



# Going nowhere fast

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DEAR CHIEF: I applied for a supervisory position at my company but they hired an outsider instead. They told me I didn’t have any leadership or supervisory experience. How am I supposed to get that experience if no one gives me a chance to lead?

GOING NOWHERE FAST



DEAR GOING NOWHERE FAST: Many people experience the same frustration as you when trying to move up in the world. Quite often when someone isn’t selected for a supervisory position, it is because of one or both of following reasons: 1) They are not an outstanding performer in the area or skill-set to be supervised; and/or 2) They don’t possess some supervisory or leadership experience.

First, it doesn’t make managerial sense for a company or organization to hire someone who isn’t good at the job they’re expected to supervise. So before applying for a supervisory position be sure you have documented proof or testimony that you’re an outstanding performer.

Over the years, I gave the following advice to people aspiring to be an outstanding performer: The more often you get things done better and/or faster than what you were asked to, the

more often you’ll be recognized as an outstanding performer by those who can positively influence your life and career. For instance, if someone wants you to vacuum the rug, do that and also quickly dust the furniture. File the reports? Do that and maybe add color coding tabs to complement the alphabetical system. Or, if someone needs something accomplished in a week, try and have it done a day or two sooner. Accomplished in a day? Have it done in 5 or 6 hours. By always striving to do things a little better and/or faster than expected, you’ll gain a reputation as someone who delivers on time, every time--and believe me, everyone will notice!

Second, a company or organization will usually want someone who has previous leadership and management experience before they hire them as a supervisor. How can you get that experience when no one gives you the opportunity to learn or practice it? Volunteer! Find out if there are any additional duties within your work environment that need someone to lead or manage. If there aren’t, then maybe a non-profit organization or social group needs help from someone to lead people or manage a project. By volunteering when you’re “off the clock,” you could very well be put in charge of someone or something. Perhaps a local Toys-for-Tots program needs someone to lead the seasonal collection effort, or the

Meals-on-Wheels program is looking for an evening volunteer to help lead and manage the delivery of dinners. Local soup kitchens continually need adult volunteers to lead teenagers who prepare and serve meals to the homeless. By stepping up to lead in scenarios like these, you’ll gain valuable leadership and management experience, and yes, you can list this experience on your professional résumé.

Along with volunteering, you should also educate yourself about the concepts of leadership and management. Just because you’re put in charge of someone or something, it doesn’t mean you automatically know how to effectively lead others or manage things. I recommend reading leadership books written by John Maxwell or Brian Tracy and management books written by Peter Drucker to gain valuable knowledge and insight on these subjects.

Your volunteer experience, along with always striving to do things better and/or faster than expected, could tip the scale in your favor the next time you apply for a supervisory position. Good luck!



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