

# From techie to manager in 12 easy steps - yeah right! Part 1

John Lawson, Lawson Williams Consulting Group

The careers experts at Lawson Williams continue to offer tips, tricks and advice on building your chosen career.

Planning a career path is difficult. In fact only 2% of Managers are able to look back and say they planned the progression of their career. All the rest took opportunities as they presented themselves. So does this mean it's not worth trying to plan, should we just hang around and hope it happens?

Someone in my early career made the following statement which I believe makes some sense of how can we take proactive steps towards career planning and opportunity,

**Management is a reward for performance.**

It's not something that I will choose to do in the future – it is a reward for what I do today.

So what can we all be doing today that will be rewarded in the future. This is in essence what this regular careers column is all about; it is presenting ideas and things we can all do that will make a difference in our careers.

For those that don't aspire to management I know that many of the following will still be relevant for your career development.



## 1. Expand your vision

Technical people often have a narrow worldview.

To move into management, you may need to “acknowledge the value and skills outside of your team or department”. Unless you recognise the roles of marketers, sales professionals and others, you will struggle to move beyond your role as a techie.

Start thinking macro rather than micro. “The higher up in an organisation you are, the broader your vision has to be.”

Add macro to your micro. Its not a case of not thinking about the detail, but learning to overlay this with the big picture.

## 2. Think outside your company and industry

“Look externally for solutions.” By bringing external ideas and best practices to a manager’s attention, you can quickly establish a reputation for being in the know.”

Reading leading-edge business books – and discussing their ideas – can lead colleagues and higher-ups to recognise you as someone with interests beyond technical issues.

## 3. Be a motivator

Management requires you to motivate others, but learning this skill isn't easy. “We learn to motivate by watching others.”

## The N word

As I write this I'm a little nervous. Why? Indulge me whilst I take a couple of your precious minutes to elaborate. I believe in a holistic approach to the world, healthy body, healthy mind etc. ...and an integral component of this is I do a little ocean swimming. Aside from the obvious physical benefits I am always surprised at how meditative swimming across a vast expanse of ocean with hundreds of others doing their best seal impression, actually is. This weekend happens to be one of the big events, Rangitoto to St Heliers in Auckland's Harbour. I've prepared well, but this doesn't seem to have prevented the butterflies making their presence felt a couple of days out.

OK I can hear you, "what has this got to do with my career in Food Technology." Well now is the time to start talking to strangers. Yep, the big N word. Networking. You mean I'm going to have to talk to people? Already I can see your shoulders have slumped, the head has gone down and you are trying not to make eye contact with the magazine. Gulp, talk to people? It's so much easier to hide in one's office.

Take a minute to remember what we have been working on for the last 6 months, Personal Branding.

"Personal branding is all about discovering what makes you special and then communicating it to the right people through multiple channels." – Dan Schawbel.

We've updated our resume, created an online profile and worked on our Unique Selling Point so it's a shame to have done the hard yards and keep it all to yourself.

I'll have some tips and tricks for next time, in the meantime how fortuitous for you that you are in the right place to start! NZIFST delivers a multitude of opportunities which can be found either in the event section of this magazine or via NZIFST Nibbles emailed to you each fortnight to easily put your toe in the water.

Looking for a starting point? One of the best networking hints I received was to invite someone of interest to accompany you to an industry event. So to any of my readers I'm free Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

***I am Raewyn Brown: You'll find me on LinkedIn and Twitter @raewynbrownNZ. I have over 15 years experience in all aspects of the Recruitment Industry. I am comfortable in my own world, called quirky in others'.***



## 4. Solve problems

Techies must translate their passion for problem solving into a management context.

"By moving into management, they will have the opportunity to problem solve in a team format, in essence, guiding the team to solve problems.

They will also have the opportunity to teach others not only technical skills but also problem solving skills, too."

## 5. Get in front of management

Unless you make your interest in management known, you may not get a chance to move up.

Seek out opportunities – presentations, meetings and even email – as a way to demonstrate your knowledge of industry as well as your facility with more than just technical concepts.

So before the next meeting you attend, do some preparation and think about ways you will make an impression. How will you show

your world view or your insights from outside your industry. How can you be a motivator or contribute to a solution that your manager has.

## 6. Network

Aside from helping you meet others, networking provides a forum to gain leadership and communication skills.

Read Raewyn Brown's article on this page for more how to's on Networking.

We will complete the list in the next article but until then here is a suggestion.

When is your next meeting? In addition to your normal preparation think about ways you will make an impression. How will you show your world view or introduce insights from outside your industry? How will you be a motivator or contribute to a solution? Remember...

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John Lawson is founder of Lawson Williams Consulting Group. He initially studied Biotechnology at Massey and is a professional member of NZIFST. He now enjoys leading a team of recruitment consultants, helping people like you develop satisfying careers.