

*How to Get Ahead:*  
Three Steps to Take  
Your Career  
to the Next Level

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What makes one person more successful than another? As an executive coach, I've been pondering this question for over 20 years. By studying, researching, and observing over a thousand clients, I discovered three things the most successful do that others don't. Together, those three things make up the PVI model. When you implement this model, you'll launch your career to heights you never before dreamed possible.

The reality you face at work is that talent, results, and competence alone simply will not allow you to attain the success you deserve. It's time to stop being surprised by this, and instead take control of your professional future by applying the PVI model.

The three steps in the PVI model are perception, visibility and influence. When used together, these three powerful principles will catapult you to the next level in your career and ensure future success. Through the PVI model, you will learn how to:

- Create the right image
- Increase your profile across the organization
- Exert influence by driving change and inspiring people
- Identify and recruit advocates who will speak up on your behalf
- Become a known, valued and desired commodity at your company

# Step 1: Take Control of How Others See You

Improving how others perceive you is the first step in the PVI model. Perceptions are based on the image you have, the attitudes you project and the type of impressions you make. Perception matters because only those who are seen in a favorable light by their bosses, peers, and subordinates will continue to move ahead in their careers.

Your behavior directly impacts how others evaluate and judge you. Behaviors can have both positive and negative connotations, depending on the context and the company you work for. You must find out which behaviors are most desirable for projecting a positive perception of yourself among your employees, peers, and management.

You accomplish this by paying attention to the behaviors exhibited by the most successful people in your organization. Do they always arrive at work early? Do they frequently introduce innovative ideas at meetings? Do they take calculated risks? If you can emulate the behaviors of the best and brightest in your company, you will be well on the way to joining them.

**Ask for Feedback** | Be aware that there may be negative behaviors that counteract the positive perception you are attempting to build. The best way to find out how others in your organization perceive you is to ask them for feedback. You may be surprised at how your bosses, peers, and employees perceive you. For example, after giving a presentation, ask for feedback about

your performance. This feedback will provide you with valuable information you can use to modify your habits and actions and improve the way others see you.

While negative feedback helps you identify behaviors you need to change, positive feedback provides insight into your strengths and can alert you to possibilities that you wouldn't otherwise have realized existed.

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For example, after asking for feedback, one of my clients discovered that executives above her at Microsoft respected her opinions and problem-solving abilities. This prompted her to engage these executives more frequently and she became the team leader on one of their pet projects.

When your bosses and co-workers perceive you in a favorable light, it will open up career advancement opportunities and put you in the running for raises, recognition, and bonuses. Perception is something that you must be conscious of at all times. As Warren Buffett once said, “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.” One careless mistake can cancel out years of perception-building efforts.

# The 4-Step Perception Management Process.

Perception management is a process that is made up of four steps. By following these steps, you can create the perception you need to get ahead.

**Step 1 | How you think you are perceived.** Remember that everything you do is being watched. How do you think your behaviors are affecting the way your co-workers view you? If you are unaware of the perceptions you are creating, you can't control them.

**Step 2 | How you actually are perceived.** The only way to find out is by asking. Look for opportunities to get feedback from your peers and your boss.

**Step 3 | How you want to be perceived.** What image do you want to project? Consider which character traits are valued by the top executives at your company. What is your next step on the career ladder? Which characteristics are desirable for a person in that position?

**Step 4 | How you change perception.** Sometimes it can be quite simple. If you want to be perceived as someone who has good ideas to contribute, start speaking up at meetings. If you have a tendency to dominate meetings, try to resist the urge to jump into every conversation. If no one knows about the work you do, start telling people about your accomplishments. You'll be surprised at how quickly you can change the way people perceive you.

Proactively shaping others' perceptions of you is a key strategy for standing out, gaining credit for your work, and, ultimately, achieving career advancement.

## Step 2: Become More Visible at Work

Visibility is important because the people who make decisions about your career need to be aware of your value. You might be performing well, but unless the right people know how well you are performing, you'll be overlooked, especially if you work in a group of very talented people.

Talent, hard work and ability to perform take you only so far. Be warned: If you don't proactively leverage and utilize visibility, you won't be noticed, and your career progression will come to an abrasive halt.

You won't get ahead if no one knows who you are; you must make an effort to stand out if you want to advance in the company. Once you reach that invisible barrier where leadership ability becomes the key to getting promoted, you'll need to engage in the 3-Step Promotion Plan to make yourself more visible to those above you.

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# The 3-Step Promotion Plan.

You can't become visible without promoting yourself, but that's only part of the process. Your visibility will increase much more quickly if you can get others to promote you too.

**Step 1 | Promote yourself.** The process always starts with you. You have to take the initiative to make sure the people around you know who you are and what you do. You must have the confidence to believe what you do is valuable and tell others about the positive impact you make.

**Step 2 | Promote others.** Praise others on your team and let them know how well they are doing. They will want to return the favor. Tell your boss about the accomplishments your team has made. This makes both you and the rest of your team look good.

**Step 3 | Others promote you.** Ask others to spread the word about the exceptional work you do. Tell them about your accomplishments and enlist them as your advocates. A good advocate will speak up about the quality of your work, the way you are always volunteering to help others, and the value you provide to the company.

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## 4 Ways to Gain Visibility.

You can start increasing your visibility right now; you don't have to wait for the perfect time. If you look for opportunities to gain visibility at work, you'll find them all around you. Take advantage of these opportunities every chance you get—starting immediately. Here are four ways to gain visibility at work. Try to implement some of these strategies, and at the same time, be on the lookout for other ways you can stand out and get noticed at work.

**1 | Get assigned to important projects.** Getting assigned to challenging and important projects is one way to become more visible. Look for high-profile projects that will positively impact the company's bottom line and find a way to get involved with them. Volunteer to take charge of the project as team leader if you can, and put all of your passion and focus into doing the best work that you can. When the project is completed, you will stand out as a leader and gain recognition and visibility from the project's success.

**2 | Gain face time with top executives.** Who are the key decision-makers in your company? You need to get to know them and, more importantly, make sure they know you. Attend the meetings they attend and join in the conversation. When a high-level leader asks a question, make it your mission to find the answer. Make an effort to align yourself with the top executives who have the best reputations and you will be seen in a positive light because of your association with them.

**3 | Share your ideas.** Ideas are the key to a company's growth and even its survival. Every new product, every cost reduction, and every process improvement starts as an idea. Offering innovative, workable ideas can earn you a reputation as someone who makes a difference, and when you make a difference, you can't help but be noticed. Your biggest and best ideas will generate a ton of attention and increase your visibility in the company.

**4 | Become known and recognized.** Get your name out there. If you work on a project, make sure your name is on it. Don't miss a chance to take credit for the work you do. Whatever you do, always do your best, and make sure everyone knows what it is that you do. Find a way to differentiate yourself and build your own brand.

Visibility starts with getting noticed, but you can't stop there if you want to be truly successful. You must be memorable. Build a personal brand that makes you stand out as the go-to person in your organization for what you do. Make it easy for others to recognize the talents and skills that you bring to the organization.

## Step 3: Influence Others

Think of perception and visibility as the pillars that support influence. You must be perceived positively if you want people to follow you, and visibility is essential to becoming known and valued in your company. You must enhance your perception and gain visibility first. Only then will you be able to influence others.

People who have influence make important decisions that have impact. They move the company forward and create powerful, game-changing results. They inspire their followers to make things happen. They sway the opinions of others and bring them around to their way of thinking. They inspire others to help and support them so that they accomplish things that they could never do on their own.

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# Influencing in Every Direction.

Most people think of influence as downward-focused. However, to be an effective leader you must be able to influence others upwardly and laterally as well.

**Influencing Upwards** | Upward influence is influencing those above you. To do this, you must find out what their priorities are and make those priorities your own. Seek out opportunities to communicate with those above you and let them know about the accomplishments and impact you have made in your department. Tell them about the problems you have solved and the projects you have successfully completed. Make sure they are aware of how valuable you are to the organization.

**Influencing Downward** | Most people think downward influence is easy, but that's not necessarily true. Influence is not about giving orders and having them followed; that's authority. When you have influence over someone, they follow because they want to, not because they have to. By empowering your employees with the authority to make choices about the way they do their jobs and allowing them to see how the decisions they make affect the company, you put them in control and make them want to do well. Assign important projects and then step back and let them own the results. They'll feel a greater sense of accomplishment and fulfillment and you'll earn their respect as a leader.

**Influencing Laterally** | Influencing laterally allows you to leverage the talents and skills of your peers. If you help co-workers in other departments when you can, you will be able to enlist their help in return when you need it. Develop a strong rapport with your peers and create a balance where you are giving more than you are receiving so they will be more inclined to want to help you.

Peer influence requires an understanding of other departments within your company. Get acquainted with other managers and find out what they do and how much influence they have. Learn as much as you can about other departments and its leaders so that you can build rewarding cross-departmental relationships. These relationships are essential to being able to influence laterally.

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## 5 Traits All Influential People Have.

Influence is possible for everyone. Even without title, authority, power, or position, you can still influence others. There are five traits all influential people share. Diligently work to build these traits and you'll notice a marked improvement in your ability to exert influence.

**1 | A solid reputation.** You build your reputation by building your perceptions. How do other people perceive you? That is your reputation. Influential people have impeccable reputations. They are known as being trustworthy, honest, and reliable.

*“Even without title, authority, power, or position, you can still influence others.”*

**2 | An enhanced skill set.** A person who has an enhanced skill set is not just good at their job; they are exceptional at it. They pride themselves on being the best. They are experts who can be counted on to get the job done right.

**3 | Executive presence.** People who have executive presence are perceived as being powerful, confident, and in control. They are assertive leaders who make decisions quickly and confidently. They have a magnetic personality that draws people toward them.

**4 | Superior likability.** Do people enjoy being around you? If you are extremely likeable, you find it easy to interact with people. People feel comfortable with you; you put them at ease. They feel enriched and lifted up by your presence.

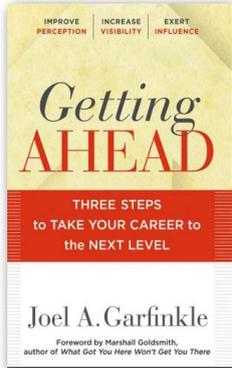
**5 | The power to persuade.** If you are persuasive, you are able to sway others to your side and win them over. You have solid reasoning skills and instill confidence in others by making them believe that you know what you are doing and have their best interests at heart. They follow you because you are excited and passionate about your cause and as a result, they believe in you.

# Perception + Visibility + Influence = Unlimited Career Success

While some people leave the fate of their careers in someone else's hands, others determine their future using these three critical skills: perception, visibility and influence. All three parts of the PVI model must be fully implemented to ensure your success. Managing your perception establishes a foundation of respect, increasing your visibility makes you stand out and get noticed, and exercising influence allows you to lead others.

When you put it all together, you gain a competitive advantage that allows you to fast-track your way to a more successful and satisfying career. You will stand out among your peers as a capable and valued leader, and your duties and responsibilities will grow. **The PVI model will elevate you to new levels in your career, enabling you to reach heights you never before deemed possible.** 📈

# Info



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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** | Joel A. Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 executive coaches in the US, having worked with many of the world's leading companies including Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Deloitte, Cisco Systems, Oracle, Ritz-Carlton, Citibank, Microsoft, and many more. He is the author of 7 books, and is regularly featured in the national media, including ABC News, NPR, New York Times, Forbes, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, BusinessWeek and Fast Company. His website, [GarfinkleExecutiveCoaching.com](#), has over 300 free articles of content. As a speaker, Joel uses knowledge gained from working with thousands of executives, senior managers, directors and employees, to reveal fresh insights and practical techniques that empower associations and corporate audiences to reach new levels of success.

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