
- the leadership skills to manage global teams, or
- the completely new skills needed for a career change or to prepare for retirement

Now that you have decided where you want to be tomorrow, identify the next competency you need to develop today to reach that next milestone.

How do you identify the competencies you need? What do you need to do today to get there tomorrow?

# 06

## Don't be afraid of change or challenges



Change and challenges are always there.

Some changes or challenges we seek, others are imposed on us – in both cases, they offer an opportunity to grow.

During our career, we might change, countries, cities, language, workgroups, direction – all this allows us to stretch our minds, to develop new skills, and to grow.

Sometimes we need to re-qualify, to sit an exam, to 'go back to school', to just do things different – embrace the challenge and make the most of the opportunity.

Changes bring uncertainty, but this only means many options to succeed.

**So find your next challenge, and make a success out of it!**



# 07

## It is only down to you

This one might be a controversial one, but think about it - these actions are only down to you:

- Keep learning
- Have a plan
- Find a mentor/coach
- Surround yourself with clever, competent people
- Identify the competencies you need to reach your next milestone
- Don't be afraid of change or challenges

We rely on support from many people, but in the end, it is only down to us to make it happen.

It is common to fall into the trap of blaming others for not allowing us to succeed: 'my boss doesn't get it', 'if they weren't there, I could do it', 'the company does not value what I do', 'they do not provide the learning opportunities', 'they don't have a plan for me to grow', 'they don't give me guidance', 'the team is not right', 'they haven't told me what I need to do to get there', 'there are so many changes'...

It is down to you to address it all, and make it happen. It is YOUR career, you are in charge!

Are you in charge of your own successful professional development?

# 08

## Avoid the comparison



Some constructive advice from personal experience. I hope this encourages you to think about your own journey!

I have found that we should avoid comparing ourselves to others – unless it inspires us to achieve more and more – of course.

Over the years we meet such wonderful people, we work with them, we admire them, and sometimes we think we will never be as good as them.

As I have shared before, I've had the pleasure of working for great organisations and their clients and students, with incredible top talent.

I've worked alongside very competent people, where sometimes I have compared myself, and doubted – but they have also inspired me to keep developing.

I still remember how many times I declined the invitation to present as I felt many others would do a better job, the job that then became my career!

We should avoid the comparison, unless it helps us to grow and inspires us to reach our potential.

Are you thinking about who is 'inspiring' you? Or are you still just comparing and doubting yourself?



## Remember it is not just 'luck'

Most people work very hard to develop their careers.

'Luck' might well play a part in some successful careers. I have found however that our success is really a reflection of the dedication, commitment and discipline we apply in our actions.

Once while discussing with my mentor, who is a very distinguished speaker, he said: 'I'm invited to do Keynotes in most conferences and I often get a comment at the end: 'you do this so good, it must just come to you at the 'drop of a hat!''

He then told me (and I've also experienced this myself): 'there has been at least 2 weeks of work to write the 15 minute keynote! If it is a success, it is only down to very hard work!'

A successful outcome is usually linked to hard work, smart decisions, good work ethics, and a great deal of discipline and resilience... it is not just 'luck'.

Are you working hard to achieve what YOU have defined as successful outcomes?

# 10

## Consider developing as a brand



Are you a brand or branded?

We develop as a brand when we create our own expertise that fits with the market, and not just a company. We develop the competencies required by the current industry trends and challenges.

When I joined the industry 20+ years ago, we used to aspire to work in the same company for life, we were 'branded' – things have changed. As most markets change very quickly, we now face many challenges, and need to develop our own industry expertise - our own 'brand'.

If you are in the energy sector, you know we face the challenges of the energy transition. Are you ready? Are you a brand or branded? How can you make yourself indispensable?

This is my final tip in the series. I hope you have enjoyed reading, I did enjoy writing...

Which is your top tip? Have I inspired you to think about your career? – at least once!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...**

Thanks to ROSEN for supporting my own learning, and enabling talent development in our pipeline industry with The Competence Club Connects.

Be part of The Competence Club Connects - the knowledge sharing initiative for the pipeline industry. Access guidance in helping you develop your pipeline integrity core competencies... and discover new ones!

Visit <https://competence.rosen-group.com/>



The  
**Competence  
Club**

*...connects*

If you would like support in planning the next step of your journey, please do get in touch for further guidance.