

# The worst career mistakes you're making (and how to fix them)

Making mistakes is a part of life, and can even be a good thing, providing opportunities to learn and grow. But there are some mistakes that can really hinder your career progression – if you don't rectify them.

We've identified the five worst career mistakes you can make, and asked top career coach Nicole Grainger-Marsh to explain why they're so dangerous for your career, and what you can do to fix them.

## 1. **Stagnating instead of upskilling.**

Many people fall into a trap of career complacency: they get a job they're satisfied with and stay there for years, without making any effort to expand their knowledge or update their skills. But even if you're content now, you should make an effort to keep learning new things.

"Being complacent and not keeping up to date and upskilled on the new requirements of the new world can lead to us being outstripped by the market," says Grainger-Marsh. "If an individual isn't keeping pace, then the chances are that the company will look to hire new talent who are up to speed."

Instead of getting paranoid about being replaced, talk to your manager about training in new programs, and use any downtime wisely by keeping up to date with your industry's news and innovations.

## 2. **Not building networks.**

It's important to build and nurture a strong professional network that you can go to for advice, feedback and referrals, says Grainger-Marsh. Think about the last time you had a problem at work – who did you talk to? Friends and family are often go-to sounding boards, and they certainly know you personally, but for career advice it's much more useful to go to a professional network.

"The ability to reach out to people you know and trust for assistance can be the difference between success and failure," says Grainger-Marsh. "Not having a

network can also be very isolating, and won't help you succeed."

Make sure you put effort into building your network, and you'll be sure to reap the rewards. "That strong network can also help you to identify new career opportunities and help you land the job!"

### **3. Disrespecting people and burning bridges.**

If you behave badly at one job, you're likely to gain a bad reputation that will follow you to your next job. For example, say a friend refers you for a job at their workplace, and you end up doing a bad job because you don't enjoy it.

Rather than ruining your reputation and burning bridges by not living up to your friend's praises, you would be better off having an honest conversation with your manager to explore ways you could make it more fulfilling.

As Grainger-Marsh says, "Treat others the way you would like to be treated. If you build a strong network of people who respect you and how you handle yourself, this will carry through to your next role, because newsflash: people talk!" So, do yourself a favour and don't burn your bridges.

### **4. Playing it safe.**

Sometimes we stay somewhere we don't want to purely because of fear of the new. "Change can be scary. But it's important to think about just how much of our time we spend at work," Grainger-Marsh says.

"For many of us, work will occupy the majority of our waking hours in the week. When you've realised that, think about whether you're happy at work, or not. If you're not, you need to ask yourself: do I really want to be unhappy for the majority of my waking week? Or do I want to find a career, role, or organisation where I feel happier?"

Life is too short to be afraid of change. And remember, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different result.

### **5. Not taking the wheel in your career.**

Time waits for no one, and the same goes for your career. "The person with the greatest stake in your career fulfilment is you – not your boss or the next recruitment agency. You are the owner of the unique value you bring, and you are also the best informed on what you value in a role, the career trajectory you want, the type of manager you need, and the type of organisation that works for you."

Perhaps you're stalling because you don't know exactly what you want in your career? Take the first step by thinking about what's important to you and what makes you happy – for example helping people, or utilising your creativity.

As long as you're taking action to improve your situation and not waiting for someone else to do it, you'll be on the road to a more fulfilling career.

Remember, it's normal to make mistakes. The key is in recognising when you've made one and taking steps to fix it.