



## YOU ARE THE CEO OF YOUR CAREER

BY GRETA DAVIS

Most college students anxiously anticipate the day when their formal learning is completed and they can proudly walk across the stage with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the workforce. Earning a certificate, degree, or credential implies acquired knowledge and skills necessary to perform a job well, yet individuals are often surprised at the amount of ongoing growth, development, and learning that is required to be successful.

Technological advancements continue to stimulate rapid change in the workplace, require constant adaptation, and put increasing demands on workers to remain relevant and up to date, according to McKinsey & Company and *Harvard Business Review*. Additionally, 50% of all employees in the U.S. will need to be upskilled or reskilled by 2025, according to the World Economic Forum. Upskilling enhances or improves existing skills, while reskilling helps employees learn new skills for their current position or to help them move within an organization.

Educational institutions are responding to these changes by focusing on critical thinking, processes of learning, and equipping students with knowledge and skills *and* personal insights into how they best learn. Companies and businesses are responding to these demands by offering sponsored training and development opportunities, but ultimately, it's individuals who have responsibility to remain relevant in the workplace. Workers can respond to the changing demands of the workplace by adopting a lifelong learning mindset and taking charge of their own career development, but this can be challenging.

Given the need for continuous learning, it's important to explore what it means to adopt a learning orientation and what obstacles might get in the way of developing this mindset.

Adopting a learning orientation means to approach both informal and formal learning with openness and the question, "What can I learn today?" Character strengths of humility and open-mindedness complement each other and activate the learning mindset. People who demonstrate appropriate humility recognize what they know and don't know. They are comfortable with "not having all the answers." They recognize there are many ways to approach a problem, and they invite new information and perspectives to workplace conversations. Another character quality that promotes learning opportunity is open-mindedness. People who are open-minded actively seek out different points of view and are not afraid to challenge their own beliefs, which sets the stage for learning, thinking critically, and making informed decisions.

Several obstacles stand in the way of adopting a learner mindset. As students exit formal education systems, they may have a negative view of learning, associating it with testing and stress. Another obstacle is the new professional's assumption that their college education has equipped them with what they need already. Conversely, people with extensive experience may believe that the years they have spent doing the work they have armed them with all the skills they need. John Maxwell, the well-known author of numerous growth and leadership development books, says that "the enemy of learning is knowing." Overconfidence shuts down the learning mindset.

With all the changes in the world of work and the demands on organizations and workers, having a learning orientation is essential for career success. People truly are having to "learn a living" by continually growing, adapting, and upskilling. Wherever your career journey takes you, adopting a learning mindset and seeking both informal and formal learning opportunities will serve you well in your career and in your life.



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