

## WORK



# YOUR CAREER: IT'S ALIVE!!!



To the 61 percent of you who said feeling stuck in the same job title is your biggest work struggle: Much like Frankenstein's monster, your professional trajectory sometimes needs a jolt to get it moving. Consider the below list that spark.

## 1. DO A GUT CHECK.

Instead of fixating on leveling up, ask yourself, "What do I want to do more of, what am I neutral about, and what do I want to get rid of?" says Heather Corcoran, an executive coach and partner at Next Step Partners. You might look at the duties a promotion would entail, think, *Ugh—sounds miserable!* and realize you want to pursue something else. Or you might think, *Bring it!*

Either way, research is crucial. Observe people currently in the role you covet, then investigate how you can emulate those duties and traits in your own work.

## 2. NETWORK SMARTLY.

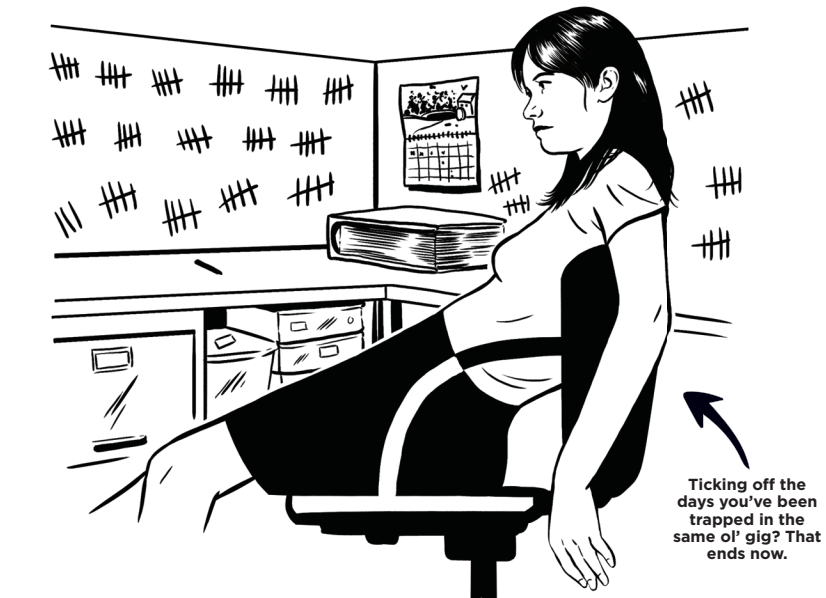
Invite people you admire in your field (or even in your office) to coffee (yes, you're paying). If it's someone you've known awhile, ask them what you'd be good at. "People often see things in us that we don't see in ourselves," says Connie Thanasoulis-Cerrachio, cofounder of career-coaching firm SixFigureStart. Always be specific about your goals, she adds. "Someone who says, 'I'm so ready to manage a team in the sales group!' will stick in people's minds."

As the convo is wrapping up, thank the person and ask how you can help them. "It creates mutuality and keeps you from looking like an ask-hole," Thanasoulis-Cerrachio explains. Alrighty then!

## 3. MARKET YOURSELF WELL.

Don't wait until an opportunity presents itself to update your résumé and LinkedIn profile. Every two to three months, revisit each line item and incorporate as much quantifiable data as possible—info like percentage increases, team members wrangled, new markets tapped, and so on. "Doing this will help you craft an elevator pitch and articulate your strengths without stumbling over yourself," says Thanasoulis-Cerrachio.

If you start drawing blanks on those strengths, ask yourself this question: What are the top five things I've done in life that have even impressed *me*? "Thinking of it that way leads people to come up with things they're truly proud of, so when they speak about those accomplishments, they're expressing



genuine excitement and it doesn't sound boastful," she says. That said, be aware of your weaknesses too. Thanasoulis-Cerrachio recommends making a list of 10 skills and ranking them from strongest to least strong so when you're inevitably asked about weaknesses, you can talk about the bottom two and how you're developing them.

## 4. HAVE TOUGH CONVOS.

Once you've determined your own objectives, discuss your goals with your manager and ask what you need to do to be next-level ready. "Start by saying you'd like to expand your role within the company," says Bonnie Marcus, president and CEO of Women's Success Coaching and author of *The Politics of Promotion*. "Speak in their terms to show you're capable of communicating from a leadership point of view."

From there, you have a couple of options to get to the duties and requirements for a higher title. "You could ask, 'What's one thing I could do better to add more value to the team?' Or say, 'What aspect of the business do you worry about most?'" says Corcoran, who points out that both questions cast you as someone who thinks about the business as a whole and solves problems

at a strategic organizational level, rather than someone who feels they're owed something. You should also be trying to weave in all those successes you've outlined to show how your work directly benefits and supports company goals.

## 5. ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES.

By now, you know what you want and what it's going to take to get there. Maybe it's overseeing a new project or some junior employees, or it could be participating in bigger meetings and company-wide initiatives. Either way, you oughta be tackling those to-dos with more gumption than Elle Woods at Harvard Law. After a couple of months, follow up with your manager to update her on your progress and how it's affected her interests. In time, she'll see that the issues they raised at your first meeting have vanished.

You should also be checking in with any new contacts you've made; asking how they're doing and sharing what you've been up to once a season is not too often to be annoying. Thanasoulis-Cerrachio also suggests using a weekly calendar reminder to remember to touch base with your existing network. Just one e-mail to one different person—totally doable!