

A Seven-Step Strategy for Professional & Career Success



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Credits & Thanks

Graphic Image, with kind permission from the book *Run With the Bulls Without Getting Trampled* by Tim Irwin

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Seven Step Strategy for Professional & Career Success

Introduction

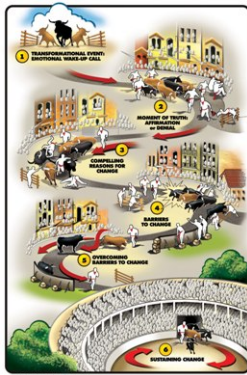
I have devised a seven-step strategy for success that you can apply to many situations in your life, which could be job searching, all other aspects of your career or in a business as an entrepreneur. Tips and techniques outlined below will help you whether you are in a native environment or in a foreign one.

In striving for success, take a holistic approach at your personal traits and current strategy particularly when your focus of visible areas is not helping you. You need to go beyond the task and focus on everything around you.

If you are looking for a job, and your well crafted resume and your appropriate qualifications are not helping you in finding the right job, then you need to go beyond the job requirements, primarily because employers are looking for a person who is a "good fit" for that company.

As a Newcomer to Canada (or new to a career transition) you might ask yourself what strategies you can use to attain career success in order to be that "good fit". I have been here in Canada for more than 25 years, and in this time, I have been on both sides of the fence, as a jobseeker and employer. Based on my extensive career experience in the UK, then in Canada, I have devised a seven-step strategy for professional success that you can apply to all aspects of your career and profession.

This article is based on talks delivered at various career conference and has been revised continually since my first talk in 2007.



The Strategy consists of the following steps:

- Step 1: Self-Promotion & Establishing Credibility
- Step 2: Business Networking
- Step 3: Attitude & Acculturation
- Step 4: Volunteering
- Step 5: Mentoring & Coaching
- Step 6: Life Long Learning
- Step 7: Holistic Life and Living



Step 1: Self-Promotion & Establishing Credibility

What do business people do to sell their products or services?

They advertise, promote themselves and seek publicity. If these are well- proven methods, then why are you as a professional not using them? You might answer that you have nothing to sell and I'd say "you have to sell yourself".

Because in your career, you are the both the business and the product, you therefore need to have a great deal of self-confidence and self-esteem to promote yourself as the best product on the market. It is important for you to establish and communicate the business value that you bring and how employers/customers will benefit from your services and skills.

Because the Internet is free, it is often the best and sometime most cost effective method for this. You can focus on leveraging the Internet for both self-promotion and publicity. Here are some ideas to get you started. If well implemented, when a prospective employer/customer/colleague does "Google you", they will get a complete and impressive image of you.

(a) Creating Your Own Personal Website.

Having your own personal website reflects that you are both professional and serious about your career. If you have your own domain name (which you need to register in order to have your own website) then you can start using your own email address based on that domain name. For example my email address is max@maxharoon.org , which is more professional on my business card then max@hotmail.com.

Most of the job seekers use email addresses assigned by their ISP's, such as Rogers and Bell. Now you don't have to worry about canceling your ISP service if you are using the email address based on your own domain. You can have a permanent email address as long as you keep on renewing your website domain name and hosting service. You can register for your own domain name for a small annual fee, just go to:

<http://www.sipgroup.org/affinity/profilewebsite.htm>

(b) Blogging

There are two ways to promote yourself by blogging. The first one is providing feedback/comments on someone's blog. The second is creating your own blog, which is simple and free. Once you register for creating a blog, you then get your own URL, which is like your own website without registering a domain name and hosting your domain e.g. sipgroup.blogspot.com. You can visit blogspot.com to create your own blog (no charge).

(c) Participating in Online Forums/Groups

Online forums are excellent places to read about technical, economic, social and political issues. In these groups, you can discuss hot topics, share interests, and join **online** communities. Similarly to blogging, you can participate in an online forum by joining an existing one. I recommend going to "groups.google.com", or "groups.yahoo.com" to participate.

(d) Participating in Social Networking Websites

There are websites that will allow you to post your audio/video clips, such as Facebook.com, Youtube.com, Vsocial.com, Grouper.com, and Myspace.com. This is a great way to demonstrate your knowledge and skills. Many of these social networking sites can provide the opportunity to collaborate with other people, write comments and even form your own groups.

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But be careful not to write any unpleasant/inflammatory comments about other people as it may come back to haunt you. This may result into spending a lot of time in “dusting (cleaning up) your digital dirt” .

There are a number of Meetup groups (a type of social networking group) addressing hundreds of topics, where they have the forums and meet socially (meetings).

I have established three such Meetup groups:

- Life Transformation Institute.org: <http://www.meetup.com/Life-Transformation-Institute/>
- Healing Food Institute: <http://www.meetup.com/Healing-Food-Institute/>
- The Society of Internet Professionals: <http://www.meetup.com/Society-of-Internet-Professionals/>

Note: The official website of the Society of Internet Professionals (SIP) is <http://sipgroup.org>

(e) Establishing Credibility

Success (professional or business) is directly related to how you are perceived, which is related to your visibility in the job market or business world. Better credibility will bring you more visibility for your skills, talents and business services.

Here are a few ideas to help you to establish credibility in your area of expertise:

- Publishing articles, e- books and books
- Speaking at events and professional meetings
- Leveraging Internet resources, such as publishing e-Zines, e-Newsletters or writing white papers



Step 2: Business Networking

In the highly competitive age of the 21st century, you need to cultivate your own network to successfully get business, jobs or even employees. It is estimated that 80% of the jobs or contracts are not advertised. Unadvertised jobs are referred to as the "hidden job market ". Ironically, more than 80% of job seekers are applying to "advertised" jobs only. You can now see how competitive it is to get an advertised job.

The business world recognizes the significance of "Word of Mouth" as the best marketing method, so why can't it be applied to individuals? To achieve this, attend lots of events. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for whatever it may be (job, business or employee, etc.) and what your key skills/ competencies are or the business services you provide.

Join a few networking organizations. If you need to gain confidence in speaking to others and in public speaking, then join a local Toastmasters Group (visit <http://www.toastmasters.org>).

(a) Plan to attend events

A great place to network is to attend events regularly. You will find that conferences, seminars, tradeshows, association meetings and community events are being held every day, somewhere in and around Toronto. Before you become a social butterfly, research to find out the event's suitability and determine ahead of time what would you like to get out of it. Then, prepare a plan to achieve your objectives.

I have few practical recommendations for you when networking at an event:

- One of the most challenging tasks for many people is walking into a room full of people they don't know and initiating a conversation. The first thing to do in this situation is to remember that many of the people in the room are just as uncomfortable as you are! Start by making eye contact with someone in the room, then smile and walk forward and extend your hand for a handshake. Maintain a comfortable distance as you introduce yourself. This is usually enough to break the ice - if not, start by asking non-threatening question that is relevant to the particular event, such as "What you think of the speaker? Are you part of this organization?" You need a lot of confidence, do not be a spectator at the event, take charge of the situation by being proactive.
- Have a "30 second Elevator pitch" ready: When someone asks you what you do, you should be able to express yourself and highlight your strengths and job capabilities in 30 seconds. 'Practice makes perfect', so write it down and practice every day. It is the verbal equivalent of your business card and your profile (resume). You could also have one basic pitch that you customize according to the situation. Be brief and remember that the purpose of an elevator pitch is to catch the attention of the listener and get him/her interested in finding out more about you.
- Bring your business cards: Even if you're not working, you need business cards. In fact, this is actually the time in your life when you need them the most. You can also print your profile (one short paragraph or five bulleted lines) at the back of your card. Use the front of the card to list your website and your blog address.
- Cultivate a business networking attitude - Givers Gain! We respect people who are perceived as contributors and helpers. So always think about helping others. Become interested in others. What goes around comes around.

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- Don't ever pre-judge anyone. They say each one of us knows about 250 people and these people may just know someone you want to meet who can help you in your career and business goals.
- Become interesting and interested in others.
- Network with everyone everywhere! And have fun while you are doing it.

(b) Where can you go for Networking?

There is no limit to places where you can network. Different business and/or social events are conducted by:

- Social Networking groups such as BNI, Referral Quest, Le Tip.
- Business networking groups such as Board of Trade, Chamber of Commerce
- Association meetings, such as the Society of Internet Professionals (SIP)
- Conferences & conventions, such as IT360, Wow GAO Conferences.
- Workshops and seminars by associations and educational institutions in your field.

****Search in Google for "business networking organizations Toronto", you will get a huge list of websites.

Just to re-emphasize the power of networking, remember "Your income or your influence or success in finding a job is directly proportionate to the number of people who consider you an expert". So the more people you know, the better the opportunity you have to be successful. Max, this paragraph belongs here rather than in Step 7... it is out of place there.

(c) What to do after the event

- Create a computer database of cards and contacts you have made at the event. There are many ways to create it, such as simple address book (such as Outlook), contact management systems (such as ACT) or an CRM (such as freecrm.com)
- Send a "Nice to meet you" letter or email or phone your contacts.
- Connect with prospects every 30-45 days
- When someone sends you a referral, acknowledge the person in writing. Keep them apprised of what happens. Again you can use email, letter or phone.
- Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!



Step 3: Attitude & Acculturation

Now let us extend the Networking attitude to “Your Attitude” in general. If you have not developed a positive attitude (about yourself and about life in general) then you may have problems doing well in the Interview or business meeting.

Some ideas, which have helped to keep my focus positive:

- Read Inspirational books
- Meditate /Retire for few minutes in your sanctuary/your favorite place for quiet repose and comfort
- Keep company with good friends and companions that encourage and motivate you

If you are in an environment/ country not native to you, then you have to assimilate yourself into its language, lingo and its culture. Each country and each industry has its own language and culture. You have to understand and acknowledge in your manner that a country’s culture has many layers, geographical, political, work and social.

If you receive a rejection re: a job offer, then do a self examination, maybe you have demonstrated (or given the impression) that you are not a person, who is:

- Tuned into the industry- have a finger on the pulse of what is happening in your industry
- Team player
- Articulate
- High-Potential
- Cultured

Culture has many layers, geographical, political, work and social.



Step 4: Volunteering

Helping professional associations and community groups expands your horizon and your network. Have you ever been told “You do not have (Canadian/relevant) experience? One way to get some experience is by volunteering or seeking an internship. Finding time to help others (volunteering) when life is full of other demands demonstrates strength of character to future employers and key business people.

Where can you volunteer/ do an Internship?

- Professional Associations in your field
- Political parties
- Local Communities
- Companies in your industry



Step 5. Mentoring & Coaching

We all need advice and wisdom from people who can inspire and guide us in attaining our goals. But, even though we realize how significant mentoring can be in our lives, we seldom seek out people who can do this for us in either our personal and professional lives.

In my presentation, A Seven- Step Strategy for Professional Success, I suggest that everyone has three essential persons in their lives:

1. A Mentor
2. A Business Coach/ Career Coach
3. A Technical coach.

1. Mentor

They say every successful person has a secret idol or a mentor. In fact, some of them even hang their mentor's pictures to remind them of their mentors' successes and achievements as a source of inspiration and motivation.

Vincent Lam, who is an ER doctor in Toronto, would have never published a book if he hadn't met Margaret Atwood (a renowned Canadian author). Margaret Atwood was Vincent's mentor; she advised him on the manuscript and assisted in publishing his book, which according to Vincent Lam wouldn't have happened without her support and mentorship. With Margaret Atwood's guidance, his book "Blood Letting and Other Miraculous Cures" not only got published, but won several distinguished literary prizes.

2. Business Coach/Career Coach

If you approve of getting a hockey, tennis or golf coach to improve your game, then why not consider hiring a Business coach/ Career Coach? They can improve your business, reveal your potential risks or failures, and guide you in developing critical business/career skills- you may not have or ones you never thought you would need. These coaches will save you money many times over; and they are well worth the cost of their services.

3. Technical Coach

Many entrepreneurs have gone into business because of their technical expertise, but on many occasions you, as an entrepreneur, will be asked to apply your technical skills for which you may not have the precise knowledge in that area. The ideal solution is to sub-contract these projects, which you cannot handle. However, there is a cheaper and more efficient solution - provided you are prepared to do it. All you need is some technical guidance. I call these technical guidance people - "technical coaches". They will not do your project for you, but have the willingness to impart their knowledge so you can develop your knowledge base. They are like your teachers, but you will be doing the homework.

Finally, if you enjoy empowering others, then I would strongly encourage you to become a mentor. Many people have lost family ties/connections; and mentorship is one way of providing the wise counsel and key support family members have given them in the past.



Step 6: Life Long Learning

There is an old adage that says "To stop learning is to stop living". This adage reflects that you must not only keep up-to-date in your area of expertise but must broaden your horizon by venturing outside your comfort zone. You can start doing this by reading books, particularly if they inspire you, attending seminars, and attending classes at various educational institutions.

Most associations, like SIP, and some government bodies conduct panel discussions, public forums and seminars, which are open to the public. Attending these events is also beneficial to you as they provide vital business networking opportunities.

You also can leverage the Internet for life-long learning by exploring the following:

- **Webinars:** webinars are conducted by large and small companies in all kinds of subjects, and most of the time, they are free.
- **E-Books:** We are lucky to find many e-books for free, search engines, such as Google along with others, are digitizing all of their classic books.
- **Online Courses:** We find traditional universities offering courses online as well as some portal websites offering free courses.

Step 7: Holistic Life and Living

There are seven areas of life and living which affects all of us, and you will notice that career is only one of them:

1. Finance
2. Relationship
3. Personal Growth
4. Career and Professional
5. Health & Wellness
6. Home
7. Spirituality

We need to have a balanced success in all of the above areas to be truly successful and happy.

You might be wondering what holistic life and living focused on “wellness” have got to do with the seven-step strategy for success? Basically, if you are not successful in other aspects of your life, then you will not be happy, even if you are successful in your career.

A healthy heart and spirit lead to a healthy mind and a healthy body. So take care of your temple (your body) and take a holistic approach to your mind, body and soul. If you are successful and you have not taken care of your “temple”, your health will eventually deteriorate and will affect your ability to continue in achieving your dreams.

Remember that wellness of mind and body will give you balance both in your emotions and your lifestyle.

Review my Inspirational Book Club (IBC) to get inspired for these areas of your life.
<http://inspirationalbookclub.org/>

I am going to conclude with a story, cited in the ever popular best seller - “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” (I highly recommend this book for the entire world to read).

Stephen Covey tells a story of a man in the forest sawing down a tree with a blunt saw. He saws and saws, and gets tired and frustrated. Working feverishly but not getting far, a passerby suggests he takes a break and sharpen his saw. The man replies “But I don’t have time for that!”

Does that sound like you? Covey’s 7th Habit is very straightforward: take the time to renew. Sharpen your saw. How? Exercise, meditate, journal, spend time with loved ones, go on vacation, play, dance, enjoy your hobbies and your life. Sharpen, sharpen, and sharpen!

This also is a good metaphor for sharpening your tools for whatever success you wish to achieve, remember the old adage - “Work smarter not harder”.

Do the seven steps for the strategy outlined above sound like hard work to you? Yes, they do require reworking your approach. But, it will come easy to you if you are passionate about this seven- step strategy and believe in it. In applying this strategy, the journey can actually be more pleasant than the destination itself!

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This and other articles, written by me are available at my webfolio, following the link to my publications at: <http://www.maxharoon.org/>

Good luck!

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Appendices



A. Resources: Websites

- ✚ The Society of Internet Professionals (SIP)
<http://www.sipgroup.org>
- ✚ Benefits of SIP Membership
<http://sipgroup.org/membership/benefits.html>
- ✚ Example of a good blog
<http://sipgroup.blogspot.com/>
- ✚ Create Your Own blog Website
www.blogspot.com
- ✚ Why do you need an email campaign
irc.openstreamdesign.com/newsletters_services.htm
- ✚ Podcast Directory
<http://www.podcast.net>
- ✚ Free Advertising on the Internet
<http://www.advertopia.com/>
- ✚ Dictionary of Advertising Research Terms
<http://advertising.utexas.edu/research/terms>
- ✚ List of Social Networking Websites
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites
- ✚ YouTube Videos of Social Network Sites
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMIxOH0A6RA>
- ✚ Domain Registration and Hosting
http://www.iqweb.ca/sip_hosting.html
- ✚ Digital Publishing: Max Haroon Interview at NATRADIO.com
http://www.sipgroup.org/workshops/ebooks/natradio_interview.wma



B. Resources: Books

- *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith with Mark Reiter. January 2, 2007, Hyperion; ISBN: 1401301304
Discover the 20 workplace habits you need to break.
- *Run With the Bulls Without Getting Trampled*, Tim Irwin, March 1, 2007
The Qualities You Need to Stay Out of Harm's Way and Thrive at Work,
ISBN-13: 9780785219514
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, [Stephen R. Covey](#), published in 1989, ISBN: 0743269519

C. The Society of Internet Professionals (SIP)



The Society of Internet Professionals (SIP) is an international not-for-profit, membership based organization representing the interest of Internet professionals. Our mandate is to enhance educational and professional standards for Internet professionals and as such, SIP has developed the Accredited Internet Professional (AIP) designation in various sectors of the Internet. Practicing Internet professionals are invited to apply for AIP designation under various streams. Membership in SIP is equally open to all non-internet professionals.

Since 1997, SIP has spearheaded many initiatives and programs, such as workshops, networking events, Internet job board, e-Newsletters, members' directory and a resource-intensive website. Review membership benefits at: <http://www.sipgroup.org/membership/benefits.html>

D. SIP Internet Job Board



The Society of Internet Professionals (SIP) has launched a unique Internet Job Board, specializing in jobs for the Internet Industry. SIP invites members and non-members to post their job requirements or post their resumes:
career Resources: <http://www.sipgroup.org/jobs>

E. Additional Resources

About Life Transformation Institute



Life Transformation Institute is a collaborative group of kindred spirits that empowers life by sharing our cumulative knowledge and wisdom. We will focus on the body/mind/spirit entity and raising awareness.

Become my fellow traveler; join Life Transformation Institute at meetup:

<http://www.meetup.com/LifeTransformationInstitute>

About Healing Food Institute



Healing Food Institute is an educational not-for-profit community group established to discover the healing power of food. It aims to cultivate and nurture an awareness of healthy foods and healthy life styles so that you can be free from dis-ease. Become a food healer, join us at the meetup:

<http://www.meetup.com/Healing-Food-Institute>

F. Author



Max Haroon, AIP is the founding president of the Society of Internet Professionals. He has been involved in the Information Technology (IT) industry in various sectors, including the Internet and IT Training for over 35 years. He evangelizes leveraging the Internet and is a notable speaker at conferences and symposiums.

As a social entrepreneur he has founded Life Transformation Institute (www.FriendsOfHeart.org) and Healing Food Institute. He has organized hundreds of events including educational workshops and conferences since 1985.

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