

THE 5 PATTERNS OF EXTRAORDINARY CAREERS

The Guide For Achieving Success and Satisfaction

JAMES CITRIN & RICHARD SMITH

JAMES CITRIN heads the global technology, communications and media practice for Spencer Stuart, an executive search firm. He has been involved in recruiting a number of top CEOs, presidents and board directors for a number of well known companies. Mr. Citrin (a graduate of Vassar College and the Harvard Business School) is the author of *Zoom* and the co-author of *Lessons From the Top*.

RICHARD SMITH is an author and search practitioner with Spencer Stuart. A graduate of Northwestern University and the University of Florida, Mr. Smith is the author of *Top Tier Talent* and a number of other articles published in business journals.

The Web site for this book is available at www.5patterns.com.

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MAIN IDEA

Why is it some people make it to the top of their organizations while others with equal talent seem to never fully reach their potential? Does it really come down to luck, political savvy or aggressiveness?

To answer this question definitively rather than by anecdotes, a three pronged research project was carried out:

1. A database of 1.2 million executive employees was analyzed for recurring factors.
2. 8,000 written surveys were sent out, of which 2,000 were completed and returned by senior executives by mid-2002.
3. More than 300 face-to-face interviews were carried out over a two year period to identify thoughts, goals, beliefs and behaviors.

This research program showed statistically that extraordinary careers follow a trajectory which is consistent irrespective of the industry within which these executives worked. The five career patterns which differentiated those at the top from all others were:

The Five Patterns of Extraordinary Careers	1 Understand how value is created in the workplace – and get into action
	2 Be benevolent – help others succeed and they will in turn help you
	3 Find a sensible and realistic way to overcome the permission paradox
	4 Exceed your job description and make unexpected breakthroughs
	5 Find a good fit – a position that harnesses your strengths and passions

“The five patterns are not a simplistic formula for distilling the complexities of a career into a set of rules. Many of us desperately yearn for a simple set of rules for dealing with the complexity of our working lives: Do these ten things, avoid these five. The problem is that in managing a career in real time, where you have to make important decisions without all of the facts, cookbook rules are simply not effective. Careers, like weather systems or financial markets, contain patterns. In any complex system, there are usually a handful of factors that govern the vast majority of the behavior of that system. So while in situations with great complexity, such as careers, there are no easy, rational answers that will always lead to the most positive outcomes, there are patterns that correlate very strongly with success over time. Many believe that success is out of their control. Yet careers guided by success patterns are understandable, predictable and manageable over the long run. Our goal is to answer two questions: How are extraordinary careers really achieved? And what thoughts and actions can you institute to create extraordinary success and fulfillment in your own career?”

– James Citrin and Richard Smith

Pattern #1 – Understand how value is created in the workplace – and get into action Page 2

People with extraordinary careers understand in great detail how value is created in the marketplace in which they work. They then translate this knowledge into action by finding concrete ways to add more value to their organization in each phase of their careers.

Pattern #2 – Be benevolent – help others succeed and they will in turn help you Page 3

The people at the top of an organization actually don't claw their way there. Instead, they are carried there by the other people whom they have helped to make successful. Thus, to position yourself for the top, create success for your peers, your subordinates and your superiors.

Pattern #3 – Find a sensible and realistic way to overcome the permission paradox. Page 4

One of the great “Catch-22”s of business is you can't get the job you want without experience, and you can't get the experience without the job. Successful executives take charge and find ways to get the critical experiences they need to get ahead, usually by seeing the opportunities other are missing completely.

Pattern #4 – Exceed your job description and make unexpected breakthroughs Page 5

People with impressive careers do their jobs exceptionally well, but don't stop there. Instead, they move well past their predefined objectives and create breakthrough ideas, thereby delivering unexpected benefits to their organizations. This differentiates them from everyone else quite effectively.

Pattern #5 – Find a good fit – a position that harnesses your strengths and passions Page 6

People with great careers always make decisions with a long-term perspective in mind. That way they migrate towards positions that fit their natural strengths and personal passions. Invariably, this will also include working with others they like and respect.

Application – How organizations put these 5 patterns into practice Page 7

Extraordinary organizations are not merely a collection of highly successful individuals but a creator of them. To be extraordinary, an organization has to take the best individuals it can find and then create an ecosystem where these people can grow to become highly successful individually.

Conclusion – How individuals can and should apply these 5 patterns Page 8

To put the five patterns into practice in your own career, a new scorecard is required. Instead of expecting instant results, you should concentrate on creating value for yourself and your organization. Over an extended period of time, those efforts will bear fruit and provide a foundation for extraordinary success.

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