The "Seven Secrets" To…..

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Managing A Successful
Technical Career

But First….

The Secrets Of Implementing
A Successful Data Governance Project
Source: Podcast by Jill Dyche

Peter Stiglich who along with Mel Pai were my DAMA contacts…..made a great suggestion as I was preparing for this presentation. They said ……try to tie elements of your presentation to Data Governance.

Peter also gave me some links to some great articles around DG including a podcast by Jill Dyche.

Her subject was: "The secrets of implementing a successful Data Governance project." It immediately struck me how many of the elements apply to managing our careers.

A Successful Data Governance Project

✓ Understanding the company culture

✓ Understanding the decision making process

✓ Understanding the organizational structure

Jill talks about six secrets to implementing a successful DG project.

These were the first three….

A Successful Data Governance Project

✓ Understand the immediate business requirements DG can address

✓ The need to avoid it becoming an intellectual exercise

✓ Understanding what constitutes a customer and the important metrics

…here are the last three.

The Company Culture

- ✓ Do I fit?
- ✓ Core values
- ✓ The people
- ✓ The leadership
- ✓ Is it a collaborative culture?

How can the company culture impact managing your career?

Probably the most basic question you should ask yourself is …do I fit?
Do their core values mesh with mine?
Do I like the people? …….Those you work closely with every day.
Do I respect the leadership? Do they respect me?

Don't all these questions add up to…..do you enjoy being there?

Now we all know there is no perfect culture…… but on balance….. for you to have a successful career….why battle a difficult culture on top of all the other challenges your job has?

Will there be difficult times…absolutely….but your chances of having a successful career go up significantly if you enjoy the environment and the people you work with and for.

The Decision Making Process

- ✓ How are (promotional) decisions made?
- ✓ Who is involved?
- ✓ Who are decision makers?
- ✓ Who are the influencers?
- ✓ Who are your supporters?
- ✓ Who are your detractors?

Don't these same questions …..critical to implementing a DG project…. have to be answered for "implementing a successful career?"

Yet most of us don't really go through these in a disciplined way as part of managing our careers.

There is an interesting phenomena here…in most companies….as soon as we insert that word "promotional" or "career" in front of the word decisions…..everyone says "I have no idea what our process is!"

Let's get real….you may not like the process but there is a process.

Time for one of my sports analogies….if everyone is playing football and you are still playing soccer you will have career challenges on this team.

Let's look at two of the fundamentals…. in any culture…. of career management. First, at the most basic level….your boss has to like your level of performance. notice…I didn't say he/she has to like you.

Second, your internal customers have to be pleased with your performance. In fact I would argue the internal customer is more important than your boss.

Let's talk about some myths around how organizations make career decisions:

     ✓   **You have to play golf with ....whomever.... to get ahead.**

           I love this one....my response....if that is <u>really true</u> I suggest you start taking golf lessons immediately.!

     ✓   **The reality is 99% of businesses ultimately look at your performance.**

     ✓   **Someone may be a nephew of the owner but if they miss their numbers a couple of quarters in a row they will get canned!**

     ✓   **George Steinberger would fire his mother is she had a loosing season.**

KEY TAKE AWAYS FROM THIS SLIDE:

     ✓   **Make sure you understand the process in your company**
     ✓   **Look at… what is your relationship with the decision makers, do they support you?**
     ✓   **Do you know who the influencers are? Influencers are those in a company that regardless of level have credibility with the decision makers.**
     ✓   **Evaluate on a scale of 1 – 10 your relationships with your boss, other key decision makers and the influencers. If you have <u>any</u> scores below an 8….. I suggest you create an action plan on how you are going to bring that score up.**

The Organization Structure

✓ Important to understand?

✓ How might it be helpful?

Scenario 1:   The company just made a major sale in October and a week later you run into the SVP of Sales at Starbucks you recognize him but you didn't have a clue what his name was.

Scenario 2: Same situation…this time you are with one of your peers who recognizes him…. she introduces herself….. then tells him how exciting it was to read about the major sale.

Whose career just may have gotten a boost?

TIP: Take a few minutes and review the Bio's of the executive team. You never know when the "small word" phenomena pops up that could give you a reason to make contact.

For example: You discover one of the execs went to the same school OR works for the same charity OR is passionate about the Opera. You shoot them a quick email and …….what's the worse thing that could happen?

Understanding The Immediate Business Requirements

✓ Pretty basic…most everyone does
✓ Less basic…ones with the most leverage
✓ Less basic…the critical priorities

Leverage means it has a multiplier effect. EG…developing data for four departments versus developing data for just one department.

Critical priorities: We all tend to think about whatever we are working on to be a priority but that isn't always true is it? Just because the boss says it is critical…does that make it critical?

A wise executive once said…one of the secrets of success is knowing the difference between the truly important and the urgent.

Returning a call from your boss may seem urgent but compared to returning a call from a customer it isn't. Returning the call from the customer is what is truly important.

The better you really understand the critical business priorities the more you will be perceived as being on top of your game and a good business person…..all important ingredients for a successful career.

Avoid Data Governance Becoming
An Intellectual Exercise…

…by making sure your efforts are
always business relevant.

Few executives have much tolerance for business discussions that are theoretical.

How on earth does this relate to effectively managing your career?

Suggestion: When you are discussing your ideas…with anyone…. try to frame them in terms of their direct or indirect impact on managing the business, revenue generation and/or customer retention.

The more frequently you do this in meetings and discussions the better the chance you will be perceived as being a good business person, worth listening too.

The Customer and Metrics

✓ What constitutes a customer?

✓ What are the important metrics?

Just as you have to understand these for doing your job…..it struck me these are also critical to understand…. as you think about managing your career.

BTW….who is your customer….. when you think about managing your career?

- **Your boss**
- **Your internal and external customers**
- **Anyone who can influence the career decision makers**
- **HR**

What are the important career metrics? Some are objective and some are subjective.

- **Your PA**
- **Your demonstrated results**
- **How you get along with your peers, managers and subordinates**

Two Key Qualifiers For a Successful "Data Steward"

✓ Someone who is expert on a piece of data or a domain of data….like "financial data" or "customer data."

✓ A change agent

Jill finished the Podcast with a discussion about the two key qualifiers for a successful Data Steward.

Again I was struck with how they are also keys to career success.

When we are starting out in our career we start by slowly becoming expert in a functional area.

For example…. my career has been in HR and I was fortunate to become a VP of HR but first I specialized in management training.

Isn't it usually that specialization gets you recognized first?

There aren't many career paths where you can start as a generalist…and I believe that is a good thing….no one wants to be labeled as a "Jack of all trades, master of none."

Jill has a very practical definition of change agent: Someone who understands how the company uses data but also sees how it can be used better. And someone who can articulate the impact of data on customer loyalty.

Sounds like both of these qualifiers for Data Steward are also important criteria for what makes someone promotable.

A Successful Data Governance Project = A Successful Career

- ✓ Understanding the company culture
- ✓ Understanding the decision making process
- ✓ Understanding the organizational structure
- ✓ Understand the immediate business requirements DG can address
- ✓ The need to avoid it becoming an intellectual exercise
- ✓ Understanding what constitutes a customer and the important metrics

For me…. the real message from Jill's model….it's all about…….being really good at what we do every day.

There really is ……. <u>no substitute</u> …….for competence. Which just happens to be the first secret of my "Seven secrets to managing a successful technical career"…… or any career.

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The "Seven Secrets"
To Managing A Successful Technical Career

- ✓ Competence
- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Interviewing Skills
- ✓ Building Alliances
- ✓ Mentoring
- ✓ Self Promotion
- ✓ Volunteering

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There is one extremely important skill missing here that is critical for success in all of these areas…..communication skills.

Which can be a wonderful presentation subject on its own.

It is not formally part of my presentation but we can certainly talk about it during the Q & A.

Technical Competence

✓ What is it?

✓ How do I know if I have it?

✓ Am I hiding it?

✓ Ways to improve it.

Everything we have talked about and will continue to talk about…. relates to competence because in the business world and in most worlds….it is the significant driver of success.

Technical Competence…how do I know if I have it? I have some very practical answers:
   • First, are you the "go to guy or gal" in your area of expertise?
   • Are you asked to join special project teams or task forces?
   • Are you asked for your technical opinions?

If you are saying to your self….Yes I am! Terrific! You are on your way to a great career.

If you are not….what can you do about it?

First is I recommend observing the folks who are the "go to" people. Can you learn from them?

   • Do they really know more than you or is it a style issue?

Are you hiding your TC?

   • Unlike HS or College where it wasn't always cool to be the first to raise your hand or volunteer to help a professor…in the business world if you have an idea or a solution…let people know ASAP.

- **If you don't what happens? Guaranteed someone else will!**

Best ways to improve your TC? A few ideas:

- **How about getting a technical mentor? Inside the company and outside.**

- **Reading white papers, visiting the technical blogs, listening to Podcasts.**

- **I find Podcast are a great way to learn stuff while driving or working out.**

- **Attending seminars like this….great way to meet other professionals.**

Managerial Competence

✓ What is it?

✓ How do I know if I have it?

✓ How can I gain it?

What is Managerial Competence?

I think it is simply managing yourself and others to meet or exceed objectives…on time and within the budget.

Of course it really isn't that simple, is it?

But I like to start there because business is just like sports….it is all about winning.

What are some of the subtler qualities of being a competent manager?
- **Collaborative**
- **Supportive…meaning more of a complimentor than a critic**
- **A good mentor**
- **Keeps a good balance between his/her department objectives and the overall company objectives.**
- **Concerned about his peers success…not just his own.**

How do you know if you have managerial competence?

- **Are you managing a team today?**
- **Does your team consistently meet their objectives?**
- **If you are not a manager yet….. What are you being told you need in order to become a manager?**

  Are you currently working on those areas.

- **Are you asked to lead (not just join) special projects, task forces or cross functional teams?**

What are some practical ways to gain managerial competence?

- **Constantly ask for feedback. From:**
  - ✓ **Your boss**
  - ✓ **Your peers**
  - ✓ **Your subordinates**
- **What are the themes from the feedback you are getting?**
- **Develop an action plan to improve in the areas suggested.**
- **Volunteer to run projects or teams.**
- **Take advantage of management training and try not to rationalize it away by saying, "I'd love to but…"**

Leadership

Not going to spend much time on Leadership…like communication it is a whole program unto itself. In the bibliography I have recommended several books in this area.

I am of the school….leadership can be learned. In fact if you study leadership you will notice the majority of good leaders….not just in business…. but political leaders, military leaders and religious leaders….. in their formative years, read everything they could get their hands on about leadership.

Another observation: good leaders in their formative years also gained first…… technical competence and second…. managerial competence.

(See bibliography for recommended books on leadership.)

Networking

✓ What is it?

✓ A few key principles

✓ Why it is so important to your career

✓ And it can even help your employer!

Networking: NOT the kind usually associated with looking for a job.

FIRST LET ME ASK: How do you see networking as a tool to help you manage your career <u>inside</u> as well as <u>outside</u> the company? (And when I say <u>outside</u> I am not talking about job hunting)

Do you know and talk to the experts in your field inside your company? Outside? If not, what are the barriers to doing it?

If you could make a connection (Internally & Externally) how might it help?

Help solve one of your sticky technical problems? (Internal and external)
They might teach you something. (I & E)
They could even become a technical mentor. (I & E)
They might recommend you for a task force or promotion. (Internal)
They might introduce you to other technical professionals. (I & E)

Networking with industry experts can help your employer….providing they aren't from the competition!

How might an outside expert help your company?

ANSWERS

- ✓ **Could link you up with someone who could help solve a challenging technical problem.**
- ✓ **They may even have faced the same technical problem themselves.**

What are some ways you have connected with outside experts? Basically…

- ✓ **Email them or call them! Tell them how much you learned from listening to their Pod cast…or speech…or article…or white paper.**

   Make sure the feedback is specific or it will become just another piece of junk mail.

TIP: Don't forget to tap into your Alumni network…it is one of the most underutilized networking techniques and yet it is a gold mine. Why? They almost always return your call. Most alumni data bases are relationship data bases so you can search by title or function or company or all of the above.

Let me summarize…

For me networking is all about building long term relationships it is not making a call to ask someone a question OR only calling when you need something.

Before moving on to the next secret I would like to share with you what two networking gurus have to say about two key principles around successful networking?

First, let me read from Keith Ferrazzi's book…Never Eat Alone…a terrific book on networking.

Key principle: You must reach out to others long before you need anything at all.

Harvey Mackay, who wrote a classic networking book, Dig Your Well Before You Are Thirsty says the best networkers are the best givers. What does he mean?

It means whenever you begin to network always think about a "gift" could you give the person you are contacting (Not the box with a ribbon around it gift.) Just something simple and easy to find like a technical article or a piece of industry news.

Please see bibliography for recommended books about networking.

Interviewing Skills

✓ Both as interviewer and interviewee

- **Some common interviewee mistakes professionals make when interviewing as a candidate internally:**

  ✓ **Number one mistake…..they don't prepare as diligently for the internal interview as they would for an external interview.**
  ✓ **Because they are an insider there is more of a tendency to wing it.**
  ✓ **They don't pay as close attention to how they are dressed.**
  ✓ **They act much more laid back than they would for an external interview.**

- **So how should you prepare for an internal interview?**

  ✓ **Do you have a copy of the job description? Have you studied it?**
  ✓ **Have you met with people in the department to find out what the current business projects are and the current business challenges.**
  ✓ **Why is there an opening?**
  ✓ **Is this a department that has a good performance record?**
  ✓ **Do people that move into this job usually get promoted?**
  ✓ **Have you prepared a list of questions for the hiring manager?**
  ✓ **What do you know about the hiring manager? How can you find out more?**
  ✓ **Have you thought about the big picture…..like reading the companies most recent 10Q and most recent press releases.**
  ✓ **BL: Apply the same rigor to an internal interview as you would an external.**

- **Common interviewer mistakes when interviewing an internal candidate…now you are the interviewer:**

  - ✓ **Because we often know the internal candidates or they are long service employees……. we tend to "take it easy" on them? Right?**
  - ✓ **We also don't do thorough internal reference checks?**
  - ✓ **We don't review their past performance appraisals.**
  - ✓ **And sometimes we don't even review their resume!**
  - ✓ **BL: Apply the same rigor to interviewing internal candidates as you would for an external candidate.**
  - ✓ **Strongly suggest you conduct a behavioral interview. Below are some behavior interviewing questions. (In a behavior interview you never ask theoretical questions. Research has show that a response to a theoretical question, no matter how brilliant, has no relationship to what the person would really do.)**

    - ▪ **Walk me through your role on the xyz project?**
    - ▪ **Did it meet all the benchmark objectives?**
    - ▪ **What was the biggest challenge you personally faced on the project?**
    - ▪ **How did you over come the challenges?**

Building Alliances

✓ What is this all about?

✓ Who should I build alliances with?

Building alliances is all about supporting your peers, your bosses and of course your subordinates.

It means doing everything in your power to make them successful including hands on support…like stay an hour after work to help someone crunch numbers or do some on-line research.

Building alliances is the opposite of being the critic or cynic . Anyone can be a critic and it is even easier to be cynical.

However I do not in any way mean Pollyannaish "support."

You can and **must be** critical from time to time….providing the criticism always comes with a positive suggestion.

In fact, the one way you can thrive and survive being a critic is …….you **always** offer suggestions when you serve up your criticism.

TIP: Ask yourself, do I have a better idea or am I about to give…. what I like to call "naked criticism."

We all know there is a right way to be critical and ….many, many wrong ways.

So what is the right way to give negative feedback to anyone….loved ones and friends included?

- **If you want people to listen to you, start with something positive without any "But."**

  So it is NOT, Mary I really like the first two slides of your presentation BUT….

  - ✓ **All Mary will hear is the BUT! Why? We <u>all know</u> after every but comes a negative comment or disclaimer.**
  - ✓ **Think about when you say BUT…to your best friend or significant other or one of your kids…same reaction… Right?.....they are all waiting for the "next shoe to drop!"**

    So, Mary's next few slides are awful…how should we handle it?

    - • **This technique is totally counter intuitive. Do not give negative feedback when you are try to build an alliance. At least not right away.**
    - • **So staying with the example of Mary and her presentation, what should the feedback sound like? First be <u>very specific</u> about the positive feedback about her first two slides. "Mary, I really liked how clutter free your opening slides look and especially how you get right to the point on slide two by using numbers versus words.**

  Now think about this. If someone you respected <u>gave you this feedback</u> what would the first words out of your mouth be after hearing the positive comments?

  Chances are you would immediately ask: Thanks but what did you think about the other slides?

  This approach takes a lot of discipline but I will guarantee….money back if not satisfied….that if you take this approach you will absolutely gain the reputation of being collaborative…being a team player and you will be building very strong alliances.

  Now, if Mary doesn't ask for feedback on the other slides what are some positive ways to handle the negative feedback?

  How about?

  - • **May I give you some ideas on the other slides? OR**
  - • **I think you can <u>strengthen</u> (BTW a very positive word for negative feedback) your other slides if you were to follow the format you used on slide 2, more numbers and fewer words.**

    TIP: For most of us this kind of stuff doesn't come naturally so it helps…. when ever possible …….to script the feedback ahead of time.

Taking someone under wing and teaching them the ropes….how things "really work" here
- **Who are the "go to people" when you need help?**
- **Sharing your area of technical expertise with others.**

<u>Formal mentoring</u> **is simply participating or letting the "powers to be" know you would like to participate in the companies formal mentoring program. And that you would like to participate as both a mentor and a mentee.**

TIP: Please don't assume the company doesn't have a mentoring program because you haven't heard anything about it.…in some companies it is not well publicized or it is new.

<u>Informal mentoring</u> **is always being on the lookout for when you can help someone who is just learning something new or is struggling.**

Approaching someone in the organization who you know you could learn from and asking them if they would be open to <u>mentoring you</u> from time to time. Be sure to present them with your specific mentoring needs.   The dialogue might sound something like this….

Steve I have always admired your presentation skills. Would it be possible for us to talk sometime about how you build, prepare and practice for your presentations?

Self Promotion

✓ What is it?

✓ Is there an acceptable way to do it?

What is self promotion? Taking responsibility for communicating your unique accomplishments to your boss.

When is it appropriate to "toot your own horn?"

Here's one scenario:

Kathy, a senior manager, tells you did a great job on project ABC.

First….always, always just say, Thank You!

DO NOT be self effacing and say, "Oh, it wasn't really that great." Never discount your fine performance. BECAUSE…GUESS WHAT? They may believe you!

Then always ask if they would mind sharing the feedback with your boss.

Next, be sure to tell your boss and it is as simple as…. Kathy Jones just really made my day when she told me what a great job I did on project ABC.

TIP: Hiding your good works is just that….. "hiding your good works!"

One of the single biggest complaints in the arena of recognition is….my boss took the credit…..OR….worse! My boss gave someone else the credit.

But are you powerless in these situations?   I don't think so.

What can and should you do?

Set the record straight!......Quietly, privately….behind closed doors, not in the hall way and of course not in a confrontational manner. (Although we all know inside we would love to confrontational because we are "ripped!")

It might sound like this…John, I have to tell you I was very disappointed that you took the credit for the Delta Project idea I submitted to you last month at the Team Meeting.
(Cont. Next Page)

Or….John, I am confused about why you gave Larry credit for the solution to the Athena problem. You know I gave you that solution when we met two weeks ago here in your office.

Couple of Self Promotion TIPS:

Save all your "ATa Boys."   Those wonderful emails from customers, co-workers, your boss, your boss's boss that are complimentary. You also want to drag them out before your next performance appraisal. (Some bosses have short memories.)

And speaking of performance appraisals…..save the good ones!

I can't tell you how many of my clients have said, "I can't believe I didn't save those emails!" Or I can't believe I didn't save copies of my performance appraisals.

Volunteering OR…. Why you should never have to ask, "why wasn't I picked to be on that task force or special project ?"

Is there ever a good reason to turn down a special project?

Of course there is….you are under a critical deadline on a critical project.
Or it is in an area where you really don't have an interest in learning.
Or it is a project with a weak team or weak team leader.

In my experience there is <u>never</u> the perfect time to take on more work.

I truly believe…on balance…taking on a special project assignment has far more upside than down side.

What are some of the upsides? Here are a few:

Recognition of your true talents.
A chance to stretch yourself by learning new things.
A chance to work with some bright people you haven't worked closely with.
Exposure to senior management.

In Conclusion…..

What can we take away from all this?

What I think drives a successful technical career is

- **Number one for me is your technical competence.**

- **Number two is checking in regularly with your customers (internal and external) to make sure you are meeting or exceeding their requirements.**

- **Number three…. in this incredibly fast paced world of technology… is staying current in your specialty.**

- **Number four is making sure you are getting credit for all the good things you do…… over and above what they are paying you for…..especially for your customers.**

A Bibliography Follows

Bibliography

- **On networking**:

  1. Dig Your Well Before You Are Thirsty by Harvey Mackay.
  2. Make Your Contacts Count by Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon.
  3. Never Eat Alone by Keith Ferrazzi.
  4. Jeffrey Gitomer's Little Black Book of Connections.

- **On your first 100 days in a new job.** Three excellent books that will help you get off to a good start in any new assignment:

  1. You're In Charge...Now What? by Thomas Neff and James Citrin.
  2. The New Leader's 100 Day Action Plan by Bradt, Check and Pedraza.
  3. The First 90 Days by Michael Watkins.

- **On leadership**:

  1. On Becoming A Leader by Warren Bennis.
  2. Leadership Jazz by Max DePree.
  3. The Situational Leader by Dr. Paul Hersey.
  4. First, Break All The Rules by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. What the world's greatest managers do differently based upon in-depth interviews of over 80,000 managers.

- **Time management:**

  1. First Things First by Steven Covey.

- **One of my all time favorites:**

  1. Good To Great by Jim Collins. It is about what makes great companies great based upon some pretty good data versus opinion.