



Chapter 5

Strategies for Promotion Roadblocks: I. C.A.N.

In the process of executing your promotion plan, you're bound to encounter some roadblocks and detours. Count on them. They are life's way of sending you to the gym to exercise your resiliency muscles. Without roadblocks and challenges, we'd all be soft and flabby. When we meet them head-on, we become stronger and healthier. This chapter is devoted to giving you some muscle to manage any challenge that might present itself.

Before getting into the strategies, I'll introduce the resiliency factor and a concept called the "I. C.A.N." mindset. People with a high degree of resiliency display several common characteristics: They are

- Purposeful
- Confident of their value
- Persevering
- Proactive
- Optimistic
- Empowered, with inner strength
- Anxiety-free
- Balanced
- Diligent about self-care
- An inspiration to others

You can be sure that managers clamor to promote people with these characteristics.

Being resilient doesn't require perfect and unwavering self-confidence, just the skills to regain it in the least amount of time possible. Henry Ford said, "Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you're right." If you believe you can be resilient, you will be.

The “I. C.A.N.” Mindset

When operating in full force, your resiliency factor will enable you to say, “I *CAN* do this.” And, indeed, you *can* do it when you apply this meaning to the I. C.A.N. acronym:

- **I = Inspire Daily:** Recall a time when you felt utterly inspired, ready to take on the world, confident that everything would work out for the best. What would your career be like if you could have that feeling on a daily basis? Tasks would get tackled immediately, people would want to have you on their team, ideas would flow, and energy would be focused on what really matters. Successful people master the art of recharging themselves with daily inspiration.
- **C = Control the Controllables:** One of the secrets of resilient people is that they concentrate on what they can control. You *can't* control how your manager will respond to your promotion plan. You *can* control how you respond to your manager, and the manner in which you convey your return on investment. You *can't* control whether your manager will go to bat for you in endorsing you to his boss. You *can* control getting on the radar screen of his boss by volunteering for projects that will give you more visibility, weaving your personal stamp into materials that will be seen by the manager's boss, asking to attend meetings where the boss will be present, and so on. People who have a sense of control in their day-to-day lives experience less stress.
- **A = Act Now:** Do not wait to do something that could be done now. This is especially true for actions that put us out of our comfort zone. What do you have a tendency to procrastinate on? Those are the very items that need to be acted on immediately. Why? Because doing so builds self-discipline. Self-discipline brings more self-control. Self-control allows you to act from a position of power and make wise choices that will move you forward. Forward movement builds

Tip: *Who's in charge of your success? Psychologists use the term "locus of control" to describe a person's beliefs about whether internal or external forces are responsible for his success or failure. People with an internal locus of control believe that success is contingent on what they do; those with an external locus of control believe that events outside their personal control determine success. To assess your beliefs, take the free assessment online at www.dushkin.com/connectext/psy/ch11/survey11.mhtml.*

momentum, which makes it easier to act. Now the cycle is complete, and you're on a roll!

- **N = Never Give Up!:** Motivational speaker and sales coach Joe Girard aptly stated: “The elevator to success is out of order. You’ll have to use the stairs...one step at a time.” Perseverance is a key characteristic of someone with resiliency. When your manager gives you a “no,” ask, “What would it take to make it yes?” Then go do it. When you hit a roadblock, ask yourself, “What new behavior or way of thinking can I learn from this?” Then go practice it. No’s and roadblocks are “double-dip” opportunities—you not only master some new skill in the process, but you deepen your ability to persevere.

Victim or Victor: Turning Adversity into an Advantage

When faced with significant stress, what causes some people to shrivel in defeat while others thrive and find victory? A 12-year study conducted by psychologist Salvatore R. Maddi, Ph.D., followed 400 executives, managers, and supervisors who were downsized by Illinois Bell Telephone as part of one of the biggest deregulation and divestiture cases in American history.

Maddi’s results showed that approximately two-thirds suffered significant performance, leadership, and health declines as a result of the extreme stress from the deregulation and divestiture, including heart attacks, strokes, obesity, depression, substance abuse, and poor performance reviews.

However, the other one-third actually thrived during the cataclysmic change. These employees maintained their health, happiness, and performance and felt renewed enthusiasm, despite experiencing the same circumstances as their coworkers.

What gave the thriving group such resilience? Three key attitudes:

- **Commitment:** A sort of “personal pledge” to stay involved in ongoing events, instead of becoming isolated.
- **Control:** The initiative to influence outcomes and not lapse into passivity and powerlessness.
- **Challenge:** A perspective that viewed changes, whether positive or negative, as opportunities for new learning.

Which of the preceding three areas are you strongest in? Which area would you like to focus on improving?

Read more about the study at www.psychologymatters.org/hardiness.html.



15 Common Roadblocks

In the pages that follow, I've catalogued some common roadblocks found on the path to promotion. You'll see commonalities in some of the underlying concerns, which typically point to problems with the boss's behavior or in some cases budget limitations. As you read through, highlight or checkmark those items that might apply to you, as well as tips you'll act on to improve your situation.

#1: You Are Too Valuable in Your Current Role

Potential Issues or Underlying Concerns

- Manager seems to be stalling.
- Manager doesn't want to lose you as a producer.

Help-in-a-Hurry Tips

- Create your own succession plan if one doesn't already exist. If you haven't been training one or more people to step into your role, get busy. Who are the best candidates to fill your shoes so that you can move up?
- Propose a mentoring plan where you'll get your promotion but also be available to your successor for a set period of time.
- If you sense your manager doesn't want to lose you and you would still report to him in a new promoted role, emphasize your continued support of him. For instance, "I am committed to supporting you as we move this project forward and will continue to give you 100 percent effort so that you also meet your production goals." Or, "I can assure you that a key priority for me is to make sure you look good when it comes to turning in numbers for our district." Continue to act supportive and produce results.

Tip: *Recognize your contribution to the problem. In Managing Up: 59 Ways to Build a Career-Advancing Relationship with Your Boss (AMACOM/ American Management Association, 1999), Michael and Deborah Singer Dobson offer suggestions for dealing with problem bosses. Consistent with the Control the Controllables concept, they advise looking at yourself and the potential impact your actions may be having on the problem. That doesn't mean you are causing the problems. Instead, the Dobsons point out that you have more power to change yourself than you do your manager. Therefore, responding more effectively is often your most powerful tool.*

#2: Your Manager Won't Endorse You for Promotion

Potential Issues or Underlying Concerns

- Manager won't endorse you to other executives involved in the hiring decision.
- Manager doesn't want to lose control, influence, or power over you.
- Manager is not completely convinced that you will perform well in the new position, which could reflect on her performance record.
- Manager is concerned that you will outshine her if promoted.
- Manager either states directly that you're not ready or avoids telling you you're not ready for promotion. (This may or may not be true.)

Help-in-a-Hurry Tips

- Ask specifically about the timeline: “You mentioned that increasing my management skills is a prerequisite to promotion. I'd like to be clear on what you anticipate and how we'll measure success so that I have clear goals.”
- If you sense your manager isn't sold on endorsing you in the new position, ask, “What would you need to see in my performance to assure you that this move would benefit the company?”
- If your manager continues to seem evasive about career conversations, watch for an opportune moment to explore this further. Do so in a curious, nonjudgmental tone so that the manager doesn't get defensive or feel backed into a corner. For example, “You know, Mr. Manager, I hear you saying you support me in developing my career, and yet it doesn't seem that much is happening despite my meeting every goal you've set. Help me understand what the benefits are to tapping on the brakes like this.”

#3: There Are Limited Opportunities for Promotion

Potential Issues or Underlying Concerns

- Your career and the position you're currently in will only be what you make it. Take ownership of your initiative.