

Grit, Emotional Intelligence, and Mindset: Three Skill Sets for Fostering Career Advancement for Organization Members

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Abstract

Organization members need to plan their professional and career development through goals that serve as guideposts to direct their efforts. Achieving career advancement goals build skill sets and competencies that aid in an organization member attaining new positions in the organization and profession. Grit, emotional intelligence, and the outward mindset represent concepts that help the organization members to grow and develop professionally and position themselves for advancement in the organization. Effective use of grit results in identified career advancement goals and passion, perseverance, and effort to accomplish them. Emotional intelligence gives the organization member the mental stability to stay the course in the arduous journey to achieve career advancement goals. The outward mindset conditions organization members to view themselves and others in a positive context and interact with others in a supportive manner throughout the pursuit of career advancement goals.

Keywords: career advancement goals, grit, emotional intelligence, and outward mindset

1.0 Context

Establishing career advancement goals by organization members and achieving them does not happen by chance. Organization members must take the initiative to set career advancement goals and have the passion, perseverance, and drive to accomplish them. Goals provide the guideposts to direct an organization member's pursuit of career and professional advancement. Emotional intelligence helps organization members manage themselves, the expectations of others, and work effectively with colleagues in gaining support for recognition and career advancement. The outward mindset focuses on building positive relationships with others in the work environment. An outward mindset gives organization members a positive context for working with others to establish credibility and support for their pursuit of career advancement goals.

2.0 Grit and Establishing Goals¹

The three major components of grit are passion, perseverance, and effort. Passion represents a strong emotional desire and commitment to achieve something important to an organization member. Passion includes *identifying goals* the organization member wants to accomplish career-wise and is the starting point of grit. For these career advancement goals to be achieved, the organization member needs to be motivated through passion that includes drive, interest, and enthusiasm. Perseverance, the second main ingredient of grit, means demonstrating the self-discipline, hope, and "stick-to-it-ness" to stay focused on the career advancement goals through to their completion. Effort, the third major ingredient of grit, serves a dual role: (1) when combined with the talent of an organization member, it leads to improved knowledge, skills, and competencies to achieve career advancement goals; and (2) once the enhanced knowledge, skills, and competencies are in place, effort is needed as an element of perseverance to realize career advancement goals (Duckworth, 2016).

Grit emphasizes that talent, while important, is sometimes overrated. Talent is defined as the attributes an organization member has such as intelligence, judgment, and the ability to learn. Possessing a deep feeling for what an organization member wants to achieve career-wise through passion, coupled with a vision as to how to realize these achievements, is crucial to grit.

Key elements of grit—passion, perseverance, and effort—are better predictors of successful on-the-job development and career advancement than an organization members' abilities represented through their talent (Duckworth, 2016).

It may be easier for an organization member to have a passion for a specific career advancement goal than the perseverance and effort needed to realize that goal. Because of the nature of an organization member's day-to-day work, it is easy for her/him to become distracted from what it takes to consistently have the perseverance and effort "over the long haul" to move forward and achieve a career advancement goal. Grit advocates that it is important to have a limited number of career advancement goals so that an organization member stays focused on them for an adequate time period, which could be years in some instances. Because an organization member's time and energy are limited, it may be necessary to prioritize career advancement goals, even if the goals are limited in number.

Passion means that interest and optimism are present in the organization member to strive to accomplish the career advancement goals continually. Career advancement goals created by passion are not easily given up on by an organization member, even when doubts may occur or when situations become difficult. Organization members who view their profession as "a calling" are inclined to have more passion for career advancement goals, as well as more perseverance to achieve them. It is beneficial to have congruency between an organization member's career advancement goals and the organization's short- and long-term strategies for sustainability and growth.

Guidance from Ignatius and Bernstein's (2018) observations regarding people who "conquer one challenge after another" provides sound advice for organization members' self-managed approach to career development and complements grit (p. 2). These people: (1) are astute about how they set goals and pursue them; (2) specify in concrete terms *how to get things done* to achieve goals; (3) make the process of attaining goals enjoyable; (4) have a *work-life balance* so that one complements the other, and they are motivated to be successful in each; (5) know how to evaluate their professional options on-the-job and choose among them as they pursue their vision for the near term in their present positions and in future desired positions; and (6) know how to prioritize and sequence their on the job efforts instead of trying to do everything at once—and none of it well (Ignatius & Bernstein, 2018). Implied in the advice of Ignatius and Bernstein (2018) is the assumption that organization members have identified talent and career development goals and have articulated visions of what near-term advancement they desire and their long-term career aspirations (Bartz, 2018b).

3.0 Emotional Intelligence²

Emotional intelligence is a combination of mental abilities and skills that help organization members to manage themselves successfully and meet the demands of others, while effectively relating to others (Walton, 2012, p. 3; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Such emotional intelligence includes using emotions to think creatively and make decisions in pursuit of career advancement goals (Bass & Bass, 2008). Emotional intelligence also involves being consciously perceptive of self-emotions, as well as the emotions of others, in a given situation to understand the meaning of these emotions and using this information as input to adjust actions effectively (Robbins & Judge, 2013). An organization member's image—how others perceive he/she in the work environment—is crucial to achieving career advancement goals because image represents, in part, what others view as the organization member's capabilities to perform effectively in higher organizational positions.

Emotional intelligence stresses an organization member: (a) knowing oneself; (b) controlling emotions through self-management; (c) motivating oneself; (d) showing consideration, empathy, and feelings for others to build positive relationships; and (e) using social skills to effectively build an awareness that aids positive interactions and relationships with others (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2015).

Specific explanations for each of these five elements are:

- (1) Knowing yourself stresses being cognitively aware of your mood, and thoughts about a given mood at a given time, to help manage behavior. Organization members' mood influences how other organization members view their *social maturity* (Edinger, 2012). When examining a negative mood (e.g., anger), it is usually best for an organization member to reflect before reacting unless imminent danger exists. It is important to have "positive self-talk" to get the mind out of a negative mood.

Thinking positive thoughts should prompt a positive mood. This also includes recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses and viewing oneself in a positive, but realistic light (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995).
- (2) Controlling emotions through self-management is dependent upon the organization member's acute awareness of emotions to remain flexible and striving for positive behaviors toward others. In some situations, the organization member's emotions can prompt an adrenaline rush that instantaneously results in behavior which may not be appropriate at that time. The desired results of an organization member sometimes come from putting her/his momentary needs on hold to pursue larger, more important issues (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).
- (3) Motivating self means organization members use emotions to gain focus and energy to attain career advancement goals. This includes effectively dealing with delayed gratification (rewards) that accompanies pursuing career advancement goals and stifling impulsiveness that can cause undesirable behaviors. It also means getting into a *positive flow* of activities that prompts outstanding performance (Seligman, 2011).
- (4) Showing consideration, empathy, and feelings for others build on positive relationships. Relationship management is the organization member's ability to use emotions to interact successfully with others in the work environment, both individually and with groups or teams. This stresses building positive relationships that *bond* the organization member with others at work. To do so, the organization member strives to understand the wants, needs, and emotions of others. Effective listening is a paramount skill in building effective relationships (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).
- (5) Using social skills to build awareness effectively is the organization member accurately reading the emotions of other people in the work environment and understanding what is actually driving their behaviors. This requires the organization member to attempt to "think and feel" as the other person does by putting him/herself in the situation of the other person (role reversal). Being an astute observer and listener is important, as well as reading nonverbal behaviors and observing each person to understand the context for her/his reactions in a given situation. "To be socially aware, you [the organization member] have to spot and understand people's emotions while you're right in the middle of it—a contributing, yet astutely aware, member of the interaction" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 39).

Organization members must recognize, understand, and acknowledge their negative thoughts and emotions and then develop the *emotional agility* to move past them. The process of emotional agility includes accepting the negative emotions, analyzing what situation prompted them, and then being agile enough to switch to positive actions to produce a solution to address the situation. This managing of negative emotions so that the result is a productive solution to a situation is called *workability* (David & Congeton, 2015).

4.0 Mindset³

Organization members using the concept of mindset effectively augment the principles of social intelligence and aides in achieving their career advancement goals. The Arbinger Institute (2016) provides an excellent source for the application of mindset by organization members through the concepts of inward and outward mindsets. The outward mindset organization member perceives the efforts in work completed by other individuals and teams as crucially important and meaningful. The organization member demonstrating an outward mindset provides positive feedback through praise and recognition to other individuals in the work setting. The outward mindset represents the organization member positively assisting people to help them improve and effectively meet work challenges that may be difficult for them. Application of the outward mindset results in organization members being regenerated through the positive feelings they receive from those with whom they work.

The inward mindset organization member is egotistical, self-centered, and has little concern for others in the work environment. The inward mindset organization member has very little—or no—consideration of the wants, needs, and psychological support of others with whom he/she works. The organization member does not receive positive feelings nor is energy regenerated. Figure 1 represents a comparison between the inward and outward mindsets as applied to organization members.

Inward	Outward
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Strives to control people</i> 2. <i>Often blames others when things go wrong</i> 3. <i>Is narcissistic</i> 4. <i>Consistently defends one’s position</i> 5. <i>Focuses on protecting oneself in interactions with others</i> 6. <i>Uses behaviors that sometimes try to manipulate others in an attempt to improve one’s own image</i> 7. <i>Shows minimal regard for how to create “collective results” among others</i> 8. <i>Views others in a context as to how they can help oneself achieve goals</i> 9. <i>Assumes that to change simply one’s behavior is the best way to enhance work productivity with others</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Strives to cause others to be fully responsible and engaged in work</i> 2. <i>Takes responsibility for actions of oneself in the work environment</i> 3. <i>Displays modesty toward others</i> 4. <i>Works collaboratively with others to solicit their opinions and collectively develop the best solutions for problems</i> 5. <i>Focuses on building positive relationships with and among people in interactions with others</i> 6. <i>Strives to facilitate “committed behaviors” collectively with others to improve work produced and achieve objectives</i> 7. <i>Is motivated about how to work with others collaboratively and for others to collaborate with each other and oneself</i> 8. <i>Focuses on the needs and challenges of others that foster a work environment that prompts individual and team cooperation</i> 9. <i>Understands changing how oneself views the assets of others is beneficial to everyone in comparison to merely changing one’s behaviors toward others</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. <i>Focuses on how to make oneself “look good” for work produced, even at the expense of others</i> 11. <i>Often creates competition between others and causes them to work independently of each other</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. <i>Sees, thinks, and works on how to improve job performance through collaboration with others that incorporates their needs and wants, and gains them recognition</i> 11. <i>Focuses on other staff members as an entity having a collective belief of working with each other for the common good of the work unit and</i>

Inward	Outward
<p>12. Focuses mainly on the job responsibilities of oneself</p> <p>13. Focuses on getting the work “out the door” with little identity for benefits</p> <p>14. Is inclined to step in, take over, and direct the work of others when things go wrong</p> <p>15. Creates conflict that keeps people embattled with each other (divide and conquer for control)</p> <p>16. Focuses solely on personal and professional goals and behaviors to protect and advance oneself</p>	<p>organization</p> <p>12. Supports others in identifying their interests and being motivated to successfully achieve what they need for the betterment of the work unit and organization</p> <p>13. Focuses on the meaning and purposefulness of the work and the positive impact it can have on the work unit and organization</p> <p>14. Understands and helps others to do so, regarding working together when things go wrong</p> <p>15. Focuses on preventing and resolving conflict among others and self</p> <p>16. Focuses on the goals of the work unit and organization, and objectives and behaviors that take others into consideration</p>
<p>17. Advances one’s agenda at the expense of others</p> <p>18. Identifies what can be taken from others to achieve objectives for oneself</p> <p>19. Frequently tries to control the behavior of others for self-benefit</p>	<p>17. Focuses on working together with others for “collective” results to benefit the work unit and organization</p> <p>18. Identifies what can be given to help others successfully achieve their work objectives</p> <p>19. Strives to empower others to be their best (Bartz, Thompson, & Rice, 2017)</p>

Figure 1. Comparing inward and outward mindsets for organization members toward others

5.0 Closing Thoughts

Grit, which includes identifying career advancement goals, emotional intelligence, and the outward mindset can propel organization members forward in the acquisition of new skill sets and competencies in realizing their career advancement goals. These enhancements of the organization member’s attributes serve as a launching pad to career advancement within the organization and profession. The career advancement process of organization members is guided by clear career advancement goals that are unwaveringly pursued and attained.

6.0 Footnotes

¹ Based in part on Bartz, D.E. (2017). Utilizing positive psychology to enhance job performance and satisfaction for managers. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(5), 1-6.

² Based in part on Bartz, D.E. (2018a). Managers effectively applying strengths management and emotional intelligence. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 8(11), 1-5; Bartz, D., Thompson, K., & Rice, P. (2017). Managers helping themselves “be their best.” *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*, 20(1), 1-8.

³ Based in part on Bartz, D., Thompson, K., & Rice, P. (2017). Managers helping themselves “be their best.” *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*, 20(1), 1-8.

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