



Five Things You Can Ditch To “Spring Clean” Your Career

It’s spring cleaning season and did you know this also applies to your career? By re-organizing your professional goals, career documents, and getting rid of unnecessary items, positive changes can occur. We don’t keep outdated things around, so why should we keep old processes, ideas, or habits that no longer fit us?

Whether you want to build a healthier work style or simply freshen up your skills, here are the five best things you can ditch to “spring clean” your career.



Let Go of Perfectionism

Perfectionism can sometimes hold you back in your career. When you’re obsessed with doing everything exactly right all the time, you may miss opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute to something new. If you’re plagued by perfectionism at work, let go of this need by reminding yourself that it’s OK not to be perfect. Some examples of perfectionism you might see at work are spending hours on a simple assignment, constantly redoing something until it’s excellent, and feeling discouraged when you cannot do things as well as others. Trying to be flawless and setting impossible standards for yourself can make you feel stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, and burnt out. If you are experiencing stress with no relief, your motivation can be drained.

This isn’t an excuse to slack off or let mistakes slide in your professional life. It’s essential to ensure your work is done correctly, just don’t expect yourself to be perfect every day at work. If you’re working on new skills or growing in your career, aim for gradual improvement over time. Find the balance between doing a job well done and letting go of the need to have to be perfect in everything you do.

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Throw Out Irrelevant Experience

When you think about your work experience, skills, and accomplishments, focus on how they have helped you grow. Think about what new skills you have gained from your job, degree program, or other activities. Even if you don't need a new job now, cleaning out any irrelevant experience on your resume can be good as it allows opportunities to learn skills that better align with your goals. This also helps you network more, as any updates to your profile will enable opportunities for discussion.

If you are looking for a job that requires specific skills, you might want to consider updating your resume to include courses you have taken or information about other relevant work experiences. Your resume, LinkedIn profile, and other similar networks reflect your professional knowledge and skills. If they don't align with what you want to accomplish in your professional life, they can hurt your image and keep you from moving ahead on your career path.



Stop Saying Yes to Everything

It can be hard to say “no” in a world that promotes over-commitment and over-scheduling. It's easy to say “yes” when someone asks you to do something, even if your schedule doesn't allow you to take on another task. You may not want to hurt someone's feelings or disappoint them, but you also don't want to waste your time on something that doesn't fit your priorities. We must choose what we say yes to and what we say “no” to with intention. The ability to say no is crucial to effective time management. Only you know what you have time for, so don't hesitate to decline a request if you need to focus on more critical tasks. When you need to say no, be polite and respectful. Say something like, “I'm sorry, but I have too much work today. I'll be able to help you another time,” or “Now isn't a good time for me. I'll let you know if my schedule frees up.”

It all comes down to simplifying, prioritizing, and focusing our attention on what matters most. Maybe you have a big project that will take up most of your time for several weeks. It's OK to decline coworkers asking for help on simple tasks politely. Just explain why you can't accept their request without feeling guilty about declining their offer.

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Eliminate Outdated Expectations

Career expectations constantly change. Five years ago, you may have had some career goals that have changed today. Those outdated expectations can look like wanting to stay at a company for a certain period but staying longer. Or you want to try something new but find yourself continuing to excel in your current role. If you’re clinging to plans you made a few career seasons ago; it’s time for an update. Start by assessing what has changed since then. What skills have you acquired? What industries have piqued your interest?

Once you’ve taken stock of where you stand currently, take another look at the plans and expectations you set for yourself back then. Ask yourself if those expectations are still relevant. Divide them into categories: keep, throw away, and revise as needed. Then use this exercise as an opportunity to fine-tune your career expectations so that they align with who you are now and who you want to become next.



Release Fear

The number one barrier to success isn’t lack of talent: it’s fear. Behind many anxieties is the fear of doing something wrong, looking foolish, or not meeting expectations — in other words, the fear of failure. By framing a situation you’re dreading differently before you attempt it, you may be able to avoid some stress and anxiety. To beat stress and anxiety in challenging situations, practice a pep talk, then picture yourself succeeding. If speaking during a meeting or anticipating a project makes you stressed, write down a list of your skills and past successes in situations involving risk-taking.

Careers are filled with risks, but there’s no reason to be paralyzed worrying about what might happen. Fear is a powerful emotion that can keep people from trying new things, but sometimes the real damage comes from inaction enabled by fear. You can start letting go of your fears by allowing yourself to take a time out; It’s impossible to think clearly when you’re flooded with fear or anxiety. Next, make a plan. When you have a plan for something that makes you nervous, it will make the process easier. Finally, whenever you reach your goal of getting over that fear, reward yourself — this could be by allowing yourself to take a long weekend after a fearful project or getting yourself a nice lunch after making an important phone call.

Spring cleaning your career can give you a fresh start by letting go of what is unnecessary in your professional life and focusing on what matters most. By letting go of perfectionism, concentrating on what’s relevant, learning to say “no”, setting realistic goals, and eliminating fear, you can clean out the clutter in your career and experience a refreshing sense of renewal.