

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/quick-tips-to-career-success>

Shutterfly CEO Jeff Housenbold rattles off a roster of quick and valuable bits of advice for the aspiring entrepreneur and employee of corporate America. Highlights include finding yourself a mentor invested in your success. He suggests learning where the money is made in a company, and building a career in that sector. Find wide areas of growth or turnaround and you will have the opportunity for broader success. And, uncover your boss' problems - and your boss' bosses' problems - and work to solve them. Don't dwell on titles; go to work to learn. Your intelligence is the ante, but it's luck that rings the cash register.



Transcript

Here are some pieces of advice for being successful in any business.. First is have what I call a 'rabbi.' And it doesn't need to be the CEO or senior executive.. Have someone in the organization who has a propensity for mentorship who wants to see you succeed either because he or she is going to succeed as you succeed or because they have that inclination to do so.. And I don't believe that there is anything really truly unselfish.. There's this notion I call 'selfish unselfishness.' So when you go to a food bank and you serve turkey dinners on Thanksgiving, you're helping people.. And that's unselfish, but you're gaining satisfaction, and that's selfish.. So if you play on that symbiotic relationship, find someone who has enough distance from you in terms of career experience and level that they're willing to mentor you and you won't be threatened.. So have a rabbi.. I think the second thing is do what interest you.. If you really love consumer brands and you're retail, you go to a semiconductor fab, you're going to be bored..

So do what really interest you.. The third thing is go where the money is made in the company.. So if it's a sales-driven organization, go to the sales group.. Understand where the money is made.. Is it through the services? Is it the products? Is it a particular product line? Is it through new products or nonproduct rate? So go where the money is made.. The next is solve your boss's and your boss's boss's problems proactively.. So you're going to be given a set of things to do and think about how they relate to the greater problem that people are trying to solve, and then be proactive to go above and beyond what is asked of you to solve your boss' and your boss's boss's problem.. The next thing I think is go where there's tremendous growth or complete turnaround.. Because those environments create great opportunity for accelerated progression in one's career.. If you're in an industry that's grown 6%, it's going to be hard because people above you aren't going to be moving up..

If it's characterized by 6% growth, it's unlikely it's an innovative industry in market.. So go where there's tremendous growth or disruption or disintermediation or complete turnaround because that's an opportunity, particularly at a young age.. Don't care about title, particularly in your earlier stages of your career.. Too often I interview people and they're haggling over, is it a senior director or a director type? Be a sponge.. Figure out where you want to be.. Have a plan where you want to be three, five, 10 years, right, and figure out what are the skills and the opportunities that you need to get there and be a sponge.. Go around people where you can learn from.. Go in a culture that you feel like you can fit in.. If you're about openness and teamwork and you go into a hero-driven or a cowboy-driven culture, you're not going to succeed.. The politics will crush you and vice versa, so find a culture that fits you..

And then realize that success is driven by putting yourself in the way of opportunity enough times that you get lucky, right? So all of you by definition are smart.. You wouldn't be admitted to Stanford, right? What's going to distinguish you? Because I bet 90% of you were in the top 10% in high schools.. But only 10% of you are going to be in the top 10% of Stanford.. What's going to distinguish success is, are you going to work harder than other people, are you going to be proactive, are you going to get out of the way of your ego, are you going to take chances? And when opportunity does knock, open the door and then also realize that your smarts is the ante and luck is really what rings the cash register..