

Advice for Unlocking Your Hidden Potential

by Jeffrey Leventry

(January 9, 2024)



One of my favorite authors just released his newest book entitled “**Hidden Potential – The Science of Achieving Greater Things.**” The author is Adam Grant, an Organizational Psychologist at the Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia.

Among other things, he has discovered that “we underestimate the range of skills we can learn and how good we can become.” He further believes that “progress depends less on how hard you work than how well you learn.” In addition, he articulates that “growth is not about the genius you possess, but the character you develop.” His book explores how to build character skills and motivational structures to help us realize our potential, and how to design systems that create opportunities for those who have been underrated and overlooked.

As a performance coach and manager, one of my primary goals has been to help people reach their potential as they climb the ladder of success. For me, the key to this process is to develop a growth strategy for my clients that includes developing skills that are in demand, and then positioning them to take advantage of opportunities where they can demonstrate their competence and expertise to achieve tangible business results.

How do you develop skills that are in demand?

Today there are many approaches for developing the skills that add value and are required for success in your role at your organization. My suggestion is to take advantage of professional growth opportunities inside your firm and those that are offered by vendors that are sanctioned by your firm.

This is my formula for strengthening your skills and increasing your net worth where you work:

- Have your manager or a Learning & Development Specialist assess your current performance and skill set
- Formulate a Plan of Development based upon the skills assessment, utilizing the 70 / 20 / 10 Learning Model. This model recommends that your development plan should include 70% learning in the flow of work (experience), 20% social learning (exposure) and 10% formal instruction (education).
- Take advantage of stretch assignments and complex projects that test your skills, rotation programs that broaden your experience base and mentoring programs that can help you learn from more experienced colleagues

- Enroll in classroom and online courses that are part of the Plan of Development endorsed by your manager. In particular, I recommend focusing on those skills that are in demand in the current work environment. A recent study conducted by Purdue University indicates that today's employees need to learn the following skills to succeed in business: adaptability / flexibility, effective communication and empathy / emotional intelligence.
- Seek a professional performance coach who can provide you with valuable insight and feedback, and assess your progress as you proceed through the development process

How do you position yourself to take advantage of opportunity?

As you continue to develop skills that are in demand at your organization, you need to evaluate how to position yourself at your firm so that your skill set can add value to the enterprise. In particular, be proactive in seeking opportunity rather than reactive during this process.

Here are several effective ways to position yourself to take advantage of opportunities:

- Connect with influential people as you expand your network, both inside and outside your organization
- Volunteer to help resolve difficult business issues or challenging projects that impact the bottom line at your firm
- Make yourself available to those who seek help and support in achieving business objectives
- Go above and beyond what is asked of you to achieve even more success than is expected
- Be a Team player who is willing to collaborate with colleagues to create optimal solutions
- Serve on committees and planning groups that develop policies and procedures designed to address critical business problems

What are the success factors for those who unlock their potential?

In reality, none of the above suggestions will unlock your true potential if you do not develop the discipline to execute on your deliverables to achieve business results. This requires commitment and a continuous focus on your goals, along with acknowledging the hidden potential that has been unlocked as a result of each and every success you have accomplished.

In my experience, the key success factors for those who ultimately unlock their potential include the following:

- Have faith and confidence in yourself and your knowledge, skills and abilities
- Persevere to overcome the challenges and obstacles that stand in the way of your success
- Learn from every mistake, failure or hardship – both yours and those of other people
- Surround yourself with people who are successful and radiate positive energy
- Seek constructive feedback from those who have your best interests in mind, so you can enhance your skill set

The Challenge

In conclusion, all of us have hidden potential that is waiting to be tapped. The challenge is to discover our potential and then master a process for developing and unleashing that potential so we can achieve the success that we desire at work, and in life.

Developing your skill set and taking advantage of opportunities are the first two steps in the process. However, your ultimate success will be fueled by the success factors that are referenced above. What is preventing you from starting this process so you can unlock your hidden potential on your road to success?