

LEADING**BLOG**

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3 Self-Limiting Mindsets that Will Hold You Back at Work



This is a guest post by Joel Garfinkle, author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. Garfinkle asks, “What makes one person more successful than another?” *Getting Ahead* is a straightforward guide to help you eliminate your blind spots to improve how you are perceived, increase your visibility and exert your influence. Great material.

The workplace has enough challenges and obstacles without us getting in our own way. But too often, we sabotage ourselves. Whether it’s internal forces that cause us to sell ourselves short or it’s a matter of having been conditioned not to “toot our own horn,” people have a marked tendency to avoid the limelight when in truth they belong in it. What’s more, if you’ve always been the ‘unsung hero,’ management wants to know who you are.

In my executive coaching business, I’ve worked with scores of clients over the years to help them overcome self-limiting mindsets that were holding them back in the workplace. Here are some of the most common issues:

1. **Not making an effort to be visible to management.** Some of my clients were frustrated because they felt chronically underappreciated, undervalued and anonymous. “I can’t get ahead because nobody knows who I am or what I do for this company,” is a common refrain. This is a particularly severe problem where managers are “results-oriented” while paying scant attention to developing the processes and people that bring them those results.

It’s up to you to ensure that you get credit for your accomplishments. Make a conscious effort to keep your boss apprised of the progress you are making and the projects you complete successfully. If you want to be valued and appreciated, you need to make sure management knows what you are doing and how your efforts contribute to the company’s bottom line.

2. **Believing it’s the boss’s job to manage your career.** Career management is your job, not his. Don’t leave your career management up to your boss.

You may need to take charge of your employee evaluation process yourself. To do this, first get an understanding of how the employee evaluation system works. Find out exactly what criteria or metrics your boss is using to evaluate your performance. This will probably require a sit-down session.

Once you know how you will be evaluated, you need to prepare in advance for the evaluation. Keep careful notes on all your accomplishments for the company. Put dollar figures on them whenever possible. The more numbers, the better. Then take initiative to schedule sit-downs to discuss your progress throughout the year. Don’t rely on your manager to do it.

Then, at least a month before your annual evaluation is due, schedule another appointment. Hand your boss an itemized list of your accomplishments for the year. Say, “Here’s a list of the things we’ve discussed over the year. I thought this would come in handy for when you write my eval.” Then let it go at that. If your manager is on the ball, though, and writes your eval way ahead of the deadline, you may need to schedule your meeting even earlier. The important thing is to take initiative and stay ahead of the curve.

Management wants to make their star employees look good. Some of them don’t have the administrative or managerial skill

set to allow them to do that, though. They get distracted and don't know what a good, solid evaluation even looks like. Managers will appreciate that you took the time.

- 3. Failure to notice the opportunities around you.** Some workers limit themselves by getting so focused on their immediate jobs and departments that they lose sight of the big picture. One solution: Think two levels up. Make sure you know about the key issues and projects not just in your immediate department, but at least two levels up from you. You should also network within the company and find out who the key players are in other departments. Keep your ear to the ground to learn about new initiatives, particularly in revenue-generating endeavors or where you will have an opportunity to create substantial savings for the company.

If your immediate boss can't or won't promote you, you need to have options. By exposing your talents, skills and value to leaders in other departments, you enhance your chances of gaining a promotion. It's not just who you know; it's who knows you! Work hard to maximize your exposure for lateral movements and promotions.

Remember, if you don't take credit for your own success, someone else will. That doesn't serve your own interests. And if you think about it, it doesn't serve the long-term interests of the company. You have a professional duty to yourself as well as your company to make sure your accomplishments are recognized and credited to you.



Joel A. Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 coaches in the U.S., having worked with many of the world's leading companies. He is the author of seven books, including [*Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*](#). View his books and FREE articles at his [Executive Coaching Services](#) website. You can also subscribe to his [Executive Leadership newsletter](#) and receive the FREE e-book, 40 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!”