

How to Build a Career That Works for You, Not Just an Employer

By Paul Mothapo

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One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was **to integrate myself into whatever endeavour I pursue.**

Study the industry _ its current state and its future state. *If you want to be employed, you need to calculate your career projection carefully.* **Low pay is fine _ but after a certain number of years, where does that put you?**

That is why I target integration in every position I land in. If I have to be a software engineer for that role, then I need to understand the entire pipeline _ find the part I can do well and do it with diligence _ so that next time, I am the person they call to maintain, stabilize, scale and whatever the use cases might be.

I would like to quote 50 cent here, when he said ***"If I have to bet on a horse, then let it be me running on that course, got dammit!"***

Most people look at a job and think about the salary and the package HR puts on the table. But the more important question is where do you want to be? Just an employee who earns a wage and goes home _ or someone who helps the company reach new heights while taking a leap in their own career at the same time?

Awareness Over Talent

The difference between someone who grows in their career and someone who stays stuck is rarely talent. It is almost always awareness. The person who grows understands the environment they are operating in _ not just their specific task, but the whole system around it. They know who the key people are, what the company is trying to solve, where the industry is heading, and what skills will matter in three years that do not matter today. **They are always looking slightly ahead of where they currently stand.**

"Stop doing tasks and start solving problems. Stop waiting to be told what to do and start anticipating what needs to be done."

Context Is Everything

Integration is not about working harder than everyone else. **It is about working with more context than everyone else. When you understand the full picture, your decisions get sharper.** You stop doing tasks and start solving problems. You stop waiting to be told what to do and start anticipating what needs to be done. *That shift _ from task executor to problem solver _ is what separates the person who gets promoted from the person who gets replaced.*

Calculate Where You Are Going

Career projection is something most people avoid thinking about honestly. They take the job, they do the work, and they hope that time and loyalty will eventually be rewarded. **But hope is not a strategy. You need to know, with reasonable clarity, where a particular role is taking you. Not just in terms of salary, but in terms of skills, visibility, relationships, and reputation.** If you cannot answer the question of where this position puts you in five years, you are moving without a direction. And moving without direction is just staying busy.

The Entrepreneurial Mindset Inside Employment

The entrepreneurial mindset inside employment is one of the most underused advantages a person can have. It does not mean starting a business. It means treating the company's problems as your problems. It means caring about outcomes, not just outputs. It means seeing opportunities where others see routine. **The person who shows up with that mindset _ who takes ownership, who thinks beyond their job description, who builds things instead of just maintaining them _ becomes indispensable. And indispensable people do not wait for opportunities. Opportunities find them.**

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About the Author

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Paul Mothapo is a human, just like you. Nothing more to say and nothing less to say.