



5 Fatal Flaws Guaranteed to Wreck Career Progress!

By Ann Rolfe

There are attributes that serve you throughout your career and there are those guaranteed to wreck your progress.

You ignore the 5 fatal flaws at your peril but everyone has blind spots. At times you may get so busy that you miss the clues and come crashing down. That's why a mentor is so important.

Time out with a trusted ally, who helps you take stock and reflect on your career progress, set new goals and plan development is one way to ensure you never fall foul of the fatal flaws.

So what are the 5 fatal flaws? They are characteristics likely to derail any professional's career, regardless of age or stage.

1. You don't learn from mistakes

Some say: "experience is the worst teacher, she gives us the test and then the lesson" and some say: "there is no such thing as a mistake, only learning opportunities!" I say: mentoring is developing insight so that hindsight becomes foresight.

Experience is very important - if you take time out to review, reflect and gain insight to apply in future. Mentors encourage you to draw the learning from things that went well and things that didn't, and use what you learn.

2. You lack interpersonal skills

No matter what your profession, the ability to communicate, listen to others, share your ideas, create understanding and work with others is essential. The development of more collaborative and team-based organisations means there is a heightened emphasis on interpersonal strengths. A mentoring relationship helps build these skills.

With a mentor you get to express yourself. They model intense listening. They ask probing questions. They don't judge you but they do help you examine your own thinking and see alternate points of view.

With a mentor you get to experience a relationship that enhances interpersonal skills. It builds trust and rapport and ability for honest, respectful communication.

3. Resistance to new or different ideas.

Rapid change is a feature of our society. So facilitating change, overcoming resistance to change and personal resilience in the face of change is essential.

It can be difficult to let go of what you “know” to make room for something new. So beware of fixed ideas, being unwilling to let go of old practices or closed to opportunities and growth.

Conversations with your mentor let you explore, entertain a new perspective and expand your ideas. Mentors challenge your thinking and give you the opportunity to literally change your mind.

4. Not taking responsibility.

Accountability is different from finding fault and blame. When things go wrong it's tempting to blame circumstances, other people, or factors outside your control. Poor results or negative outcomes may not be your fault but an honest appraisal of the causes will reveal opportunities for you to do things differently in future.

You are responsible for our own decisions and behaviour and your mentor will help you to think through possible actions and outcomes and the consequences of your choices.

5. Lack of initiative.

It's hard to initiate action when you don't have the authority or experience to decide what needs to be done but leaving it to someone else, or an “it's not my job” mentality does not serve you.

If you don't know what to do there are always ways to find out, or figure it out. You may not have the answers yourself but you can ask the questions. In a team, you can initiate problem-solving to generate ideas.

Being passive is not a good look, acting helpless is worse. Draw on your mentor's experience to develop ways of showing initiative without over-stepping your authority.

Fortunately, all five fatal flaws are avoidable. In fact, each of them presents an opportunity for ongoing professional development and lasting career success and each is an example of how mentoring works.

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