

4 worst career tips you'll ever get



By Jennilee Peremore-Oliver

18 Feb 2019

The world is not short of opinions and advice. We all have the professionals in our families who offer free advice although you secretly wish they'd charge a consultation fee, so you can use affordability as an excuse to not listen. You don't get to be that lucky though.



© Dmitrii Kotin – 123RF.com

Your career is no different. Daily, you're faced with people who spend so much time telling you how to do your job, you wonder how much of their own job is done with the limited time left to their disposal.

Here is a list of some of the advice I've received throughout my career, and through trial and error, I can officially declare that it is the worst advice I've received.

1. Fake it till you make it

When I was doing my undergraduate degree, we were preparing presentations for one of our modules. I remember the advice we received from one of my lecturers on public speaking was 'Fake it till you make it'. The advice was to act like a confident speaker and then eventually you will become one. At school, we are taught to focus on our weaknesses so that it can one day eventually become strengths, while the areas where our strength lies are left to gather dust. We work so hard at perfecting our imperfections, that at the end of the day, we are exhausted and have no time to use our strengths to our advantage or polish them. When I received this advice from my lecturer, I applied it to every aspect of my life, and each time I fell short, because what my well-intentioned lecturer did not tell me, is that it is okay to not be perfect at everything.

There is someone who will need you to be brilliant for exactly what you're brilliant at, and when that time comes, you will hope that you didn't let your brilliance gather dust. This is what we call, in the working world, a team. Together each team member's area of brilliance is gathered to collectively deliver excellent results. My advice to someone starting out is this: specialise. Be brilliant at what you're brilliant at and become an expert in your field. Leave the

awesome speech to your friend who's brilliant at delivering speeches. You don't need to be.

2. Don't reinvent the wheel

The world is moving fast, and we don't want our competitors to move ahead of us, so instead of creating and innovating something new, we copy the next great fad, gimmick or strategy already tried and tested by one of the big brands. It's quick, it's easy, and the plan is already written. The only problem is this: it's someone else's great idea, and that other person who invented it went through the hard work of researching that idea, testing it, and failing, making changes and testing it again and again, until it finally worked. The difference between you and them is this: they know how to fail at it and they know why they failed and that's why they will be able to devise and implement subsequent great ideas. They know the formula of innovation, and it's not in copying, it's in reinventing the wheel.

3. Find a quick-fix

This one is all about solving a problem and to show immediate results. Quick-fixes can work; they can help a management team sleep well for a few nights, but the problem won't go away.

Strategy is a word that scares everyone, because it sounds like a plan that will only show results in three to five years. A plan can be quickly implemented, but it must never be void of strategy. You strategise every day in every decision you make, and these can either take your company to the next level or let it drown further. To this advice I say, no, don't find quick-fixes. Strategise calmly and implement it in everything you say and do daily. The results will follow, sooner than you think. Just be consistent.

4. It's all about perception

I've seen wonderful brands with great imaging and millions spent in advertising, and I've admired them. You immediately perceive them as successful. However, when I have required the customer service of some of these immaculate brands, I have been disappointed countless times, because they failed miserably when it came to customer service. It's not all about perception. Your logo can be striking, your advertising clever, and you can make a great impression on millions of people simultaneously, but if that perception of your image is not upheld during your one-on-one stakeholder interactions - whether it be employees with management, or customers/clients with sales staff - then your millions spent in perception will slowly but surely whittle away as people realise you are not the perception they have of you.

Conclusion

This is just some of the worst advice I have received in my career, but there is so much more I can list. Despite eventually discovering that this wasn't the best advice, this advice has taught me a few important lessons when it comes to building your career:

Focus on your strengths - you don't need to be great at everything. Be creative and innovate, even if it means reading a 300-page book from front to back; you don't lose anything, you become smarter. When everyone else is losing ground, hold yours, stick to your plan and play out your strategy for your brand in everything you say and do. It's nice to look good, we all want to sit with the cool kids, but it's about depth. It really is about how you make people feel and it is not all about perception, because some people still prefer reality.

What has been the worst career advice you have received and why?

ABOUT JENNILEE PEREMORE-OLIVER

Jennilee Peremore-Oliver is an award-winning media and communications professional, who started her career in 2009. In 2017 she founded the Communications Agency, Jenniemore (Pty) Ltd. She has worked with brands in the corporate, media and non-profit sectors.

■ 4 worst career tips you'll ever get - 18 Feb 2019

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>