



**Special
Report**

The Top 10 Career Mistakes To Avoid

Insider Secrets on Creating More
Money, More Time & More
Satisfaction for 6 Figure
Professionals

www.6FigureCareerManagement.com

Sital Ruparelia

'The Top 10 Career Mistakes To Avoid' **Special Report**

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The 10 Career Mistakes To Avoid

INTRODUCTION

Many senior professionals within financial services, and indeed other major sectors, often struggle to effectively manage their careers.

They want to get the optimum balance between income, job satisfaction and time away from work - but make some key mistakes and so struggle along on the treadmill.

During my career as a leader, recruiter and consultant within financial services, I have noticed many of these mistakes being made by colleagues, clients and indeed myself.

But these 'mistakes' are not a result of people not being smart - far from it.

It's because most people are using strategies they learned in a very different work-place from today: the world of work in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, when things were very different.

But the ***fundamental rules of career management have changed*** – you cannot just do what has worked for years, because it's simply not effective any more.

This special report highlights ten of the key mistakes made by 6-figure professionals in managing their careers.

But to set some context, we'll first touch on the changes taking place in the modern work environment.

I hope you find the report of value. Should you have any comments or feedback please feel free to email me directly at sital@6figurecareermanagement.com

Best Regards

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A CHANGING WORKPLACE

Regardless of which sector of the industry you work in, it has become increasingly difficult to manage careers in recent years.

The reason for this lies in the dramatic change in the business environment over the last decade, which means that the traditional methods of managing careers are no longer effective.



A. Automation & Technology

- The increased automation in every part of the financial services industry (and indeed our lives) has, and will continue to have, huge changes on every one of our roles
- More and more of the tasks that were done by individuals have been made more efficient through technology
- At the same time, advancements in communication tools and the advent of social media mean that we now have more information overload and are constantly available via mobile, Blackberry & laptops

B. Outsourcing

- Whether it's within the same country or to Asia & Eastern Europe, most parts of the industry are becoming more decentralised
- As the emerging economies take on more work from the West, there is a major shift in the type of skills required to be successful in first-world economies

C. No More Jobs For life

- The increased competition resulting from a global market-place means that banks merge, restructure and rationalise, giving rise to higher levels of displacement and redundancies.

- So gone are the notions of 'jobs for life' with any one employer. Similarly, people tend to have less loyalty towards a single employer. Today's school leavers will have not just a number of different jobs throughout their lives, but also a number of different careers.

In the old days, organisations offered employees job security and a pension in exchange for loyalty. Today's organisations offer the opportunity to do interesting work and learn in exchange for your talent.

You are a free agent and not an employee. It's time to think 'You Plc' or 'You Inc.'

D. Sense of Purpose

As we have become wealthier as a society, many people these days are looking for a greater sense of meaning and purpose from their work, unlike previous generations who may have looked at work primarily as a means to earn a wage. This has a big impact on how we make career decisions.

E. Work-Life Balance

With this wealth has come the increasing emphasis on a 'work –life balance.' We no longer want a job for life, but a job with life. They want a healthy balance between work and their lives away from work and therefore their demands and requirements have changed. That has a big impact on how we make job and career decisions.

To what extent each of these factors affects you will depend on your specific role and which part of the market you work in.

THE 10 CAREER MISTAKES

Faced with this rapidly-changing landscape, the vast majority of individuals don't have the knowledge, skills or support structures to steer their careers in the direction they want.

They consequently make a number of mistakes which directly impact on their ability to get the right financial rewards, job satisfaction and the elusive 'work-life' balance they desire.

Below are the 10 common mistakes along with some suggestions on how to avoid them.

1. Failing To Make Themselves & Their Careers A Priority



Most people spend all their time working **IN** their careers, instead of **ON** their careers. In other words they focus purely on doing their job rather than managing their careers.

People fail to make themselves or their careers a priority and so never quite realise their potential. They are so focused on doing the job that they don't have the time to take a close look at what they want personally from their careers and take a strategic view as to how to make that happen.

But with no one else managing their careers in this new world of work, their career development is often just left to chance and so they never quite realise the level of financial success, personal job satisfaction and fulfilment, or indeed the kind of lifestyle away from work, that they desire.

To avoid falling into this trap, get clear about what is important to you professionally and personally. Define both the lifestyle and work style you want. Then become ruthless with your time and eliminate, delegate, outsource and automate as many activities as possible so as to create the time and space to follow some of the points laid out in the rest of this report.

2. Trying To Stick To A Career Plan



Many people are stuck in the mindset that success comes from following carefully laid-out career plans. But that is simply not the case. This approach may have worked in the past, but it won't in today's work place.

Take a look at any successful person with 10 – 15 years experience who is currently happy and satisfied with their career – including yourself. Ask them where they saw themselves at the beginning of their careers and a large proportion of them will tell you it was not necessarily what they are doing today.

The sheer complexity and pace of change within modern business resulting from globalisation, innovation and increased competition creates an ambiguity that cannot be managed with a set-out plan. You cannot predict what type of businesses and career opportunities will be available in 5 years' time and so trying to plan your career like you did in the old days is futile.

As Dan Pink, the author and commentator on careers in the new economy points out – in today's workplace "there is no plan" – and by trying to stick with a rigid plan, you potentially dilute your level of success. The real secret to career planning in the 21st century is not having a career plan

So am I suggesting you leave your career to chance? Not quite. Instead of being guided by a rigid career plan you need to use an internal 'compass' to guide your career decisions and then build in some flexibility so that you can take advantage of opportunities that come along. As Pink points out, instead of trying to make 'extrinsic' decisions ("if I take role X that will then let me move onto position Y afterwards") – we should instead be making 'intrinsic' decisions because position Y may not exist when you are ready to move on.

Make decisions driven by what's inside you instead of trying to make sense of the ambiguous and ever-changing world around you. Start making career decisions based on what feels right based on your unique talents, values, passions, interests and the environments you feel most comfortable in.

Making decisions based around your internal compass and maintaining a good degree of flexibility opens you to more opportunities and more success whilst giving you increased levels of satisfaction and confidence.

3. Failing To Play to Strengths



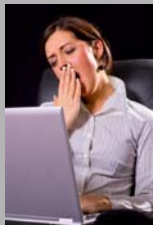
Many people are in jobs and careers which do not play to their natural strengths and style. They end up tolerating roles which don't tap into their unique abilities and so spend their careers trying to 'improve on their weaknesses.'

This faulty thinking instantly reduces the impact of their natural strengths and with it, their potential and their job satisfaction – which ultimately impacts on their self esteem. Individuals who spend large portions of their careers in roles that fail to tap into their natural talents go through their careers and lives feeling like a square peg in a round hole (I've been there myself and so speak from first hand experience!).

To become truly successful (regardless of what your own definition of success is), you must overcome this. You need to spend some time being introspective so that you are totally clear about your unique talents and strengths, your values, your natural style.

And then make career decisions that allow you to tap into these natural strengths and style whilst living your values. For some people this can mean job or career changes – but that is not always the case. With the right level of awareness, you can redefine your approach to most jobs to allow you to tap into more of your strengths to increase your level of effectiveness and job satisfaction.

4. Tolerating Uninteresting, Unchallenging Work



Large numbers of people get stuck in jobs or careers which they no longer find interesting or challenging. Instead of doing something about it, they stay in those roles through a combination of fear, boredom or simply not knowing what to do next.

Their failure to take action limits their development, creates a sense of dissatisfaction and from an employer's viewpoint creates a disengaged employee which in turn impacts on their career progression. This vicious cycle affects most people at some stage of their careers – but for some people who don't take action, the cycle turns into a rut which has a paralysing effect on them both personally and professionally.

To avoid this requires awareness and the courage to take some action. Understand what types of roles and environments suit you best. Be clear about the talents and skills you enjoy utilising the most and then consistently ensure your job and career hits that 'sweet spot' – the point at which your talents, interests and passions converge.

And when you notice your career not hitting that sweet spot for a significant portion of time, have the courage and conviction to do something about it.

5. Focusing On Inputs Instead of Outputs



Many individuals spend their time being too focused on the inputs of their jobs rather than what they deliver – the outputs and value they create for their employers. They get absorbed by the various 'activities' of their jobs and their careers subsequently become an endless cycle of meetings, conference calls, emails, plans, processes and of course politics. All these input activities take up time and sap the energy out of them. But very often they give little opportunity for people to make a tangible impact to a firm or business unit's results.

If that's the case, then this reduces the value you bring to your employer and directly hampers your earning capacity and promotional prospects – and in turn the level of satisfaction you gain from the role.

Instead of being distracted in this way, focus the majority of your time on delivering outcomes and results, not processes. Become laser focused on ensuring you are contributing towards key business indicators - increased sales, reducing costs, reducing risk, increasing client satisfaction and developing people. And then ensure that your tangible achievements against these indicators are clearly articulated through CVs/ resumes, interviews, performance appraisals and salary discussions.

6. Failing To Stand Out From The Crowd



Despite achieving incredible value for their employers, many individuals don't reach the levels of income, stature or success they feel they deserve because they fail to be unique and stand out from the crowd.

Their failure to positively differentiate themselves from others and build a distinctly personal brand is fatal in the new economy. As we discussed in the first section of this report, you are more than ever before like a free agent – and just as in any business, your brand is key.

So how do you create a personal brand without feeling false? The key to this is to focus on differentiating yourself by means of your authentic, inner self and not 'packaging' yourself in a way that sounds contrived. Use the points covered in point 3 to understand your true self and how you are different to your peers. Develop an elevator speech, CV/resume, interview style and work style that is distinctive – and yet still feels natural to you. And then ensure you are visible on an ongoing basis whilst positively differentiating yourself based on your personal brand.

7. Not Having A Support Team



Many people try and manage their own careers and make their own decisions – like they have for years. But in years past the work environment was less complex and the decisions less challenging. Nowadays, this 'lone ranger' approach slows down career progress and hinders success.

Instead of trying to do it yourself, as the CEO of You Plc (You Inc), you need to build a board of advisors – a trusted circle of individuals who you can use as a sounding board for advice, inspiration and accountability. Whilst most individuals will have people around them that they sometimes use as a sounding board – the fundamental difference in today's job market is around the depth of those relationships. These individuals need to be an integral part of your career and not just people you occasionally chat to.

This group of people can be friends, ex-colleagues, peers and mentors, and they will be crucial to your success. My experience is that if you do not have the right support group, you are severely diluting the impact you can make with your career.

8. Failure To Develop The Key Skills Required For The 21st Century



In an ever-changing economy and industry, people's failure to continue learning will kill their career. This sounds dramatic – but it's true.

Aside from the technical skills and knowledge that's required, it is vital to develop the key skills and attributes that are required in a global market-place that is hyper competitive, ever more inter-connected, and ever more reliant on technology.

3 of the key skills and attributes are:

- Leadership
- Relationship Building
- Creativity

These are the very skills and traits that cannot be easily outsourced or automated by technology. The very competencies that are portable across job functions, companies, industries and indeed national borders.

So get serious about lifelong learning and serious about developing these competencies. Yes, many of the people reading this report will have been on some form of leadership programme and may feel that they are strong relationship builders. Some will also feel they are creative problem solvers.

But leadership is more about who you become rather than just what you do. An evolving journey rather than something you tick off as a skill gained from attending a workshop. The very same applies to becoming a more creative individual. As it does with becoming a more empathetic individual who builds stronger relationships.

It's an over-used cliché at times – but those who truly commit to lifelong learning with a focus on these 3 areas will be the winners in the new world of work.

9. Avoid Making Mistakes or Screwing Up



Many people spend their careers trying to avoid making mistakes. Instead of focusing on being successful by taking measured risks they focus on trying not to slip up - and consequently miss key opportunities for success.

These are the very same individuals that look back at the end of the careers and think 'if only....'

They focus on staying 'safe' instead of being bold enough to make career moves that inspire them. Real success in business and careers comes from having the courage to take bold decisions, sometimes falling over and learning valuable lessons. It's those lessons and the character traits you develop when you screw up that actually provide the fuel to accelerate your career. Screwing up actually gets you closer to your goals.

So avoiding those falls, you deny yourself the lessons and knowledge you need to learn to become successful.

True success requires you to develop a new attitude towards your career. It requires you to have more experiences, to be bold, fall and pick yourself back up. But it's about consistently taking career decisions where the benefits you gain from a mistake (in the form of learning, insights and development) outweigh the potential risks of screwing up.

10. Having No Purpose Or Meaning To Their Work



Many people spend their careers climbing the ladder of success only to realise some years later that the ladder was leaning against their wrong wall. They achieve material success and external status, but internally they have no sense of fulfilment or satisfaction.

By pursuing careers and jobs that lack any sense of purpose and meaning they never reach a level of genuine satisfaction.

As we mentioned at the top of this report, we are much wealthier than previous generations and so increasingly we look for much more than just financial reward, recognition and friendship from our work.

As a society and as a workforce, we are increasingly seeking greater fulfilment and meaning in the work we do.

True fulfilment in any walk of life comes from using your god-given talents in the service of something bigger than yourself. It comes from knowing who you are (your talents, strengths, style, values) and applying them to every aspect of your life, inside and outside work.

Does that mean we all need to become teachers, social workers or environmentalists? Not at all (unless that is what you want to do, of course!).

To make your work more meaningful, think about what legacy you want to leave – what difference do you want to make in your industry, niche or indeed your life?

Legacy may sound a little 'grand' – but at our very core, most people want to make an impact and leave an imprint. This legacy or imprint may come from your current job. It could come from elsewhere – in which case, what do you need to do with your current role to give you space and time to create that legacy?

About Sital

Sital Ruparelia works with six-figure professionals, predominantly in financial services, who want to be more effective and achieve their career goals. This can involve help in earning more money, transition or promotion, working less or changing to find a more meaningful and enjoyable career.

Sital is available as a guest speaker and writer and can be contacted at info@6figurecareermanagement.com

“Straight Talk”

Sital publishes “Straight Talk,” the weekly newsletter for 6-Figure Professionals who want to be more effective and achieve their career goals. If you’re ready to jump-start your career, have greater success, satisfaction and rewards then get your FREE tips now at www.6FigureCareerManagement.com.

