

TAKE A CAREER LEAP

How to Broaden Your Impact ... Without Leaving Your Classroom

By Kim Gould

When you chose your career as an educator, you knew what you wanted. The satisfaction of watching a youth devour math, or learn to express her ideas through art, or display wonder at an experiment – these are the gratifying moments you dreamt of then and the joys that keep you there today.

Educators have the pleasure of a career that brings daily satisfaction. Nevertheless, you may also want to broaden your circle of impact beyond the students of one school, or you may desire variety outside of the typical classroom or office setting. Many educators simply see needs to be met and more to do than can be done in a traditional school.

You can shape your own future and enhance your institution at the same time through an approach that develops your effectiveness in your position and produces avenues for sharing and visibility throughout the organization. This approach requires only thought, frank scrutiny, and brainstorming. It presents a breakdown of four key factors shaping your career and a straightforward analysis to help you devise specific steps that will further develop the parts of your job known to contribute to competence and advancement.

The key factors are *visibility*, *autonomy*, *relevance*, and *relationships*. Use the questions in the sidebar to see where you can invest your skills and desires for career enhancement returns. You can quickly develop alternatives for yourself that are practical and creative.

Leave no question unanswered! Then use your answers to shape a plan that will impact the system while enhancing your job promise, your work enjoyment, and your sense of accomplishment.

Even if the alternatives you put forward seem small or insignificant, you are on the path to becoming your organization's most important asset.

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Questions for Career Enhancement

Visibility – the degree to which you and your work are known in the organization.

- With whom in the institution have I shared my ambitions, my goals?
Who else could help me if they had more such information about me?
- How is what I do communicated to the organization (both informally and formally)?
How can I improve on this? What other avenues are available to me?
- Who are the influential people in my organization who know about my work?
What additional information could be shared with them and how?
- Who are the influential people outside my organization who know about my work?
How could they learn more about me?
- Which of my job activities bring me into contact with people beyond my department?
How can these activities be expanded?

Autonomy – the amount of discretion in your job.

- What parts of my job allow me the opportunity to act on my own initiative, to demonstrate my creativity?
How could I make these a more central part of my job?
- Are there any new projects or activities in the organization or within my job that would give me the opportunity to develop something?
How could I get involved with these projects?

Relevance – the value of your job and actions to organizational issues and problems.

- What are two to four crucial issues that my institution faces within the next two years?
- What skills do I have that could play a role in addressing these issues?
How can I use these skills to become more involved in these issues?
- What other skills could I develop or improve on to make me more of an asset to the organization?
How can I do this?

Relationships – your supporters and associates on the job.

- How often am I in contact with my peers?
How could I benefit more from these interactions?
- Which senior person(s) could best help me do my job more effectively?
What can I do to develop this relationship?
- What contacts, both inside and outside of the institution, do I have that are of most value to the organization?
How can I use these to their greatest value?
- What contacts could I develop that would make me more of an asset to the organization?