



Stretch Assignments as an Opportunity to Advance Your Career

Career Planning for Employees

What is a stretch assignment?

A stretch assignment is a project or task that is currently beyond your level of knowledge or skill. Such assignments serve to “stretch” you developmentally by placing you in a challenging position in order to learn and grow.

Why take on stretch assignments?

- Generate an opportunity to learn and develop
- Show managers that you have initiative and are ready to take on more responsibility
- Initiate advancement within your current organization rather than feeling the need to switch jobs

How do you get a stretch assignment?

Are there areas of your organization where you have noticed inefficiencies? Does your manager seem overwhelmed with a certain task or the number of tasks he/she has been assigned? You have the opportunity to create your own stretch assignment within either of these situations. Talk to your manager about a project you have identified and offer a solution.

Examples of stretch assignments:

- Managing a volunteer or intern
- Implementing a new or significant project
- Participating in the strategic planning process
- Organizing and leading an event or meeting
- Taking on and turning around a failing project

Tips about stretch assignments:

1. Stretch in the right direction. Make certain that your stretch aligns with your current job responsibilities and/or future career goals.
2. Take the time to plan your stretch. Stretch assignments can be time intensive and energy consuming.
3. Don't be afraid to include others in your stretch assignment. This will offer you a leadership opportunity by allowing you to delegate tasks and coordinate assignments with coworkers. Teaming up with coworkers, or possibly a mentor, can also cause the endeavor to seem less daunting. Stretch assignments are challenging, so don't be afraid to ask for help.
4. Cross organizational boundaries. Stretch assignments are often most effective when they include working with individuals from another area of the organization.

Resources and Links

[Position Yourself for a Stretch Assignment](#)