

Moving up

Level: Intermediate–advanced

Time: 90 minutes +

Summary: This lesson is about promotions. In this lesson, students will:

1. study an article that provides tips on how to win a promotion;
2. think about their own core skills;
3. look at job titles and job descriptions.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; one copy of the vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any

Note: This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on a shortened version of the original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 4/2015.

Warmer

This task introduces the topic of promotions and moving up the career ladder. Try to keep the task short and light-hearted so that you don't accidentally open up any grievances students may have with their employer!

Key words

Students match the key words from the article to the definitions. After they have done this, they should find the key words in the article to see how they are used in context. Note that the definitions for the words are given in the order the words appear in the article.

Tip: This task can be divided up amongst the students, with half matching 1 to 9 and the other half matching 10 to 18. When they have all matched their key words and definitions, they should share their answers either in pairs or small groups.

Key:

1. *misconception*
2. *get ahead*
3. *appeal*
4. *lack*
5. *competent*
6. *brief*

7. *core skills*
8. *aspire to*
9. *reimbursement*
10. *hierarchy*
11. *status quo*
12. *candidates*
13. *references*
14. *transition*
15. *whining*
16. *credibility*
17. *vague*
18. *laterally*

Understanding the article

Get the students to work in pairs and find and highlight or underline all the tips for getting a promotion in the article. Tell them that they should not try to break down the tips and should only note one tip per paragraph. When they have found them, they should summarize them by writing them in note form in the list on the worksheet. After they have completed their list of tips, get them to compare their lists with other pairs. Have they all understood the tips in the same way? Discuss any that are not completely clear.

Key (suggested answers):

- *Know your company and the way it functions (para 2)*
- *Get known (para 3)*
- *Know yourself and your goals (para 4)*
- *Invest in yourself – look for learning and networking opportunities (para 5)*
- *Think strategically (para 6)*
- *Apply even if you even if you don't have all of the qualifications (para 7)*
- *Keep a record of your achievements (para 8)*
- *Volunteer and get to know people outside your company (para 9)*
- *Invest in your professional development and acquire new skills (para 10)*
- *Prioritize what you want (para 11)*
- *Take on more responsibilities but remember your place within the hierarchy (para 12)*
- *Don't presume you're going to get a job (para 13)*
- *Don't complain about outside candidates (para 14)*
- *Stay positive; don't show your frustration (para 15)*
- *Ask for feedback about why you didn't get the promotion (para 16)*
- *Consider a lateral move (para 17)*

Moving up

- *Stay in touch with your colleagues but allow your company to announce your promotion (para 18)*

Moving up expressions

Students rearrange the words to make expressions about getting a promotion. The expressions all refer to the idea of a career ladder. Students then talk about similar expressions that are used in their language. Do they also use the image of ladders or something else?

Extend this task by getting the students to create sentences of their own that use the expressions.

Key:

a.

1. *the next step in your career*
2. *climb the career ladder*
3. *the next rung up*
4. *look up the organizational ladder*
5. *take a step upwards*

b. *all of them use the career ladder image*

Core skills

This task practices the language used in paragraph 7 of the article. This task will also be useful for students who want to update their CV or need to talk about their current job and skills set, especially during an interview.

They should work individually and make notes of their answers for parts a and b. Then, they should work with a partner or in small groups to talk about what they've written and whether they are really ready to apply for a promotion.

Job titles and job descriptions

a. Students find and write the job titles or job descriptions of the ten experts who are quoted in the article and discuss which ones sound most impressive.

Key:

British career coach
financial analyst and founder of Citymothers
one of the founders of Everywoman
US career coach
author and workplace expert
legal recruiter, communication coach and author
career advisor
managing partner
New York City management consultant
human resources executive

b. and c. Students write their own job title or job description and, then, discuss it with other students. In their pairs or groups, they should try to make their job descriptions sound more impressive. Suggest that they try by integrating the core skills that they wrote in task 5 and adding words like *manager* or *expert*, as well as the country or city where they work.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all of the new and useful vocabulary they have learnt during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

Related topics on onestopenglish

The following onestopenglish lesson plans walk students through creating a personal profile and a CV:

www.onestopenglish.com/esp/human-resources/personal-profile-and-cv-builder/

Moving up

1 Warmer

When did you last get a promotion?

Are you hoping for a promotion in the near future?

Have any of your colleagues recently been promoted?

2 Key words

Match the key words to the definitions below. Then, find them in the article to read them in context.

appeals aspire to brief competent core skills
get ahead lack misconception reimbursement

1. a wrong belief or opinion as a result of not understanding something _____
2. to make progress in your work and become successful _____
3. If something _____ to you, you like it or want it.
4. not have any or enough of something that you need _____
5. capable of doing something in a satisfactory or effective way _____
6. official instructions to do a job, saying how it should be done _____
7. key things you need to be able to do a job successfully _____
8. want to achieve something or to be successful, especially in your career _____
9. an amount of money you get from your employer to replace money you have already spent on something that is connected with your work _____

candidates credibility hierarchy laterally references
status quo transition vague whining

10. a system for organizing people according to their status in a company _____
11. the present situation or the way that things usually are _____
12. people competing for a job _____
13. statements from people who know you or have worked with you that give information about you. You often need these when you apply for a new job _____
14. the process of changing from one situation or position to another _____
15. complaining in a way that annoys other people _____
16. qualities that someone has that make people believe or trust them _____
17. not clearly or fully explained _____
18. sideways (rather than upwards) _____

Moving up

Moving up

by Margaret Davis



You've been working really hard so surely your promotion is already overdue. Sadly, it doesn't always work like that. Margaret Davis has some tips to help you move up the ladder.

1 Wouldn't it be great if you walked into the office tomorrow morning and discovered you had just been promoted? In an ideal world, your boss would immediately recognize your strengths and you would simply be offered the promotion you thought you deserved. Unfortunately, here in the real world, automatic promotions rarely happen. But if you are willing to invest some time and effort preparing for the next step in your career, your chances of success will be greatly improved.

2 Career experts say that getting a promotion is similar to finding a job, especially if your company has a formal interviewing process. Knowing your company and the way it functions is essential, according to British career coach Denise Taylor. "The biggest misconception about promotions is that they naturally occur with time," Taylor writes in *The Guardian*. "It's not enough to think you deserve one; you must understand and clearly demonstrate how you meet the requirements."

3 If you want to get ahead, you need to get known, Taylor says. "Offer to write for the company magazine. Doing so will mean you'll be seen by many people within the company. Get chatting to people from other parts of the organization and find out about their work and challenges. You never know when this will prove useful and there is often a need for cross-functional project teams; the more you are known, the more likely it is that our name will be suggested."

4 Equally important is knowing yourself and your goals, according to Louisa Symington-Mills, financial analyst and founder of Citymothers, a networking site for working parents. "If you're aiming for the next rung up purely because you think you should but the different work involved actually doesn't appeal, it won't be a match made in heaven," Symington-Mills writes in *The Daily Telegraph*.

5 "Invest in yourself," Symington-Mills advises. "Look at opportunities to learn. If you are confident in your professional knowledge but lack management experience, look at courses available that fit around your day job and give you meaningful and useful skills, as well as adding to your CV." Not surprisingly, Symington-Mills is a fan of networking. "There are few better ways to broaden

your contact and knowledge base than through attending networking events. These could be internal to your firm – if you work for a large organization, the chances are there will be a choice of networking groups to allow you to connect with people with similar interests – or external."

Think strategically, advises Karen Gill, one of the founders of Everywoman, a global membership organization providing development services for women. Gill says that men spend 20 per cent of their time making strategic moves to help them climb the career ladder, while women put all their efforts into doing their current job. "Although it may mean that those men are concentrating less fully on their immediate work, they are perceived as having an interest in corporate strategy as a whole, whereas, if you are merely competent within your brief, you are not," she told *The Guardian*.

According to Gill, men apply for positions whether they have all the qualifications or not, while women do not apply unless they meet all the qualifications. "No one can be 100 per cent qualified," she comments. "Instead, work out what core skills you need to do the job you aspire to and just take the leap."

US career coach Hannah Morgan, writing in *US News and World Report*, says that it is important to keep a record of your achievements. "It will be difficult to prove you are exceeding expectations if you don't have evidence," Morgan explains. "It is your responsibility to track your accomplishments. Keep a simple spreadsheet listing your tasks or goals, the actions you took and the result or outcome of your actions. When you step forward and take on special projects or tasks, remember to include these as well."

Morgan says that getting to know people outside your company, for example by volunteering, will provide valuable experience. "Join professional associations or organizations that have high visibility in your community or area of expertise. The next step is to look for volunteer opportunities within your organization that provide you with the opportunity to use your strengths."

Climbing the career ladder may mean acquiring new skills. The good news is that, in the internet age, doing so is becoming easier. "You can either pay for the training yourself or teach yourself through MOOCs or mentorship, or you can tap into career development reimbursement options that may be available through your employer," Morgan writes. "Investing in your professional development is just one more way to show you are ready for a promotion."

Moving up

- 11** Ambitious employees can damage their chances by asking for too much at once, however. Don't ask for a promotion, a pay rise and new privileges all at the same time or you risk frustrating your boss, says author and workplace expert Lynn Taylor. "Know your priorities and work down the list as concisely as possible," Taylor told *Forbes*.
- 12** Don't be afraid to take on more responsibility but be careful not to break the established rules, warns legal recruiter, communication coach and author David Parnell. "Any mature workplace has an established hierarchy and everyone should know their place within in," Parnell told *Forbes*. "Trying to impress your manager by handling their responsibilities, rather than just doing yours, can be interpreted as offensive or even threatening to the hierarchical status quo."
- 13** No matter how well you are known within your company, you still need to submit an application for internal promotions, says career advisor Alison Doyle of *About.com*. "Don't presume you're going to get the job. The company may be considering external candidates as well as other employees for the job. Also, don't presume that the hiring manager or department manager reviewing your qualifications will know your background." Don't take your boss by surprise, Doyle warns. "Be sure to let your boss know that you are interviewing for a new position. You'll want him or her on your team because your references will be checked. Do offer to help with the transition if you're selected for promotion."
- 14** Never complain to your boss when candidates outside your company are being interviewed for a position that you want, advises Lynn Taylor. "Whining about others detracts from your own professionalism and credibility. Similarly, comparing your worth to that of others in the firm who have already achieved the level you seek is counterproductive. Keep it positive, focused and don't put anything negative in writing."

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15 Try to stay positive even if you don't get the promotion you wanted, says Debbie Messemer, managing partner at the global financial services company KPMG in San Francisco. "It's OK to give yourself 24 hours to be disappointed but, then, get back on your horse and move on," Messemer told *Fortune*. "Outwardly displaying frustration for an extended period can hurt you and your reputation in the long run."

16 Feel free to ask your manager why you didn't get the promotion but don't be aggressive about it. Try to remain unemotional. At the same time, don't be surprised if the answer you receive is not entirely satisfying. New York City management consultant John Beeson says it is sometimes difficult to get honest information about why you were not promoted. "Managers and HR professionals often provide intentionally vague feedback for fear of losing a good employee," Beeson writes in the *Harvard Business Review*.

17 If you're ambitious, you probably want to get to the top as quickly as possible. But moving laterally can also be useful, especially if it means increasing your skills. "When we think of promotion, we often only look up the organizational ladder and we neglect the value of the lateral move," says V Jean Maye, human resources executive for a New York City television network. "Lateral moves, in which you move to a different area at a similar title or salary, can prove to be just as career-enhancing and useful as vertical moves," Maye writes in *The Chicago Tribune*. "Taking on a new role or new responsibilities will give you new skills and experiences, more information about the company and a bigger network of colleagues."

18 Finally, when you do take that long-awaited step upwards, don't forget your colleagues. "Take the time to say goodbye to your current co-workers and to let them know you'll stay in touch," says Alison Doyle. But be careful, she adds. "Do wait until after the company formally announces your promotion to tell them. It's important that the company makes the announcement first, before you tell anyone."

3 Understanding the article

Find 17 tips in the article – there is one tip per paragraph in paragraphs 2 to 18. Summarize them by writing them in note form below.

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- _____
- _____

Moving up

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4 Moving up expressions

a. Put the words in the right order to make expressions from the article that are used to talk about getting a promotion.

1. career in next your step the
2. ladder climb career the
3. up rung next the
4. organizational up look ladder the
5. step a upwards take

b. What image do all the expressions use?

c. Are similar expressions used to talk about promotions in your language?

Moving up

5 Core skills

a. What core skills do you need to be able to do your job well?

b. What other skills would you need to do the job you aspire to?

c. Are you ready to take the leap and apply for a promotion?

6 Job titles and job descriptions

a. Write the job titles or job descriptions of the ten experts who are quoted in the article.

b. Write down your job title or job description.

c. Discuss other (more impressive) ways to describe what you do at work.

