

Having an understanding of what you are good at, demonstrating your competency, leveraging your skills and experience to help you be successful and understanding ways to go about continuous development are key ingredients to career advancement.

It can sometimes be frustrating when you know you are good at something, but are not sure how to 'prove it' to your manager or HR team. And equally frustrating, is when you know that you need to continue to develop a particular skillset to get where you want to go in your career and are not sure about how to go about it.

The tips below are designed to assist you in your on-going development.

1 Ask yourself... Where am I now? Where do I want to go?

Consult the career map on the my**career** website that is most relevant to where you are now in your career. This will help you to benchmark where you are now in relation to your skills and experience.

If you are unsure about what's next in your career, it might be helpful to take our career quiz or to consult multiple career maps on the my**career** website to help you understand how you can leverage your experience thus far in the sector to advance your career both on your current path or in other roles across the industry.

You will also want to do some homework within your own organization as well. There may be development planning tools, job descriptions, and skills profiles available within your organization. Ask your manager or your HR team for more details on what may be available.

Further insight can also be gained by completing the My Skills and Competencies assessment on the my**career** website.

2 Showcasing your Competency... How do I Demonstrate My Skills and Experience?

By understanding where you want to go in your career, you can start to identify how your collection of skills and experiences to date can help you get there. It can also help you to understand which competencies are more crucial to showcase than others.

The key is not to simply identify that you have a particular skill set or experience. Rather, it is important to demonstrate it.

Here's how you can do that:

- **Consider the context of the skills/experience within the context of the industry.** (i.e. what strong communication skills might look like for a Broker/Agent may be different from say, a Loss Control Specialist or an Underwriter).

- **Remember, different phases of your career may require varying degrees of competency** (i.e. what strong communication skills looks like early on in your career may not be the same as what is required at the senior leadership table).
- **Think of specific examples that apply to both the context and degree of competency required** (i.e. keeping with the communications example, is it: interaction with clients, conducting presentations, writing reports, achieving success in a negotiation/mediation, resolving conflict, etc. that helps you to demonstrate this skill set?)
- **Identify how you know you have been successful** (i.e. results, feedback from a client/manager, outcome, efficiency gain, cost savings, etc.)

You can see how working with the career maps, completing the My Skills & Competencies assessment, consulting tools within your organization, or talking to a mentor or your manager might be helpful in this process.

Having examples of how you demonstrate your competency in a particular area can be extremely helpful when it comes time to talk about your performance, career goals, and readiness for the next steps in your career.

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Building your Capacity – Continuing to Develop Your Skills and Gain Experience

In benchmarking where you are at and your strengths, you likely also identified some areas for continued development. You might be asking yourself, how can I continue to grow my skills and experience profile? Well, there are four main ways to go about it:

On-the-job – Taking advantage of opportunities to take on new tasks/challenges focused on the areas you've identified that you would like to develop, seeking out ways to 'stretch', etc. A discussion with a manager/mentor or consulting your HR team can be a good way to get this process started. The Experience Speaks section of the **mycareer** website also has some great examples of ways fellow industry professionals have embraced opportunities to grow on-the-job.

Off-the-job – Volunteer either within or outside the industry in ways that will help you to develop skills and gain experiences in areas that you identified. Coaching, serving on a committee/board, getting involved with a community project, or fundraising can all be great ways to continue to foster your development. Remember to share these experiences with your manager and colleagues.

Formal Learning – Attending a workshop/training session, taking a course, or participating in a seminar/webinar can be a means to continue to build your skills toolkit. However, you will also want to map out ways you can solidify and apply your learning. Developing a plan in consultation with your manager/HR team can be extremely helpful in this regard.

Informal Learning – Reading books/articles, working with a mentor, or collaborating with a colleague who is skilled in the area you are trying to develop can be a good starting point in continuing to evolve your skills and experience profile. Again, you will want to seek out opportunities to incorporate your learning and continue to develop your skills in a practical way.

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Continuous Improvements – How Committing Can Help You Advance Your Career

A common trait amongst insurance industry professionals who state they have found 'success' in their careers is a commitment to continuous improvement. The sector is known for constantly presenting opportunities for something to be learned, a process to be evolved, or a skill to be applied. By saying 'yes' to these opportunities and recognizing how they align to your continued development, you are setting yourself up for success in achieving your career goals.

Continuous improvement – whether it be in the classroom, through industry engagement, tackling a new challenge, or lending expertise to a team to work towards a common goal – sets a tone that projects a willingness to grow with an organization, face challenges head on, be self-aware and manage change effectively.

Ask industry leaders what they are looking for in top talent – these are the characteristics that most often make the list.