

Transcript | How to Prepare for Promotion in 2026

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00:00:10.920 --> 00:00:19.680

Jessica van Onselen: Hello! Hi, everyone! You are totally in the right place. Welcome. We're gonna give everyone a second to join.

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00:00:19.810 --> 00:00:34.579

Jessica van Onselen: Welcome today, you are absolutely in the right place. We're just going to give everyone a few seconds to what we used to call the digital commute during COVID. I wonder if we still call it the digital commute, but everyone's just joining. Welcome, we're going to get started in a few seconds.

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00:00:34.680 --> 00:00:36.499

Jessica van Onselen: Lovely to see you all.

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00:00:36.800 --> 00:00:44.770

Jessica van Onselen: Hi, everyone. Oh, I can see all the participant numbers ticking up, it's always so exciting. Welcome. We're gonna get started in a few minutes.

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00:00:46.090 --> 00:00:52.759

Jessica van Onselen: Hello from a grey London. It's rainy here. Hopefully where you're joining us from, it's slightly more beautiful.

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00:00:53.050 --> 00:00:56.509

Jessica van Onselen: Alright, fantastic. We are gonna start. Hello?

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00:00:56.510 --> 00:01:18.690

Jessica van Onselen: And welcome to this panel on how to prepare for promotion in 2026. Let me introduce myself. My name is Jessica Van Anselen, I'm the Director of Communications here at Apolitical. It would be great to hear from all of you, so do post in the chat where in the world you're joining us from, and maybe what government organization you work for. Always lovely to hear, different voices from around the world.

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00:01:18.780 --> 00:01:37.459

Jessica van Onselen: Today, we'll be focusing on how to make a compelling case for your next job or promotion in government, so your contributions are visible, valued, and aligned with what your organization really looks for. We'll explore what drives career progression in the public service, and how to speak confidently about your impact.

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00:01:37.480 --> 00:01:44.720

Jessica van Onselen: You're going to hear candid insights from our amazing speakers, who you can see on screen with me, and how to speak confidently about your impact.

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00:01:44.720 --> 00:02:00.670

Jessica van Onselen: And who have success... and our speakers have successfully navigated career promotion pathways, they have lots of advice to give, so that you can leave today's session feeling prepared to clarify your goals, articulate your value, and go for that promotion you've been thinking about.

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00:02:01.000 --> 00:02:19.550

Jessica van Onselen: For those of you who are joining us for the first time, and I'll speak a little bit more about this in a minute, welcome. APolitical is the world's largest network for global government, used by over 350,000, just let that number sink in, 350,000 public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries.

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00:02:19.740 --> 00:02:33.229

Jessica van Onselen: Apolitical's mission is to make government smarter, and we do this by equipping public servants worldwide with the knowledge and skills they need to lead the change. I wanted to begin today's event with a special welcome.

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00:02:33.230 --> 00:02:50.379

Jessica van Onselen: And this special welcome is to all of those who are joining us today from Rwanda, perhaps from Kigali or elsewhere across that beautiful country. We have a large new cohort of learners from Rwanda onboarding to apolitical at the moment to take our fantastic and free AI training.

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00:02:50.380 --> 00:03:00.079

Jessica van Onselen: and many are public servants from the front line whose first language is not necessarily English, so I wanted to take a moment to say a really special.

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00:03:00.110 --> 00:03:14.920

Jessica van Onselen: This may be your very first apolitical event, so I invite you to sit back, enjoy the conversation today, and hear from our incredible experts, who I will introduce shortly. And then for our returning apolitical members, a Happy New Year, welcome to 2026,

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00:03:14.920 --> 00:03:22.889

Jessica van Onselen: I hope you will extend a warm welcome to our new Rwandan colleagues and show them a vibrant conversation that they can expect at apolitical events.

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00:03:22.890 --> 00:03:47.579

Jessica van Onselen: Alright, I'm gonna jump into the chat and see who's joining us today. It's always lovely to see people. Hi, we have Fiona from Newcastle, lovely to see you. Eleanor is joining from Lincoln, fantastic. Hello from London. Nadia, maybe you're finding London as grey as I am. A very cold and wet Bristol there. Welcome, welcome, so fantastic to see you. Hi, we have Innocent joining from Rwanda, fantastic to see you there.

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00:03:47.580 --> 00:03:56.089

Jessica van Onselen: We've got Philippe joining from Newcastle, the Home Office, Edinburgh represented, very good, fantastic. Got the Cabinet Office in London, West Midlands.

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00:03:56.180 --> 00:04:06.150

Jessica van Onselen: Canada, sunny Winnipeg. Jacobina, I feel you're, rubbing it in there that you've got some sunny, Winnipeg news for us. That's, that's, just making me envious.

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00:04:06.150 --> 00:04:17.409

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic, welcome, do keep introducing yourselves, it's so lovely to have you all online with us today. Let me get a little bit of technical housekeeping out of the way before we begin today's conversation.

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00:04:17.410 --> 00:04:33.829

Jessica van Onselen: This event is recorded. We do that for on-demand viewing on the apolitical website, so please don't record it yourselves. Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer. If you just go to our website, you look at the bottom there, at the footer, you can find those details.

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00:04:33.870 --> 00:04:43.729

Jessica van Onselen: Closed captions are available. They can be toggled on or off on your screen settings for Zoom, so if you, like me, sometimes like closed captions, that can be really useful.

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00:04:44.430 --> 00:04:55.949

Jessica van Onselen: Before we introduce our speakers, and I am super excited to introduce these three powerhouse speakers to you, we're going to run a few quick polls just to get a sense of where you're coming from today's conversation from.

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00:04:56.170 --> 00:05:14.909

Jessica van Onselen: Let's have a look at the first poll. Alright, this should pop up, but the question you'll see is, what part of the promotion process concerns you the most? And you've got a couple of options there, please start voting away. Is it having adequate knowledge and qualifications? Maybe it's making my interests visible, or advocating for myself.

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00:05:14.910 --> 00:05:18.210

Jessica van Onselen: What about preparing your CV or your cover letter?

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00:05:18.210 --> 00:05:36.610

Jessica van Onselen: the interview part, the assessment panels, maybe that's the tricky bit for you. Could it be negotiation? How much you get paid, what your role scope might be, your team, etc? Maybe it's something else, and if it is something else, pop it in the chat. We always love, those other answers there. So get voting on what part of the promotion process

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00:05:36.610 --> 00:05:47.939

Jessica van Onselen: concerns you the most. I'm gonna give it another few seconds, because there are a lot of you online, and we want to see how you're voting, but don't want to give it away, but I'm seeing a clear winner here.

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00:05:48.000 --> 00:06:04.859

Jessica van Onselen: Gonna give it a second, and then I'll share the answers with you. Okay, right. So, a staggering number of you voted, this is amazing, and I can safely say that the winning, blocker or obstacle that most of you feel is interviews or assessment panels. That's really the tricky bit, right?

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00:06:04.860 --> 00:06:27.730

Jessica van Onselen: not far behind in second is making my interest visible, sort of advocating for myself. Really easy to say, but pretty tricky to do. And I would say third place from where I'm looking is having adequate knowledge, you know, the qualifications, etc. Very few of you saying something else, but I'll pop into the chat and see if there's anything interesting in there. Anyone else got something that wasn't there?

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00:06:27.730 --> 00:06:29.280

Jessica van Onselen: James had said.

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00:06:29.380 --> 00:06:52.710

Jessica van Onselen: for him, it's not knowing where to look for my next career move, that's interesting, so it's sort of scanning, James. And Louise has said, raising my profile when I am rarely in the office, and not based in London, where most senior leaders are based. I think this is so true for a lot of folk in government, right? Where is the center of power? Where are those decisions being made? Reasonable adjustments, that's interesting from a neurodiversity or disability perspective.

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00:06:52.710 --> 00:07:11.540

Jessica van Onselen: Keep popping those in the chat, super, super interesting. Okay, we've got a second poll, and I hope our speakers are also looking at these polls, they're really interesting for today's conversation. This one, where are you personally in the promotion journey? Are you not thinking about promotion at all yet? You're super happy. If so, why are you on this call?

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00:07:11.540 --> 00:07:20.630

Jessica van Onselen: Are you preparing for promotion in the next short while? You're really looking ahead, this is something on your mind, the next 6 to 12 months? Maybe you're already actively applying.

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00:07:20.630 --> 00:07:29.419

Jessica van Onselen: Or were you recently promoted? In which case you will have a lot to talk to folks on this call about. You've just recently gone through the whole process, you have some lessons learned you could share.

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00:07:29.480 --> 00:07:44.310

Jessica van Onselen: Where are you personally in the promotion journey? I see the votes rolling in here once again. It looks like we have a clear winner, but I'll give it a few more seconds, and then I'll share it back. Okay, overwhelming winner in this one. You're preparing for promotion in the next 6 to 12 months.

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00:07:44.310 --> 00:07:50.260

Jessica van Onselen: So the majority of you on this call are, like, very much in that zone, turning your attention to how do I get that promotion?

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00:07:50.270 --> 00:08:04.419

Jessica van Onselen: actively applying a close second, right? So actually, a lot of you are in the thick of it, and really looking forward to hearing what you're learning about that at the moment. Fantastic. So interesting to have those polls. It always gives us a sense of where everyone is at today before we adjourn.

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00:08:05.020 --> 00:08:25.279

Jessica van Onselen: Now I want to turn to introducing our speakers. We were just having a real chuckle together in the green room, before we kicked off this, conversation. We're fortunate to have three brilliant guests joining us today. We have Shabana Ansari, we have Afshin... I'm gonna say it wrong. Iftikar, Afshin, I got there in the end, and Andrew Abella joining us today.

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00:08:25.350 --> 00:08:37.769

Jessica van Onselen: Let me introduce Shibana first. Shabana is a Senior Policy Analyst at Employment and Social Development Canada, ESDC. She has a background in journalism, community and stakeholder engagement, and social media management.

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00:08:37.770 --> 00:08:46.899

Jessica van Onselen: Shabana's work in the federal public service is driven by a commitment to advancing accessibility and inclusion initiatives that improve the lives of Canadians. Welcome, Shabana.

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00:08:47.140 --> 00:09:03.159

Jessica van Onselen: Afshin, who's joining us from sunny Lahore, she made a point of letting me know the weather was good there, serves as the regional head of HR, South Asia, at West Point Home. Over her 20-year career, she has led complex HR transformations, shaped multi-country people strategies.

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00:09:03.160 --> 00:09:07.189

Jessica van Onselen: And built resilient leadership pipelines supporting international operations.

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00:09:07.190 --> 00:09:15.979

Jessica van Onselen: She blends analytical thinking with human-centered leadership, driving initiatives in DE&I, culture building, and performance. Excellent. Warm welcome to Afshin.

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00:09:16.030 --> 00:09:30.270

Jessica van Onselen: And Andrew, last but definitely not least, has worked as a senior advisor, a researcher, manager, and director, leading a variety of initiatives across the government of Canada, including pandemic response work. Gee, Andrew, so many stories to tell there, I'm sure.

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00:09:30.270 --> 00:09:40.350

Jessica van Onselen: service-focused research and client experience research. He is passionate about evidence-based decision-making, supporting employee growth, and improving services for Canadians.

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00:09:40.350 --> 00:09:49.959

Jessica van Onselen: If you want to read their full bios, maybe I read through them a little quickly for you, you can do so by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen and heading to the Speakers section.

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00:09:50.970 --> 00:10:14.609

Jessica van Onselen: Before we launch into today's panel, we're going to kick off with a panel discussion. I thought we could start with a quick icebreaker question, just to get us all warmed up. So I'm going to put it to our speakers, but I'm inviting everyone to answer in the chat, too. Maybe you have an answer as well. So, Shabana, Afshin, and Andrew, what one thing do you wish people would just stop putting in their job applications? What is one thing you wish people would just stop putting in their applications?

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00:10:14.670 --> 00:10:25.849

Jessica van Onselen: I'll give you a moment to thank everyone else. I posed the same question to you, and I'd love to hear you share your answers in the chat there. Afshin, let me come to you first. What one thing should folks just stop doing?

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00:10:27.420 --> 00:10:36.010

Afsheen Iftikhar: Thank you so much, Jessica, for the generous introduction. Welcome, everyone, and thank you so much for choosing to join us today for the learning conversation.

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00:10:36.270 --> 00:10:38.520

Afsheen Iftikhar: Honestly, I am...

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00:10:38.880 --> 00:11:02.610

Afsheen Iftikhar: I find it very funny when people mention five objectives, that they are self-starter, hardworking, self-driven. I'm sure we all are, that's why we are applying for the job. So I believe that people should stop putting those objectives into the application. Rather, they should mention some specific achievements that they have made in their previous organizations or experiences.

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00:11:03.030 --> 00:11:13.479

Jessica van Onselen: Okay, so, no on adjectives, your Afshin is just not into it, more on impact and, what you've achieved. Fantastic. Andrew, what about you? Just... you wish. Your 2026 wish is stop doing...

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00:11:13.990 --> 00:11:14.760

Jessica van Onselen: this.

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00:11:15.220 --> 00:11:23.189

Andrew Abela: Well, first, shout out to Apolitical for running this, and everyone here, welcome. So, my real... my joke answer is hobbies.

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00:11:23.250 --> 00:11:42.880

Andrew Abela: unless they're super relevant to what you're trying to achieve in the job you're applying to, take them off. Let your experience and what you've achieved speak for itself. But my real answer is actually take off the year that you got your degree, or diploma, or your higher education. There's a lot of evidence that suggests that ageism can actually happen, and people can

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00:11:42.880 --> 00:11:50.470

Andrew Abela: date to your age, and this can actually lead to inequitable aspects of a hiring process. So it's pretty simple. Take off the year that you got your degree.

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00:11:50.800 --> 00:11:59.340

Jessica van Onselen: That is a top tip, Andrew, that's amazing! Okay, Shabana, you've got your work cut out for you. Can you beat Andrew's, Andrew's one there? What do you wish folks would just stop doing?

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00:11:59.560 --> 00:12:13.750

Shabana Ansari: I mean, those were both very brilliant points. I think I would say that it is safe to do away with detailed job descriptions from our current role. I feel like our application should not be a copy and paste of our resume.

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00:12:13.810 --> 00:12:29.060

Shabana Ansari: You know, the application is our chance to show alignment with our new role, the role that we are applying for. So instead of listing all the tasks that we do in our current role, I think we should highlight very strategically contributions and results that demonstrate our readiness for the next level.

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00:12:29.100 --> 00:12:37.159

Shabana Ansari: So I think that's what I would do away from my own, and hoping that other people would also do away with the detailed job descriptions.

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00:12:37.680 --> 00:13:00.470

Jessica van Onselen: Okay, so I better go home and make some changes to my CV. No more mentioning of my gardening and cooking. Definitely not going to mention that I graduated in, like, a previous century. Fantastic. This is so helpful. What a great start. If anyone has any tips, and all of those who answered in the poll that you've recently been promoted, give us your tips, having been through all of it. Fantastic. Okay, let's get this panel started.

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00:13:00.470 --> 00:13:20.950

Jessica van Onselen: We are very fortunate to have a conversation covered from both angles today, so Shabana and Afshin will start by sharing some insights from a human resources perspective before Andrew shares his experience as a candidate for promotion. So we're really going to get a rounded conversation here today. Shabana, I'm going to start with you. Let's start sort of exploring understanding

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00:13:21.010 --> 00:13:31.230

Jessica van Onselen: the landscape around you. Shabana, what does the current promotion landscape look like in the civil service today, particularly in Canada, and how would you say it's evolving?

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Shabana Ansari: This is a very, very good question, and something that, you know, we have been talking about a lot.

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00:13:39.630 --> 00:13:55.590

Shabana Ansari: I mean, you know, my people who are joining from Canada would know that many teams in the Canadian Public Service are going through some challenges right now. A lot of change is coming. We are expecting cuts to some programs, which also means that there would be cuts to roles.

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Shabana Ansari: And this means that there is less talk about promotions or career growth right now, and more focus on stability and waiting to see what the next steps would be.

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Shabana Ansari: But I feel that, like everything else in life, the promotion landscape is constantly evolving.

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Shabana Ansari: And hopefully it will evolve for the better in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

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00:14:17.840 --> 00:14:24.439

Shabana Ansari: I also find that this might be the time where we can prepare for the future.

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00:14:24.640 --> 00:14:34.090

Shabana Ansari: Because in my opinion, career growth has never been about, big or dramatic moves. It has always been very quiet and very consistent.

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00:14:34.090 --> 00:14:53.570

Shabana Ansari: So, I think that this... this time, I mean, I... I... and I know some... some of my colleagues and friends have been preparing for the future very quietly, strengthening their skills that matter. Skills, you know, that we need right now and in the future. Skills like... skills like adaptability, for example, critical thinking.

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00:14:53.570 --> 00:14:55.609

Shabana Ansari: Communication, sound judgment.

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00:14:55.630 --> 00:15:01.900

Shabana Ansari: So when the right opportunity comes along later this year, when things have stabilized a little bit.

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Shabana Ansari: We feel ready to take them on, take on new responsibilities, you know, work towards a promotion, like, look for what we need, and prepare for it.

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00:15:11.120 --> 00:15:19.600

Shabana Ansari: So... and that is the reason I feel that events like these are so valuable, because they give us a chance to not only learn from each other.

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00:15:19.780 --> 00:15:28.159

Shabana Ansari: This also gives an opportunity for us to share our own experiences, our own concerns. So thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this amazing panel.

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00:15:28.370 --> 00:15:28.850

Jessica van Onselen: No, don'.

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00:15:28.850 --> 00:15:31.250

Shabana Ansari: wait to hear what Afhil and Andrew have to say.

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00:15:31.660 --> 00:15:41.640

Jessica van Onselen: super useful, yeah, and really hearing that reality about, you know, budget squeezes, that's what we're hearing from governments all over the world, and the importance of skills, right? I mean, I think you named it so early there.

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00:15:41.640 --> 00:15:57.280

Jessica van Onselen: Afshin, I'm going to come to you. So, you believe the first step in preparing for promotion is actually aligning with your organization's values and principles. I thought that was so interesting. So, could you tell us a little bit more about why it's so important to align with an organization's values and principles?

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00:15:58.340 --> 00:16:13.069

Afsheen Iftikhar: 100%. Thank you, Jessica. Well, I always say and truly believe that performance can open the door for you, but the value alignment with the organization decides or determines how far you will go in that organization.

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00:16:13.070 --> 00:16:19.819

Afsheen Iftikhar: In the hierarchy. So I think, and I strongly believe for that, based on my experience, my humble experience.

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00:16:20.660 --> 00:16:26.819

Afsheen Iftikhar: Performance is not all about what you deliver. It's about how you deliver that.

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00:16:26.850 --> 00:16:41.450

Afsheen Iftikhar: How you show your leadership behavior, leadership maturity, how you're consistent in terms of your, in your day-to-day interaction with people, because if your consistent behavior is not developing the trust in people for you.

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00:16:41.450 --> 00:17:05.809

Afsheen Iftikhar: I think you are kind of losing a good group that can vouch for you and for your promotion. And when I talk about organizational alignment, it's not about unders... not only about understanding organizational priorities, but I think every single priority that you're defining for yourself, and that's the beauty of OKR when we talk about objective and key results.

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00:17:05.900 --> 00:17:11.060

Afsheen Iftikhar: That when you are deciding your own goals, and your department goals, and your individual goals.

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00:17:11.060 --> 00:17:32.989

Afsheen Iftikhar: You have to be better aligned with organizational goals. And we find it often very cliché and bookish, but trust me, it works, because if you are completely aligned with the organizational mandate, and your language, your leadership behavior day to day, and your interaction with people, how you mentor others, how you help others getting out of the challenging situations.

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00:17:32.990 --> 00:17:44.910

Afsheen Iftikhar: how you bring your perspective on the table, that all should be aligned with the mandate of the organization. Otherwise, you both are going into different directions, and then you cannot expect that you will be getting the next promotion.

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00:17:45.190 --> 00:17:46.259

Afsheen Iftikhar: That's my...

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00:17:46.600 --> 00:17:56.639

Jessica van Onselen: It's such an astute point, Ashin, because so often folks will sort of say, well, my ambition is I want to get a giant pay rise and, you know, manage a team of 100, and...

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00:17:56.640 --> 00:18:15.230

Jessica van Onselen: you know, I'll hear in those conversations if I'm sitting... considering a promotion, well, how does this align with what the organization wants to achieve? So, just having that alignment is... it's such a crucial point. Yeah, absolutely, fantastic. Shabbat, I'm going to come back to you, and then Andrew, we're going to turn to you and get your experience on being a candidate.

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00:18:15.230 --> 00:18:22.170

Jessica van Onselen: When looking for promotion opportunities, Shabana, what should public servants consider to boost their chances of success?

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00:18:23.520 --> 00:18:42.859

Shabana Ansari: That is such a great question, Jessica. What I do for myself is I start by treating the job description as my guide. In the Canadian Public Service, the job poster usually has three sections, so you have the essential qualifications, your asset qualifications, and your competencies.

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00:18:42.910 --> 00:18:53.390

Shabana Ansari: So, essential qualifications are usually the must-have skills and experiences that you need to do your job. Then your asset qualifications are something that are differentiators that set you apart.

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00:18:53.390 --> 00:19:09.060

Shabana Ansari: Competencies can be skills or a personality, thing. It's like, for example, collaboration, how well do you collaborate, or strategic thinking. So, when I have this, all three things lined out for myself, I do, like, a gap analysis.

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00:19:09.060 --> 00:19:19.889

Shabana Ansari: Meaning, I compare my current skills to the role requirements. I see what skills I have that exist, and what skills I need to either develop or polish.

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00:19:19.910 --> 00:19:36.930

Shabana Ansari: And then I compare that to the rule requirements, the rules that I'm aspiring for. Then I use this plan for my development. Do I need any training? Do I need any stretch assignments? Can I look for acting roles where I can build the skills I don't currently have?

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00:19:36.940 --> 00:19:52.129

Shabana Ansari: I also look beyond the technical skills, because in my experience, many of my promotions have hinged on soft skills. Adaptability and communication are the top things that come to mind. Also, leadership qualities, like

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00:19:52.220 --> 00:20:10.400

Shabana Ansari: like, you know, having an open mind, being easy to work with. Often, the posting would mention things like, stakeholder engagement, and then I start thinking about the examples where I've done that, and then, you know, think about how well to demonstrate that I've done that.

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Shabana Ansari: I also intend to work very strategically when I'm looking for a promotion. Usually, I find that job descriptions usually reflect organizational priorities.

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00:20:22.090 --> 00:20:33.520

Shabana Ansari: And once I get a sense of what those priorities are, I often connect with people in that area to understand what success looks like for them in their role, or for the organization.

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00:20:34.120 --> 00:20:55.790

Shabana Ansari: The last thing I do... one of the last things I do is I also stay current. I... I'm very, very intentional about reading the job poster and looking for emerging skills. Digital literacy, for example, data analysis, AI is a very big thing now, artificial intelligence, also inclusive leaderships. My work is very...

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00:20:55.790 --> 00:21:12.030

Shabana Ansari: very, very deeply embedded in accessibility and disability inclusion. So when I was looking for my current role, which was a couple of steps higher than what I was in my

previous role, I looked at, you know, all the things I had done in accessibility and disability inclusion.

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00:21:12.070 --> 00:21:26.659

Shabana Ansari: Often, it's so hard to be so objective about what you do, and not notice that you have been quietly doing things that the next job needs, the promotional opportunity needs. So basically, just, you know, bringing my thought back to

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00:21:26.660 --> 00:21:38.969

Shabana Ansari: what have I already done, what I also want to do in the future. So just keeping them aligned, and then looking for gaps where... and then fixing those gaps, either through training or through, you know.

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00:21:39.240 --> 00:21:41.550

Shabana Ansari: You know, building up on the skills I don't have.

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00:21:41.730 --> 00:21:50.650

Jessica van Onselen: What I really love about what you're saying there, Shabana, is you've got such a future lens, right? You're looking at the skills of the future, the job of the future, but also my future self.

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00:21:50.760 --> 00:22:12.419

Jessica van Onselen: and really making kind and practical decisions for, like, what my future self will need. And it's such an obvious thing when you say it, but it's a very forward-looking kind of lens, and that's a great way to look at it. Fantastic. Well, we are out of the gates with an incredibly strong start here. Let's talk a little bit about getting the skills and experience for the promotion. Shabana's opened the door, Andrew, but let's turn to you.

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00:22:12.420 --> 00:22:18.530

Jessica van Onselen: You've been a successful candidate for promotion, and I really hope you'll tell folks on the call maybe a little bit about that journey.

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00:22:18.590 --> 00:22:35.050

Jessica van Onselen: How can public servants gain the right skills and experience for a new role when there's perhaps not enough overlap with their role? So, Shabana's saying, think ahead into the future, but what if the job you want, you know, there isn't an immediate way that

you could get those skills and exposure in what you're doing right now? What have you learned?

111

00:22:35.790 --> 00:22:39.650

Andrew Abela: Yeah, such a good question, and I do have a lot to say about this.

112

00:22:39.670 --> 00:22:46.449

Andrew Abela: So, a bit about my past. I spent about 10 years as a neuroscience researcher in a totally different domain.

113

00:22:46.450 --> 00:23:06.339

Andrew Abela: Eventually made the shift during the COVID-19 pandemic to work for the Public Health Agency of Canada and Central Agencies, and from there, I went to work at the immigration department here in Government of Canada as a senior analyst, eventually as a manager, very quickly after that, and I've worked as a director as well for different,

114

00:23:06.540 --> 00:23:10.969

Andrew Abela: Call them micro-missions, short-term opportunities, between 4 months and up to a year.

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00:23:11.420 --> 00:23:26.820

Andrew Abela: So, I know all about doing different things, and I will say one of the most valuable things I've learned as a hiring manager, as a contributor seeking new opportunities, it's first to be really intentional about what you want to do next.

116

00:23:26.870 --> 00:23:36.590

Andrew Abela: So, thinking about, like, you might think to yourself, in 10 years, I want to grow as a public servant, and kind of go up the ladder, up the chain.

117

00:23:36.590 --> 00:23:58.799

Andrew Abela: You have to break that long-term goal down into really concrete steps, and they might look like this. You know, I'm really good as an analyst on a policy team right now, but maybe getting some experience on an operational team could diversify my experience. I could grow out the exposure I get and my perspective of the organization by taking a short-term opportunity.

118

00:23:58.800 --> 00:24:09.159

Andrew Abela: So although you might be very well suited and well-placed in your role, you might even have a possibility to act for your manager or for a more senior role on the team itself.

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00:24:09.160 --> 00:24:20.360

Andrew Abela: Also, just considering the possibility that a micro-mission for a few months, or even one year, something like that, on another team, entirely in another place in the organization, might be the best place for you.

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00:24:20.470 --> 00:24:28.709

Andrew Abela: you don't have to think about that as totally scary. What another team is doing can be very much overlapping and adjacent to what you're doing now.

121

00:24:28.710 --> 00:24:40.570

Andrew Abela: And they could benefit from your skill set having that expertise applied to a new domain. So you can grow, the team can benefit, and your home team can benefit when you eventually go back to bring that new skill set and perspective back.

122

00:24:40.590 --> 00:24:55.799

Andrew Abela: Another thing that's important for getting promoted in an organization like Public Service, wherever you are in the world, is not just about the skills and experience, it's also about your perspective. And I think, like, the two things that I see as the most important from my own journey is, number one.

123

00:24:55.950 --> 00:24:57.380

Andrew Abela: Flexibility?

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00:24:57.730 --> 00:24:59.190

Andrew Abela: Adaptability?

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00:24:59.690 --> 00:25:12.360

Andrew Abela: And number two, the perspective you have on the organization. So, if you're an intro beginner analyst on your team, you might think about the work you're given day-to-day, the tasks you're given, your assignments, things like that.

126

00:25:12.360 --> 00:25:24.350

Andrew Abela: But your manager is thinking about your director's mandate for your division. Your director's boss is thinking about, what is the organization doing? How are we delivering on the demands that the minister's placing on us?

127

00:25:24.350 --> 00:25:43.649

Andrew Abela: And the higher you go, you are expected to think more broadly and horizontally. Not just what I'm doing, but what other teams are doing. What is other people doing in the organization? So one thing you can do for yourself beyond just opportunities is just having that perspective, or asking your supervisor.

128

00:25:43.650 --> 00:25:54.240

Andrew Abela: how can I have that perspective more in the work I do? Can you tell me more about why this is important for the rest of the organization? The more you do that, the more you'll have an easier time moving up. And flexibility is interesting because

129

00:25:54.500 --> 00:26:09.349

Andrew Abela: as you consider taking short-term opportunities, you know, a part of this is making it known to your supervisor that you are open to this, you are interested, and ask them to tell their supervisor this. Say, hey, I have someone that's really great. If an opportunity comes up.

130

00:26:09.350 --> 00:26:23.610

Andrew Abela: please consider my name and let me know. This is really good because you'll multiply the exposure you get, so it's not just the people that you're talking to to flag opportunities like that, it's your supervisors as well, they have more exposure. And the flexibility piece comes in to think about.

131

00:26:23.960 --> 00:26:27.909

Andrew Abela: Taking another opportunity, it's not just about getting experience working in another team.

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00:26:27.920 --> 00:26:32.320

Andrew Abela: It's about how do you adapt to working on another team?

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00:26:32.320 --> 00:26:50.070

Andrew Abela: you're going to be flexing and building muscles that you might not get to do in a job you're used to doing and you're very familiar with doing, just by nature of changing your job

for a few months. So getting to talk about that journey and those skills you're building will benefit you for promotions in a variety of ways in the future.

134

00:26:50.840 --> 00:27:13.569

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic, and two things really stick out for me there, Andrew. The one is curiosity, right? Being curious beyond your own development, but what other teams are doing, what other people you admire are doing, what the organization is doing, and maybe a bit of bravery as well, right? Because to go and work in another team, to sort of put yourself out there is an act of bravery, so just leaning into those, those sort of attributes as well.

135

00:27:13.700 --> 00:27:30.340

Jessica van Onselen: Asheen, if I can come back to you, getting promoted, it's not only about skills, I think the opening remarks today have already touched on that, but it's also about being visible and known, right? If you... people aren't aware of you, if they don't know that you're working in this area, it's hard for them to remember you or bear you in mind.

136

00:27:30.390 --> 00:27:41.820

Jessica van Onselen: What does that look like in practice, and how can people increase their visibility without feeling like they're self-promoting? Or maybe they do want to feel like they're self-promoting, but what tips and insights do you have about that?

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00:27:43.780 --> 00:27:51.670

Afsheen Iftikhar: Wonderful question. And nowadays, it is happening a lot that we feel like, if we are posting more on LinkedIn.

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00:27:51.670 --> 00:28:05.730

Afsheen Iftikhar: And, being part of the events is like we are promoting ourselves very well. By the way, we consider that as self-branding, right? And when you want that promotion in the organization.

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00:28:05.730 --> 00:28:12.480

Afsheen Iftikhar: It's important that we differentiate between how we are promoting ourself and how we are branding ourselves.

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00:28:12.480 --> 00:28:25.830

Afsheen Iftikhar: So, take it very specifically and intentionally. When we are doing the efforts in organization, we are branding... not... we are not branding ourselves, but we are promoting ourselves. And about self-promotion, it's not about

141

00:28:26.450 --> 00:28:40.319

Afsheen Iftikhar: talking about yourself, or talking about your work and your efforts. Okay, I spent, like, three, tiring nights to get the project done. That is not the approach. I think we undermine the...

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00:28:40.630 --> 00:28:49.769

Afsheen Iftikhar: the one trait which is critical and very much noticeable by leaders or seniors, and that is bringing clarity.

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00:28:49.770 --> 00:29:03.020

Afsheen Iftikhar: So, leaders always pay attention to those people who increase the clarity in something, what you are delivering, and decrease the noises. So, according to my experience, if you...

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00:29:03.140 --> 00:29:22.870

Afsheen Iftikhar: bring healthy visibility into the organization, in your role. That healthy visibility means you are certainly talking about your achievements, you are certainly part of the group meetings, you are talking about the numbers that it created, but you are doing it in a very thoughtful and mature way. And what do I mean by this?

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00:29:23.690 --> 00:29:26.730

Afsheen Iftikhar: You are not talking about that I led the project.

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00:29:26.990 --> 00:29:51.899

Afsheen Iftikhar: you are talking about the project reduced 15% of the quality errors that we were experiencing last time, and this is how it has impacted the overall organization. So, my pro tip as an HR professional is that whenever you are... you want your work to be visible, make sure that your work is visible in front of wider audience, so it's not that you are just standing at the

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00:29:52.090 --> 00:30:01.120

Afsheen Iftikhar: cooler corner, and talking about the efforts you are putting in, but you are... you are talking about the impact it created. So, the context...

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00:30:01.180 --> 00:30:16.860

Afsheen Iftikhar: action and the impact. You're talking about the whole story. And at the end of the time, when you are talking about the impact, do talk about that, did it reduce any... any error margin? Did, it mitigate any risk?

149

00:30:16.900 --> 00:30:41.740

Afsheen Iftikhar: Or did it improve any process? Always create your impact, or create your story about the impact, in a way that is, again, getting back to the same thing, that is so much important for the organization. So if you're trying to solve a problem, which is not a problem for a leader, they are not going to pay attention. But if you are making an effort on something which is important and problem in the dash.

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00:30:41.830 --> 00:30:46.580

Afsheen Iftikhar: For the leaders, they are certainly going to pay attention for that, if that makes sense.

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00:30:46.680 --> 00:31:06.290

Jessica van Onselen: It's so... it's so important to talk about, the impact as opposed to effort, right? It can be tempting to say, well, I worked incredibly hard on this... this thing, and then forget to tell the part of the story of what was that thing you built, and what difference did it make, particularly for citizens' lives, in government? Absolutely. So... so that storytelling element, I think that's really useful.

152

00:31:06.410 --> 00:31:27.289

Jessica van Onselen: Andrew, coming back to you, your career is a really fantastic example of cross-departmental collaboration. I think we got a sense of that with your first answer, where you were talking about, kind of, thinking about what other departments are doing, being interested in other teams. What can others do to be seen and considered for cross-functional opportunities? What have you seen about making oneself visible for promotion?

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00:31:28.880 --> 00:31:32.859

Andrew Abela: So, I think a big part of this is...

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00:31:33.180 --> 00:31:37.710

Andrew Abela: Really endeavoring to be a good collaborator.

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00:31:38.040 --> 00:31:40.430

Andrew Abela: Whomever you interact with.

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00:31:40.660 --> 00:31:43.809

Andrew Abela: I'm talking about your colleagues on your team. I'm talking about...

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00:31:44.030 --> 00:31:54.269

Andrew Abela: the other people in your division, or, you know, the small organization you're a part of, your branch. I'm talking about anyone you email in your department or ministry.

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00:31:54.270 --> 00:32:09.249

Andrew Abela: or any connections you have. I know it's obvious, like, we all want to be professional, but we often get questions. We get people reaching out to us. Hey, can you review this for feedback? Can you help us out? Can you have an... do you have information for us, or policy guidance to inform this on?

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00:32:09.310 --> 00:32:32.510

Andrew Abela: And sometimes we get so busy, we think, oh, I'll just do a little bit here, and I'll, you know, give a response back. Every interaction you have with people in the public service is an opportunity to build a new bridge with someone. And you really... the thing about the public service is, like, you have to have a really long view. So you shouldn't think about, like, the next year or so. I think you should think about, like, in 5 years from now.

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00:32:32.570 --> 00:32:52.499

Andrew Abela: If someone I'm, you know, having a weak connection with, or a small connection with, will they think of me when an opportunity comes up? Maybe they would pass my name along. And I think the more you think about this as an opportunity to grow your connections with people is going to serve you, not just in ways of promotion, but will also make you a better public servant, to be quite honest.

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00:32:52.500 --> 00:32:58.390

Andrew Abela: And I think another way, to think about this is, like, people move around in the public service all the time.

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00:32:58.580 --> 00:33:08.649

Andrew Abela: Your colleague on your team, or that person from another team that you're working with, they might be a hiring director in 3 years. When they have an opening,

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00:33:08.650 --> 00:33:31.230

Andrew Abela: that matches your skills and or experience or background. You want them to think of you, because you might be interested. And I think just thinking about that influence, that long-term influence, also your boss right now might move to a new role in another department. They might move to defense, they might move to the border security agency, you don't know. I think having the option of

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00:33:31.340 --> 00:33:52.209

Andrew Abela: following them if they are hiring, because this often happens. In fact, I experienced it. My former boss moved to ESTC, Service Canada, Social Development Canada, and there was a short-term opportunity for a director opening there, and I went and I took that, and I would not have had that experience had I not had that relationship with that hiring director there.

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00:33:52.210 --> 00:33:58.670

Andrew Abela: So I think it's about, making it known, being a very good collaborator, and this...

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00:33:58.670 --> 00:34:08.770

Andrew Abela: doesn't just include, you know, one department to the next to move all the way across the public service somewhere else. It could just be an adjacent move. It could even be an at-level move.

167

00:34:08.770 --> 00:34:21.450

Andrew Abela: And I think getting that exposure and being someone that people want to work with, people are motivated to work with, will serve you, like, as a long-term investment exponentially for your career.

168

00:34:22.760 --> 00:34:29.570

Jessica van Onselen: Love it. Practical, implementable, really, really useful. Fantastic. Let's talk a little bit about,

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00:34:29.590 --> 00:34:42.659

Jessica van Onselen: letting the rest of the organization know, letting folks know that you're ready for promotion, that you want a promotion. It's a really important part of the process, but often overlooked in these conversations. Afshin, I'm going to come to you. So.

170

00:34:42.659 --> 00:34:53.969

Jessica van Onselen: You consider mature decision-making an important quality in the workplace. What does that mean in a workplace setting, and why do leaders notice it? I mean, do you want to explain what you mean by mature decision-making?

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00:34:54.550 --> 00:34:55.350

Afsheen Iftikhar: Sure.

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00:34:55.800 --> 00:35:05.350

Afsheen Iftikhar: And I think... Promotion readiness is often judged under difficult circumstances, not in the successful ones.

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00:35:05.350 --> 00:35:18.439

Afsheen Iftikhar: People usually forget that, okay, what successful project you delivered, but leaders will never undermine the fact that how you delivered that, and how you behaved and depicted your leadership qualities during the difficult time.

174

00:35:18.500 --> 00:35:23.739

Afsheen Iftikhar: That's what I call emotional intelligence or mature decision-making leadership.

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00:35:24.100 --> 00:35:26.820

Afsheen Iftikhar: Now, it's important that

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00:35:26.820 --> 00:35:51.149

Afsheen Iftikhar: mature decision-making is not that how you are treating others, I believe it's more about how you are showing your behavior under pressure, how you are helping others navigate tough challenges, and how you are mentoring others. Because, as I think Andrew just mentioned, that collaborative attitude is the one people and leaders usually appreciate.

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00:35:51.150 --> 00:36:13.760

Afsheen Iftikhar: It's the same thing. When you are treating people, not with emotions, but with very professional attitude, and when do I call, emotion and emotional intelligence, it doesn't

mean that you don't have to sound emotional. We are human beings. We are supposed to be emotional, but not emotional in sense of reacting to different situations.

178

00:36:13.760 --> 00:36:20.769

Afsheen Iftikhar: How you are taking... how you are dealing with situations when something is coming as a blame.

179

00:36:20.940 --> 00:36:38.740

Afsheen Iftikhar: How you are balancing short-term wins with long-term consequences. How you're talking about trade-offs in tough situations. How you are considering the overall context, when it's about... you are making some decisions in crisis. So it's a... it's a whole picture.

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00:36:38.740 --> 00:36:43.569

Afsheen Iftikhar: About your maturity, about your judgment, about, day-to-day decisions.

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00:36:43.570 --> 00:37:00.010

Afsheen Iftikhar: And that's how collaborative stakeholder leadership is so important, because when you deal with people with professional attitude and with maturity, they would certainly remember that, because as human, we never forget how people make us feel.

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00:37:00.300 --> 00:37:13.470

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, so true. Shabana, I see you nodding a lot there, particularly at what Afshin was saying. Let me come back to you. What's your advice for public servants who maybe struggle to speak confidently about their impact?

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00:37:14.600 --> 00:37:27.030

Shabana Ansari: This is such a great conversation, Jessica, and Afshin and Andrew did talk about it a little bit, and I just, you know, I wanted to share my own experiences. As someone who loves talking about herself.

184

00:37:27.050 --> 00:37:44.399

Shabana Ansari: speaking confidently about my impact, the impact of my work has never been a problem that I faced, but on a more serious note, I realized that self-promotion can be very challenging for some people. My suggestion for this would be to think about this not as bragging.

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00:37:44.400 --> 00:37:49.859

Shabana Ansari: But to reframe it in our own mind as being our own best cheerleader.

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00:37:49.910 --> 00:38:14.649

Shabana Ansari: So, I think the best way, maybe, to do this is start with the facts. Ashine did talk about measurable outcomes, you know. You know, basically, when we use numbers, when I feel like I use numbers, it feels like my impact is getting more clearer. It's getting clearer and more credible. So, something like a measurable outcome, like I planned, created, and distributed.

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00:38:14.650 --> 00:38:32.399

Shabana Ansari: 50 newsletters in 2024, or, you know, something I did, an app that I created, or invented, or discovered, reduced processing time by 15%. So, starting with facts, you know, basically always makes it a little easier and more clearer.

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00:38:32.600 --> 00:38:39.859

Shabana Ansari: And I also noticed that someone was talking about the STAR method in the chat, and I feel that is, you know.

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00:38:40.600 --> 00:38:51.390

Shabana Ansari: might be a cliché, but is also very underutilized sometimes, especially when we are thinking about our own work, you know? And I find that the STAR method makes me

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00:38:51.390 --> 00:39:04.259

Shabana Ansari: keep my story structured and focused, what the situation was, what the task was assigned to me, what action did I take, and what was the final result. I think that helps me link my work to bigger goals.

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00:39:04.260 --> 00:39:13.030

Shabana Ansari: I frame my achievements in terms of organizational priorities, which I've seen talked about as well, and so did Andrew in some way. And...

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00:39:13.030 --> 00:39:29.430

Shabana Ansari: And how does this public service outcome help me talk about the impact of my own work? For example, this project that I am currently working on is supporting my department's goal of improving accessibility for all Canadians.

193

00:39:29.530 --> 00:39:46.289

Shabana Ansari: I think what can also help with people who might be a little introverted or who don't feel very comfortable talking about their own impact is to maybe prepare a couple of impact statements. Try them out, see what feels more natural, more comfortable for them to talk about.

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00:39:46.490 --> 00:40:01.289

Shabana Ansari: I also have noticed that, you know, confidence grows, when we know our story, when we know what our story is, what we are trying to communicate, and once we have that in the bag, we can deliver it more clearly.

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00:40:02.100 --> 00:40:15.829

Shabana Ansari: If nothing else works, if people feel like talking about their achievements, talking about their impact is hard, I would suggest that getting feedback from colleagues or clients sometimes is easier. It reinforces your contribution.

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00:40:15.830 --> 00:40:23.699

Shabana Ansari: You know, when you look at what other people say about your work, you can frame your impact in that lens.

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00:40:23.700 --> 00:40:36.590

Shabana Ansari: I also find that when I frame my own impact as, say, service to Canadians and back it up with results, I feel like I'm not self-promoting, but I'm demonstrating pride in my work.

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00:40:36.950 --> 00:40:42.679

Shabana Ansari: So that's how I do it, and you know, I hope that's useful for our listeners today.

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00:40:43.030 --> 00:40:48.810

Jessica van Onselen: I mean, a positive treasure trove of tips there. Afshin, you want to come in and respond to Shabana? Please do.

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00:40:49.930 --> 00:41:12.689

Afsheen Iftikhar: Sure, I just wanted to make a comment on that. When we were talking about... she was making all the good points, and I was recalling that being part of volunteer projects, I think that has been exceptional for me in terms of giving me more visibility, because when you are part of the steering committees, when you are part of the public volunteer activities.

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00:41:12.690 --> 00:41:28.059

Afsheen Iftikhar: You're automatically getting more chances to be visible, and people get to see that... what skill set you can bring on the table, and maybe, maybe many of the aspects of that conversation or the project is of the next level that they experience.

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00:41:29.640 --> 00:41:52.750

Jessica van Onselen: What's striking me about... and we're going to move to Q&A in a second, so folks, start entering your questions by all means, but what's really interesting about what all three of you have been saying is that, actually, getting ready for promotion is not something that you can do in a couple of weeks, or maybe even a month or two. It's almost a constant mindset, right? Constantly investing in these networks, etc. So, we are, in fact, always preparing for promotion, forever.

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00:41:52.750 --> 00:42:00.599

Jessica van Onselen: And that we should always have that future lens. It's just really different from that, like, oh, I sort of woke up one day and I want a promotion. It's a daily act.

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00:42:00.600 --> 00:42:18.170

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic. We're going to move to our Q&A in a sec... in a session... in a second, but really, the conversation has been so fantastic so far. Please share any questions you have. You can enter them in the Q&A section of Zoom. You'll see at the bottom there the panel, so please pop in there and answer any questions we have.

205

00:42:18.170 --> 00:42:26.189

Jessica van Onselen: ask any questions. We have a few there already. So you can pop them in the chat too, but we'll be checking the Q&A a little bit more closely.

206

00:42:26.190 --> 00:42:35.510

Jessica van Onselen: I'm actually gonna start with a little bit of a controversial hand grenade. Why not? And throw it in there. Someone called Boswell, said the most interesting thing in the chat here. Hi, Boswell.

207

00:42:35.510 --> 00:42:54.909

Jessica van Onselen: I think Boswell was kind of challenging a bit of, maybe, groupthink that we've all got between the four of us here, which is that visibility is, like, a good thing, right? And, Boswell's sort of raising the question of, well, it doesn't sound like it's very fair, right? So does it mean that the most visible person will be seen for promotion, and is that merit-based?

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00:42:54.910 --> 00:43:00.740

Jessica van Onselen: So I'm going to turn Boswell's observation into a question and sort of throw it back to you, and Andrew, I'll come to you first.

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00:43:00.740 --> 00:43:19.060

Jessica van Onselen: Is this a competition, and does it mean that the sort of loudest, braggiest person is more likely to get a promotion? And what might the introverts, or those who are a little bit more shy and reluctant, how might they think about tackling this project, this problem of wanting to be known for their impact, but maybe not being as, extroverted as others?

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00:43:19.930 --> 00:43:21.780

Andrew Abela: Yeah, it's such a great question.

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00:43:22.150 --> 00:43:30.779

Andrew Abela: I think in most cases, I would like to say in all cases, the most, you know, person with the most merit, who is most matched to the job.

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00:43:30.980 --> 00:43:34.409

Andrew Abela: At hand, getting evaluated, gets it.

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00:43:34.860 --> 00:43:52.360

Andrew Abela: But the reality of the public service is that there are so many different ways to staff. Some of them are very slow, some of them involve advertised competitions, some of them involve non-advertised competitions or appointments, some of them involve short-term acting assignments for a month, which don't go to open process. And what happens is.

214

00:43:52.370 --> 00:44:06.899

Andrew Abela: Life happens to people, to leaders. They have to go away for a month. Maybe they break their arm and they can't work for a whole month, and they have to be replaced. These are all opportunities that come up and do, unfortunately, involve

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00:44:07.060 --> 00:44:21.729

Andrew Abela: people that are familiar to others, people that are known to be contributors, people that are known to be strong. And I don't think everyone has to be posting on LinkedIn

every day to be visible. I don't think you have to be raising your hand at every meeting to speak up.

216

00:44:21.730 --> 00:44:27.189

Andrew Abela: I think that, leadership signaling your strength can be done in a very

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00:44:27.190 --> 00:44:51.510

Andrew Abela: quiet way, can be done in a very humble way. So, for example, having in your one-on-one meetings with your supervisor or your colleagues, just simply making known about your intentions to move up and how you're trying to grow in certain ways, that is a great way to signal your interest in these opportunities. People talk to each other, people share. So you don't have to speak up in, like, a 300-person meeting to be visible, of course. That doesn't always have to be the case.

218

00:44:51.530 --> 00:45:02.459

Andrew Abela: But I do think it is important to grow your connections to others, and grow your network in a way, but it doesn't have to be, like, all about me putting yourself on the spot all the time.

219

00:45:02.740 --> 00:45:17.169

Jessica van Onselen: So maybe it's thinking about it more as, broadcasting your competency as opposed to bragging or self-promotion, but, fantastic. Shabana, I'm going to come to you. I've got a question here. Ashin, do you want to quickly respond, and then I'll come to Shabana.

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00:45:17.620 --> 00:45:19.260

Afsheen Iftikhar: That's, that's fine, please go ahead.

221

00:45:19.260 --> 00:45:27.809

Jessica van Onselen: Okay, thanks. So, Shabana, we got a question here which I think so many public servants on this call are going to resonate with, so I'll read the question to you. It's from Anonymous, and it says.

222

00:45:27.810 --> 00:45:40.830

Jessica van Onselen: I'm also interested in navigating promotion, even silent and appointed, during a period of fiscal constraint. How can we quietly navigate and negotiate a promotion and create a role for ourselves during budget and role cuts?

223

00:45:40.900 --> 00:45:46.509

Jessica van Onselen: Shabana, what are your insights on that? So many public servants just working in environments where budgets are being slashed.

224

00:45:47.400 --> 00:45:52.880

Shabana Ansari: Andrew did, talk about this in his last answer, you know.

225

00:45:53.190 --> 00:46:09.550

Shabana Ansari: we talk about visibility, right? I mean, I'll tie my answer to what was asked earlier to the one you asked just now, Jessica. So, I think one thing that, you know, a lot of us right now are feeling is a sense of,

226

00:46:10.040 --> 00:46:16.670

Shabana Ansari: not being steady Because, you know, I mean, opportunities are limited, things are changing, there's some uncertainty.

227

00:46:16.690 --> 00:46:32.399

Shabana Ansari: But I... and you also said this, Jessica, that, you know, sometimes, you know, it's an ongoing thing. It's not something that you do. You wake up one morning and you think that you are ready for a promotion, and you will start applying for jobs, or creating opportunities for yourself.

228

00:46:32.400 --> 00:46:36.890

Shabana Ansari: To me, creating opportunities also means growing.

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00:46:36.940 --> 00:46:46.109

Shabana Ansari: And growth is not necessarily tied to promotions. Growth is something that is quiet, that is consistent, that I do for myself every day.

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00:46:46.220 --> 00:47:02.899

Shabana Ansari: So, at a time like this, you know, I'm thinking about what next, definitely, but I think one thing that all of us can do right now, and Andrew and Ushein both talked about this a little bit, is, you know, we have to keep building those relationships. We have to keep

231

00:47:03.030 --> 00:47:18.759

Shabana Ansari: You know, and it doesn't have to be transactional. It can be something that is just, you know, just gives us energy. For example, I, as an extrovert, I get energy from people. I have to keep talking to people, you know, their perspectives share mine.

232

00:47:18.760 --> 00:47:29.519

Shabana Ansari: So, I think right now, what people can do... my long-winded way of saying that, right now, the best thing is to think about, you know, what do you have right now, and work with what you have.

233

00:47:29.520 --> 00:47:43.109

Shabana Ansari: Don't stop talking to people, you know, reach out to friends, colleagues. It doesn't have to be big or dramatic. It can be quiet, it can be consistent, you know, those connections, those relationships we build now. And things change, right? Everything is evolving, like, all the time.

234

00:47:43.110 --> 00:47:50.970

Shabana Ansari: And when things change, we already have it in our roster, in our bag, you know? Those relationships that we build right now, because we have the time, so...

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00:47:51.300 --> 00:47:55.069

Shabana Ansari: I think that's... that can get us through what is happening right now.

236

00:47:55.470 --> 00:48:00.339

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, it comes back to this thing of long-term investment, always being... always being investing in it.

237

00:48:00.350 --> 00:48:25.320

Jessica van Onselen: Asheen, I'm gonna come to you with a question which sounds really simple, but I think it's actually something that a lot of folks battle with. So, again, it's an anonymous question. They've asked, how do you find the balance between being concise, not wasting everyone's time by going through all the detail, but providing enough detail to be substantive during an interview? Do you have any tips when you're hiring someone or looking at someone for promotion? What's the right balance of detail and

238

00:48:25.320 --> 00:48:27.280

Jessica van Onselen: And getting the right message across.

239

00:48:28.460 --> 00:48:33.850

Afsheen Iftikhar: I think I also learned it through hardwave, and that is, talk about outcomes.

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00:48:34.080 --> 00:48:51.860

Afsheen Iftikhar: what did you accomplish? How did you accomplish? What did you learn through hard way? What was the last time you got some... you faced some failures? What was the last time you faced some successes, and how? So, we need to... somebody talked about being introvert and how to, like, be visible.

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00:48:51.950 --> 00:48:57.829

Afsheen Iftikhar: See, if we will not be sharing the impact of our work, somebody will fill in the gap.

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00:48:57.830 --> 00:49:21.759

Afsheen Iftikhar: According to their own lens. So it's important that we talk about it. But we talk about it in a very, grounded way, because when we talk about it in an outcome way, it becomes confidence, and it doesn't look like arrogance. So be very comfortable in your own skin, that regardless you are introvert or extrovert, you are not, like, telling a story here, you are not modeling.

243

00:49:21.840 --> 00:49:41.650

Afsheen Iftikhar: You are just doing... talking about your own work in a way which is so meaningful for the leadership team. So, and... and that... that is exactly the question. When you are interviewing people and you like to understand that, okay, how precisely and concisely you can talk about it, be ready with your specific examples.

244

00:49:42.830 --> 00:49:45.740

Jessica van Onselen: Andrew, please come in, by all means, you're all so polite.

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00:49:46.200 --> 00:49:58.829

Andrew Abela: I just want to add something to this. It's such a good point, Ashti, and I think it can stress people out to talk about outcomes, so I want to give some tips. Outcomes don't just have to be key results that the department achieved.

246

00:49:58.830 --> 00:50:17.230

Andrew Abela: You don't have to say, like, oh, we became 10% more efficient at processing applications or whatnot. Outcomes can be about your own development. I think this is what's amazing, is, like, we grow so much in every experience we have in our jobs. Make that known in your interviews. Talk about how past experiences shaped how you are today.

247

00:50:17.230 --> 00:50:42.030

Andrew Abela: this is such a, like, softball, like, lob for you to, like, knock it out of the park sometimes, these questions, because at the end of the day, people evaluating on interviews, they want to set you up for success. They are asking questions, so you tell your story. And so, focusing on those main points about, like, just like Ashin was saying about, like, the STAR method, what led to certain results, but don't stress about organizational outcomes. Of course, they're good to highlight when they're there.

248

00:50:42.030 --> 00:50:58.089

Andrew Abela: But talk about your own growth. How did it make you better as a leader? How did it make you more ready for challenges that you might face at the next level? And the last tip I'll say is when you prepare for interviews, this can really help for managers, directors, senior directors, things like that. Prepare for a level above what you're applying to.

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00:50:58.090 --> 00:51:05.339

Andrew Abela: This can help you get the mark right on key leadership competencies, things like that, so that you're telling your story with the right framing.

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00:51:06.540 --> 00:51:16.359

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic. Andrew, I'm actually gonna come back to you, and we're coming into the last, sort of, 5 minutes, so we're gonna try and get through as many questions. Let's do some rapid-fire ones.

251

00:51:16.390 --> 00:51:30.560

Jessica van Onselen: We've got a question here, which I think is on a lot of people's minds as well, which is that in the civil service, and this is as true in Rwanda as it is in Canada, as it is in the UK, it often feels like, or can appear, that the order of succession is almost already set.

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00:51:30.600 --> 00:51:37.239

Jessica van Onselen: How can one cut across this formidable structure if you think you have something to contribute? Andrew, what have you learned about that?

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00:51:38.880 --> 00:51:53.210

Andrew Abela: I think that every good leader is... and I'm talking about manager, I'm talking about director, or people on the team that are senior analysts versus junior analysts. Everyone that is very strong is constantly thinking about their succession plan.

254

00:51:53.650 --> 00:52:05.059

Andrew Abela: If they are facing an opportunity, they might leave on very short notice, and something that they will be asked to do is, who would you recommend to take your place on the short term, for example, maybe even the longer term?

255

00:52:05.060 --> 00:52:18.589

Andrew Abela: So making it known that you're interested is a good way to do that. Being the first person in line for succession is great. I think making your intentions known is one part of that, but also showing your,

256

00:52:18.590 --> 00:52:25.040

Andrew Abela: Ability to deliver at that level, and your readiness is very important, using all the tips we've shared already.

257

00:52:25.040 --> 00:52:47.609

Andrew Abela: And I think the other thing is, like, also admitting sometimes when you're on a team with a lot of good people. This was the case for me, when I was at the central agencies five years ago. I was with this, like, amazing scientists, researchers, and government of Canada, all super good and equally strong, and I kind of was thinking, like, okay, I can stay here and stay the level I am, or maybe go somewhere else, and maybe more opportunities would happen.

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00:52:47.610 --> 00:52:52.690

Andrew Abela: So being willing to move and to different places and get exposure to different

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00:52:52.690 --> 00:53:02.979

Andrew Abela: ladders or different opportunities is just going to be so beneficial to you. So being flexible and open to new things, as opposed to constantly trying to climb up the escalator of where you're at.

260

00:53:06.770 --> 00:53:15.539

Jessica van Onselen: I myself am muted now, trying to talk into the ether there. Alright, I'm gonna try and quickly fit in two more questions, one for, Afshin and one for Shibana.

261

00:53:15.540 --> 00:53:27.420

Jessica van Onselen: So, Afshin, I've got a question here. How can I develop a master copy of my skills and experience so I have it available on hand to tailor whenever I apply for jobs? What tips do you have for that?

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00:53:28.660 --> 00:53:51.890

Afsheen Iftikhar: I think nothing is a master copy of yourself alone, because the job we are applying for, the master copy should be according to that job, and that is the right alignment we have been talking about a lot. And so, it's important that, okay, we have our accomplishments mentioned, we have one handy AI-generated or very, very well-wet

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00:53:52.030 --> 00:54:08.529

Afsheen Iftikhar: copy ready, but always tweak that according to the job you are applying at, or organizational you are applying for. Because if you are not making the changes, and it looks like a generic cover letter, it will not be getting you anywhere.

264

00:54:10.300 --> 00:54:35.229

Jessica van Onselen: Great. And Shabana, final question here. So let's just say you are actually applying for a promotion in another department. When should I let my manager know, your line manager know? Can you... this person asks, can I still lean on her to prepare for the role? What if I don't get it and have to stay in the current one? So, how do we navigate the politics of, I want a promotion, but do I draw on my manager for support?

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00:54:35.230 --> 00:54:37.890

Jessica van Onselen: Or is that inappropriate? Any tips, Shivana?

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00:54:38.490 --> 00:54:46.799

Shabana Ansari: I think it's also... this also depends, Jessica, on, you know, what kind of relationship we have with our managers, right? I mean, you know,

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00:54:46.800 --> 00:55:00.740

Shabana Ansari: I mean, we always want to keep it professional and pleasant, but, you know, the reality sometimes is that there might be managers who are not supportive of your growth. So I... what I generally do is, you know, if I'm in a situation where I feel supported.

268

00:55:00.740 --> 00:55:11.429

Shabana Ansari: I tell my manager right from the beginning that I am exploring opportunities, also because I want them to know that I'm ready and willing to take on more opportunities.

269

00:55:11.430 --> 00:55:23.480

Shabana Ansari: And, this also helps me find something if it exists within my own team. So keeping my manager informed right from the beginning, if I have a healthy relationship with them, is my go-to.

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00:55:23.550 --> 00:55:30.710

Shabana Ansari: If I am in a situation where it's toxic, and I know that there will not be support, I would not tell them

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00:55:31.230 --> 00:55:38.380

Shabana Ansari: It would depend on my comfort with them. Like, if I feel that they're not supportive of my growth, I will not tell them.

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00:55:38.670 --> 00:55:49.060

Shabana Ansari: But there is a point where you have to tell them, because in the... at least in the Canadian Public Service, you need a reference from your current manager to move on to a new job. So, I mean.

273

00:55:49.150 --> 00:56:03.389

Shabana Ansari: the thing that I do for myself is I always keep it pleasant, and the line of communication open, so that when I need to grow, or move, or step out, I have that bridge already created, and then, you know, they can support my growth.

274

00:56:04.810 --> 00:56:29.389

Jessica van Onselen: And maybe something to think about, Anonymous, as well, is preparing a couple of lines on what sort of growth and opportunities you're seeking, right? And to frame that in terms of your own positive development, so that it doesn't sound like a negative conversation with your manager, but maybe one that's about growth, and can help them understand your reasons for seeking that. We've got so many questions, I am just... I wish we had many hours to just

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00:56:29.390 --> 00:56:37.509

Jessica van Onselen: spend together, especially hearing all this wisdom from our incredible speakers, but I'm afraid we are approaching the end of our session. We have had some incredible

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00:56:37.510 --> 00:56:51.109

Jessica van Onselen: wisdom from all of you, and I'd like to ask all of you on the call to just join me in giving Shabana, Afshin, and Andrew a virtual round of applause. And most importantly, thanks to all of you, the attendees, you are investing in your learning and being so engaged in the topic.

277

00:56:51.110 --> 00:57:05.130

Jessica van Onselen: The team is going to put up a quick final poll to find out how you felt about today, and that helps us to continue improving our content. We won't share the results, it's completely private, but we really appreciate your responses, because that helps us get better at what we do.

278

00:57:05.130 --> 00:57:13.680

Jessica van Onselen: Before we go, and while you're responding to that poll, I want to share a few events that you can register to join us again soon, and I do hope you will join us again soon.

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00:57:13.680 --> 00:57:28.699

Jessica van Onselen: If you're not available to join live, remember that you can always register for the event, in order to get the... send the recording to catch up later at a time that suits you, especially true for our colleagues in Australia, Asia, and, New Zealand. So, coming up, we have...

280

00:57:28.740 --> 00:57:36.700

Jessica van Onselen: Hacks for Working with Gemini, that's next Wednesday, where experts will teach you practical tips to work more efficiently with Gemini AI.

281

00:57:36.820 --> 00:57:52.619

Jessica van Onselen: Then we have Stakeholder Management 101, next Thursday. That's being moderated by the exceptional Corey Zarek. If you don't know who Corey Zarek is, you should definitely Google her, to help you master the stakeholder management process within complex public sector organizations.

282

00:57:52.620 --> 00:58:15.699

Jessica van Onselen: And related to today's topic of career progression, we have AI for job applications. I saw some conversation about AI use in job applications in the chat. We actually have a whole session on it, and that's at the end of January, and it's part of our AI Skills Lab series, so just do not miss that. We will be talking specifically about how you can use AI to strengthen your job application. Okay.

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00:58:15.700 --> 00:58:29.600

Jessica van Onselen: That is all we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful, and we want to say a huge thank you to our incredible speakers. Really, thank you to the three of you, you've just been extraordinary. To everyone who's made today happen, and to you for taking time out of your busy days.

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00:58:29.600 --> 00:58:38.219

Jessica van Onselen: Keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, and we hope to see you at another apolitical event soon. Have a great day.

285

00:58:38.240 --> 00:58:40.360

Jessica van Onselen: Goodbye, everyone! Bye-bye-bye!

286

00:58:40.360 --> 00:58:42.640

Afsheen Iftikhar: Hello, Jessica. Thank you, everyone.