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To get ahead in the world, it’s important to have a niche that sets you apart from others. A niche is something you bring to the table that no one else or few others can. It’s a capability you provide that is considered valuable or rare and has positive results. Anyone can possess or develop a niche if they’re willing to pay attention to something, develop a skill-set, practice something, or hone a specific ability.

I once worked for a military officer who made it a personal habit to find out and remember the names of every unit member’s spouse and child. He even went so far as to memorize their birth and anniversary dates and other significant events such as hospital visits, school trips, and their involvement in community activities/services. This niche not only impressed the officer’s troops, but it also impacted his commander’s choice when selecting an

## Carve out a niche for yourself

assistant officer to accompany him to military installations worldwide where the unit’s troops conducted missions. The commander wanted an officer who could whisper in his ear valuable information about the troops whose hands he was about to shake. And the commander, being supplied with such valuable information in a timely manner, appeared to be “awesome” in the eyes of the troops. You can bet your bottom dollar that the commander held his officer’s niche in high regard, especially when it came time to make promotion recommendations.

Carving out a niche also means spotting a useful area that no one else has spotted. It might be as simple as being great at spreadsheets or report writing or it could be knowing something else no one else knows. It might be being brilliant with scheduling or budgets or understanding a certain system. Make sure, though, you don’t make yourself so indispensable that your niche backfires

and becomes a burden instead of a benefit.

Having a niche can help you get noticed by people other than your boss--other people’s bosses. These bosses get together and they talk. If they bring up your name, rest assured it’ll be in a good way. And guess what? The reputation your niche gives you makes it difficult for your boss to not promote you if he or she wants to win peer group approval. If the other bosses think you are a good idea then your boss really has to go along with it too!

So look around. What kind of niche can you find and develop that will make you a valuable resource from which others or your company can benefit? Once you hone and begin executing that niche, you’ll be the one enjoying extra benefits, called upon for “the cool” duties, or be given additional freedoms that can truly benefit your professional development.

~ The End ~