

Stuck in a dead-end career? Your Career-Limiting Habit is to blame

New study finds the top 5 habits that keep employees from career advancement

May 26, 2011—Provo, UT—According to new research from the *New York Times* best-selling authors of [Change Anything](#), 97 percent of employees report they have some Career-Limiting Habit (CLH) that keeps them from achieving their potential at work. These habits cost employees raises and promotions they might have otherwise received.

Take Rick, for example. His boss—who also happens to be the CEO—describes him as both brilliant and a tyrant. He recently told Rick he is not on the succession plan for the CEO position because the board believes his bad temper would destroy the company.

That comment from Rick's boss underscores the other key findings in the study. The study shows the vast majority of bosses are pessimistic their employees will ever change their CLH. In fact, bosses report that only 10 to 20 percent of their employees actually make profound and lasting changes to their CLH.

"This finding is incredibly discouraging when you consider the enormous investment companies make in performance management," says Joseph Grenny, co-author of [Change Anything: The New Science of Personal Success](#).

The top 5 Career-Limiting Habits:

1. Unreliability
2. "It's not my job"
3. Procrastination
4. Resistance to change
5. Negative attitude

Other CLHs that limit employees' progression include: disrespect, short-term focus, selfishness, passive aggressiveness and risk aversion.

Can you truly succeed without changing your CLH? According to managers, the answer is a resounding, "No." Nearly half of bosses report that addressing employees' glaring bad habit is three times more important than increasing their technical skills.

However, the online poll of 972 people, 493 of which were managers, found there are predictable paths to success for employees who want to reverse their CLH.

"Most of us think willpower and commitment are the key to changing our long-standing bad behavior, but successful *changers* know better," says Grenny. "Those who aligned six unique sources of influence to help them change were ten times more likely to get rid of bad habits and improve their chances of advancement."

Grenny offers examples of the kinds of tactics people use to successfully shape better habits for career success.

1. **Create a Personal Motivation Statement.** When you hit a motivational wall while changing your work habits, motivate yourself by visiting your "default future"—the career you'll have if you are repeatedly passed up for promotion. Specifically, our research shows if a 30-year-old employee earning \$60,000 is passed up for a promotion with a 2 percent raise, he or she will incur a loss of \$59,780 over his or her career.
2. **Invest in professional development.** New habits always require new skills. Top performers hone their craft. Actively develop the skills you need to be viewed as a top performer through training, workshops or books—but make sure this is only one part of a bigger change strategy.
3. **Hang with the hard-workers.** The Career-Limiting Habits that keep you back are likely enabled, tolerated or encouraged by others. Use positive peer pressure by surrounding yourself with hard-working friends who share your career goals. Distance yourself from the office slackers.

4. **Find a mentor.** Changing habits requires help. Find a trusted mentor to encourage your progression and help you navigate the career development opportunities that exist within the organization.
5. **Put skin in the game.** Reward yourself for reaching short-term goals by placing money at risk. For example, if you reach your goal in your next performance review you can purchase a reward with the money you set aside. However, if you fall short, the money goes to support the political party you oppose.
6. **Control your workspace.** Make your new habits easier by enlisting the power of your surroundings. If you'd benefit from close association with another team, ask to move offices. When possible, turn off electronic interruptions that keep you from being as productive as you need to be to move ahead.

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Note to editor: Joseph Grenny, author of *Change Anything*, is available for interview. Copies of the book are available upon request.

About the research: The study collected responses via an online survey tool from 972 individuals. Margin of error is approximately 3%.

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