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5 STEPS TO REACHING YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

GET YOUR CAREER STRATEGY BACK TO BASICS: DON'T BE SHY ABOUT PURSUING BIG GOALS AND ASKING FOR UNABASHED FEEDBACK.

BY LAUREN MAILLIAN BIAS

We all want to be proud of the decisions we make. Despite what we might say, project, or posture, many entrepreneurs are perfectionists as a matter of principle, while being opportunists at heart. We all want more to be proud of. We all want to be successful in business and in life—but can never quite figure out how to achieve these results.

Sensibly speaking, the answer is simple: one approach does not apply to every situation. It's a mistake to think that a single crafted message will connect with everyone. It's important to be familiar with all segments of your market, and what aspect of your product or service appeals to them. Other outside factors can also influence how the target audience perceives information on any given day.

Despite the many factors that we cannot control, I have built my career and credibility on some key principles. I discuss them in detail in my new book, *The Path Redefined: Getting to the Top on Your Own Terms*, but here are a few points to propel you forward:

1. SET YOUR OWN BAR HIGH

When you want more for yourself than anyone else, you set the highest bar possible and know with certainty that no one can expect more than you already planned to deliver. This is powerful, as it shifts your perspective and your level of confidence in every decision you make. You can't shift your paradigm and push yourself outside of your comfort zone until you allow yourself to push the envelope of what you imagined possible. However, we often don't approach life with these lofty goals because we are conditioned to think that many of our ambitions are larger than life. Be unapologetic about your intention to excel, and determined and focused in your approach.

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2. UNDERSTAND THE DATA POINTS

Having clear metrics for your team's work and specific data points on what makes an individual contribution successful is a requirement for business success. You shouldn't need a team or company meeting to know if you, or your project, are meeting expectations. You should know the data points in advance so that you can independently analyze if you are on target, can course correct, or devise a plan to improve. Analyze the data against the goals—quantified in ROI, revenue, sales, media impressions, or have increased or sustained brand loyalty. Are the milestones gradual? Are the benchmarks definitive or fairly fluid based on other success factors? If you have a Type A personality then you have a "need to know," and that's a good thing. Metrics help you establish a framework for success.

3. REWARD YOURSELF WITH RESPONSIBILITY

Opportunity exists between what you are currently responsible for, and what needs to be done. Oftentimes, roles and responsibilities aren't assigned to people without the requisite experience. But if you don't try, then you'll never learn or excel. And while doing work that you aren't explicitly asked or required to do may feel like extra work, that's what makes it invaluable. In fact, if done in a concentrated manner, it accelerates your career trajectory because you have broadened or deepened your knowledge and abilities. There is always another skill to master, a new trend to explore, new data to analyze, or a relationship to strengthen for yourself or your company.

All of these attributes belong to you and your personal brand. They enhance your resume, and you own them. They are yours to keep and continue to build upon throughout your career. No one can take your accomplishments and knowledge away from you, though keep in mind someone always wants your place. But you can outwork them all.

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4. LEARN TO BE A BETTER COMMUNICATOR

You probably think this topic isn't worthy of much conversation, which is the exact reason that it is—and that it isn't discussed often enough. Whether we like it or not, oftentimes we must demonstrate that we are thoughtful communicators before others reciprocate. If we can't explicitly ask for more communication, then we need to show that we appreciate it. Infer that we expect good communication by showing it as our guiding principle. Being a good communicator means you are articulate, succinct, relevant, timely, and not condescending. Erring on the side of more communication fosters transparency, which in turn, drives you to build the integrity that is the foundation of your reputation.

5. BE PROACTIVE ABOUT ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

Done doesn't always equal perfection, especially if you don't know what would make a project perfect. Fault often lies in not asking for feedback or waiting until it's too late for feedback to be effective. Most people in a position of seniority don't want to bother formulating their immediate reaction to your work into constructive feedback, because it is far easier for them to correct your mistakes than to invest time showing you how to improve. But it's intimidating to produce work and wonder if it was good enough, so most people would rather wait for an issue to arise than take a proactive approach to gain insightful feedback. Few people show that they care about peak performance, so ask questions and embrace your potential to improve.

You can achieve great success and find true fulfillment by staying true to yourself, while continuing to aim high and exceed expectations. This is how you can get to the top on your own terms and live the path redefined.

*—**Lauren Maillian Bias** is a serial entrepreneur, and the author of the business memoir, [The Path Redefined: Getting To the Top On Your Own Terms](#). In 2011, she was recognized at [The White House](#) by the [Kauffman Foundation](#) as an [Empact100 Award](#) honoree, the top 100 entrepreneurs under 30 and named by [Essence magazine](#) to the [Class of 2013 African-American Shot Callers](#), she is the founder and CEO of [Luxury Market Branding](#), a strategic marketing company, and is an investor and advisor to early-stage venture-backed mobile and consumer facing technology-enabled companies. She is a member of the [Young Entrepreneur Council \(YEC\)](#), an invite-only organization comprised of the world's most promising young entrepreneurs.*

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