

5 steps to accelerate your career in 2017

As seen on: **Take advantage of 2017's Talent Shortage:**

<http://www.cnbc.com/2017/01/13/5-steps-to-accelerate-your-career-in-2017.html?linkID=3>

1. Clarify your career objective.

Being able to define what a better job means to you is to give yourself some direction. "Being intentional is essential to having a career you want," said Meg Bartelt, a financial planner who specializes in working with professional women in the tech industry. "Too many of us, me included, blithely trip along, only making adjustments when a crisis appears. Sure, it might result in a career you want, but you're leaving an awful lot to chance."

A better strategy is to think about what you want to get out of your job this year — whether it's a new title, higher pay, greater responsibility or something entirely different. Whatever that goal is, you won't be able to reach it until you can name it.

2. Learn a new skill.

Rapidly advancing technology has transformed many jobs. In order to keep up, seek out ways to continue your education. On-the-job training and learning new programs, techniques and strategies that may be affecting your industry could be sufficient. Also consider massive open online courses (MOOC), official certification programs and other more formal education opportunities.

Most important, though, remember to keep an open mind. "We must not only look into the future to figure out how our particular job will change over the next three to five years — and do what we need to do to keep ourselves relevant — but we must also equip ourselves mentally and emotionally for change itself," said Kim Seeling Smith, founder of human resources training and consulting firm Ignite Global.

"The ability to accept and even embrace change is the single most important thing we can do to prepare ourselves for the future."

3. Revamp your social media presence.

Like it or not, your online appearance is often the first impression you're projecting to people, be they old acquaintances, promising suitors or potential employers. Be sure you are controlling that message.

Remember that what you say and do online is public — no matter what your privacy settings. "Nothing is truly private on the web," said Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer at CareerBuilder. "It would be a shame to miss out on a job opportunity because of some embarrassing photos from years ago."

Beyond [keeping it clean](#), you can maneuver your online presence to show off your experience and expertise. Haefner recommends starting a blog related to your career interests, as well as connecting and engaging with relevant people and companies.

4. Boost your daily productivity.

Making a big career move has to happen one day at a time. So do your best to maximize your productivity and efficiently use your work hours to advance your objectives. This might require blocking off time for daily activities such as checking email and social media accounts, as well as putting your phone away when focusing on big projects, to stay on task and [ignore productivity killers](#).

5. Cultivate your network.

Whatever your career goals, you're likely to need a hand to help you achieve them. Talk about your plans to the people you know — your boss, colleagues, friends, friends of friends — and ask them about their related experience and advice.

"This is networking at its best: targeting a few people whom you can focus on individually and establish a solid personal and professional rapport with," said Bartelt. "People tend to be helpers by nature, I've found, so give them an easy way to help you."

Also, reach beyond your existing network and expand your circle. Bartelt suggests setting a professional development schedule for the year and planning to attend, say, one networking event a month, "be it a roomful of strangers or a single person over lunch," she said. "This way, you will continually grow and refine and strengthen your network, but in a manageable and hopefully even enjoyable way."