

# I WANT TO BE PROMOTED, ALREADY!

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Hey there, friends. Welcome back to The Career Reset podcast. I'm your host, Mel Savage, and I'm here to help you love the career you already have and be amazing at it. Whatever it takes, my friends, whatever it takes.

Today, we are talking about getting promoted. Our favorite topic—getting promoted. So many clients want this. I wanted this throughout my whole career. And if you know anything about me, you know I started in the mailroom at a small advertising agency and then worked my way up to senior management at McDonald's. So I have been promoted a lot. I've missed a lot of promotions along the way. I've blown it so many times. Done that, been there.

Today's for you if basically, you feel like you deserve a promotion, and you're not getting it. We're going to talk a lot about that mindset today and what you need to do. But it's also for people who are like, *I want to be promoted in a year or 18 months, or whatever. And I want to put my plan together to make that happen.* So even though a lot of the mindset stuff I'm going to talk about today is going to be geared towards people who are in that *woe is me sort of mindset*, the tools I'm going to share today, the ideas I'm going to share today are going to help you whether or not you're being proactive, or you're being reactive to your situation.

Being promoted is always a good goal. Why not? Why not have it as a goal? I think it's a great goal. You should do it, especially if you want to get ahead. Go after it. When I ask people what they think they need to do to be promoted, it usually revolves around being really great at their job, which is a good strategy. But if that's only one strategy, it's like doing your job well within the parameters of what your job description is, or over and above, or whatever is one of many strategies that you can employ to get promoted.

I recommend multiple strategies for getting promoted. So it's about a lot more than just doing your job well and, frankly, you want to make sure that you actually are doing your job well. How are you measuring that? Is it just your opinion that you have? Are you sure that you are doing your job well? What's factoring into that decision? How are you measuring that? These are important things to know. Who said? It's important what you think. What you think about your performance and you as a person is the most important thing.

When you're getting promoted, it's like being elected or something. You need to make sure to help and influence what other people are thinking, too. That's just the way it is. That's just the way it is, my friend. You're not going to get promoted just based on what you think about yourself. I wish that was the case because I would be running

the world right now for sure. That's for sure. I know it would be an awesome world full of empowered women doing awesome things, for sure. But it's about more than what I think or what you think.

So one of your goals needs to be to make it so that promoting you is a no-brainer, basically for all the decision-makers. You want to make it so that when they're sitting around the table, or on a Zoom call, or whatever it is, having a talent management discussion, your name comes up, you want everyone to be like, *Oh, yeah, for sure. No question. She should be promoted. Absolutely, that should happen. Next topic. Absolutely.*

We're going to talk today about going through a method I call the AIM method. I made this up. AIM method to being promoted. AIM stands for Assess Incrementalize and Market. It's not brain surgery. I made a nice little acronym out of it so that you can remember it. AIM - Assess Incrementalize and Market. But these are the things that you need to do for any type of business plan, any type of goal that you're going after, and if you need the plan. If you want to get promoted faster, if you want to achieve any goal faster, easier, with a lot less drama, I talked about this all the time, you need to have a plan around it.

The method I want to teach you is the AIM method, Assess Incrementalize and Market. The key thing I want you to take away from all of this is that you are the one driving the bus on this. A lot of the time, people think, *I'm just going to do my job. Fingers crossed someone's going to notice, and then they're going to promote me. I'm going to tell somebody that I want to be promoted. And then my work is done. I'm doing my work, and I want them to know I'm promoted. I don't have to do anything else.* Then you just sit back and wait for the promotion to take place.

You need to be more in the driver's seat than that. It's like when you're driving somewhere, and you've got the kids in the backseat, and they're like, *Are we there yet? Are you there yet? Are we there yet?* That's kind of what you're doing when you're just thinking, *Well, I got in the car. I'm doing my job, I got in the car. I told you I want to be promoted. Why isn't it happening? Why isn't it happening? What's the promotion? When's the promotion?* That's annoying. You need to know. You need to actually be the one in the driver's seat. And that's what the AIM process is all about.

I want you to not be waiting around. I want you to be doing your work to influence the decision. And by influencing the decision, I do not mean ultimatums. I'm not a big fan of ultimatums. Like, *If you don't promote me, then I'm going to have to start looking for a job.* I don't love that. You can do it if you want. I'm just saying that's not the first course of action I would take. I don't even believe in that course of action. You either decide you want to be there and you go for it, or you decide you want to leave and you leave.

Blackmail, ultimatums, you call them whatever you want, it's just not something that I think is effective. If you believe in yourself, and you believe in a decision that you make, put all your energy there. That's what I would say about that situation. So the focus today is to really help you go from someone who either is feeling undervalued, isn't getting ahead, maybe you're getting yanked around a bit, maybe they're not fulfilling their promises, and you're blaming them like you're sort of letting this whole situation happen to you, you might be that person or you might be someone who's like, *I want to get promoted. I just don't know how to go about doing it.*

If you're either of those people, that's great because what's going to happen as we go through this, is I want you to be someone who takes matters into your own hands, sets the goal, and then keeps taking action on that goal until you get promoted no matter what it takes. You're going to keep doing the stuff and not take it personally.

Thank you pandemic for making me watch all these movies. I do waste a lot of my life in movies, but I don't consider it a waste. I do love watching movies, but I watched *The Devil Wears Prada* again. I'm just amazed. I love Meryl Streep. I love Stanley Tucci. Anne Hathaway, I think she's meh. But that's just my opinion. There's this whole transformation scene in that movie, where I think the character's name is Andy and she's blaming everyone else for why her job is hard. She's saying things like, *I'm killing myself. I'm working really hard but nobody's noticing. What does she want from me?* All this kind of stuff.

Then Stanley Tucci comes in, and basically gives her head a shake and says, *Look, are you sure you're doing everything you can do? Maybe if you stop whining for a second and understood the needs of your audience, versus having your head up your own ass*, obviously, I'm paraphrasing here, *then you could make it work*. And then she goes and takes that typical *this is where I think the movie falls apart for me a little bit*, where obviously she has to become beautiful and fulfill all those little things so that she could actually be doing her job.

I know it's a fashion magazine, but I have these *Cinderella* moments that just bugged me a little bit, but that's my own thing. Anyway, I love the whole part where Stanley Tucci is like, *Stop it. Stop whining. Start figuring it out*. And that's where she figures it out. That for me is the best part about that movie, in this case. That's what I want you to do. I want you to figure it out. We're going to assess, incrementalize, and market.

Assess. I'm sure you've written a plan before for anything. I don't even care if it's like a dinner party. You have a plan, you assess the situation. I want you to do that work. You're going to assess the situation. What is the true situation that you're dealing with? Or what do you believe is the true situation that you're dealing with? What are the reasons? Now, you might be being fed a bunch of reasons that you don't really understand or you choose to think are bullshit. That's entirely up to you.

But understand those reasons. You need to go talk to some people. Go talk to those people. Maybe it's your boss, maybe it's some other stakeholders in the organization, maybe you want to do your own self-assessment and just do check-ins with people. Like, *Tell me what I could be doing better to help you?* Have conversations with people, whether it's your reports, your peers, your boss, your indirect bosses, if you will, leaders of other departments, or indirect stakeholders, that sort of thing.

Who would you like to say the 10 people who would give you the best perspective on this what you really need to do? Where is the situation? That's about your skill set. It could be your skill set. Maybe you need to have better relationships with certain people. You don't have the relationships. There are key decision making stakeholders that don't know who you are, who haven't seen you in action. They need to see you in action. That's getting purposeful. It's not just about doing your job, it's making sure the right people see you doing your job, not in a shady way or anything.

But let's say, there is like stakeholder who needs to see you do your work, but they don't even know you. Their decision may be, *I don't know. I've never seen her do her work. I don't know what kind of work she does*. If that's a problem, then talk to your boss about taking on some projects where you're going to be exposed to that person. Have a conversation with that person. What are they looking for? What do they want to see from you? I'm not saying do everything everybody wants you to do. But you need to assess the situation first so that you can have a clearer picture of what your audience needs are from you.

What is it that they're they're missing from you right now, or they're seeing in you right now that they need to see something different, whatever that is? Just be honest with yourself. Don't take it personally. You're just assessing. This is like if you were doing research on a project of some kind. You would just assess. It would be indifferent. There would be neutral emotions around it.

Now, there are other problems that come up. Maybe there's a money problem, meaning the company doesn't have enough money to promote you. You can decide what you want to do with that information. That might be a decision. If money is really important to you, then maybe you do need to leave that organization. Or maybe there's something else that can happen. Maybe there's some other compensation structure, maybe there's a delayed compensation structure. But you have to really know what the problem is and how you feel about that problem. Get a really good picture of that.

Maybe sometimes, the situation is you just have a boss who's kind of weak, who doesn't sell you, who doesn't build your profile, whatever it is. Assess and understand. Now, be careful. I'm not saying blame your boss for why you're not getting promoted. Again, you need to be dispassionate about this. But if the case is you're finding out that people just don't know who you are because your boss hasn't done that work on your behalf, then you need to build those relationships. You should be doing that, anyway, frankly.

Maybe you need to have some work to do. Don't try to change your boss. Take matters into your own hands. You need to assess the situation. That's the first thing. Getting a really good picture of what the true problem is always the first step. Having a dinner party, how many people are coming? What night is it? What do people want to eat? Why are we getting together? What's the expectation for this thing? You're assessing the needs of the situation. That's what you got to do here.

It might take a little while. Maybe it'll take a few weeks to really get through this. Then once you have it all at the end of the assessment situation, you decide what your conclusions are before you move on to incrementalize. What are the conclusions? *I need to get better at ABC skills. I need to build relationships with these three people. I need to decide what monetary compensation looks like for me.* Whatever it is, you need to make some conclusions on what it is that's getting in your way, even if you don't agree with it.

If you talk to 10 people and the 10 people are telling you that you need to be a less controlling manager and you're going to be sitting there going, *I'm not controlling, I'm not*, that's not going to help you. Figure out what they mean by that, and start tackling it. So the conclusion is, you do the assessment, you make the conclusions. That's sort of commonplace to start for anything.

Step two is *Incrementalize*. So you have assessed the situation, and you've come to some conclusions, and ultimately, at the end of that, you're going to set a goal. I called it setting conclusions and setting a goal. When I work with people in my advanced career planning one-on-one program, we start with a goal. What is it that you want to achieve? Always, what do you want to achieve? Then we assess the situation and understand what's in the way of us reaching that goal.

So your goal here is to be promoted. You assess the situation between where you are now and your getting to that goal and what you need to do. Then from that, you've drawn some conclusions. Now you want to incrementalize. So you have this list of obstacles that are in your way of getting promoted. Let's say, some of them are skillset issues. The goal here is to get better a little bit at a time and make sure people notice, or people

are bought into first. You want to get better a little bit at a time, and then make sure people are bought into your plan for how you're going to get better.

Let me give you an example. Let's say, you are a controlling manager. You're very dictatorial with your team, and it comes across by solving the problems for them and how you speak to them. Maybe you're impatient with them. There are all these different things. And what you've realized is that is what's holding you back from being promoted. The first thing you want to do is set what success looks like. What do you as an inspiring leader look like? What are you doing? Make a list of all the things. How do you behave?

Take a look at all the different kinds of situations that you might face that you're facing today as a manager of people. How do you want to handle those situations? You need to assess what success looks like. What I always say to people is, you create that 10 out of 10 vision for yourself. Then be really honest. How do you rate yourself now? Are you a three out of 10? Are you a five out of 10? How far away are you from this 10 out of 10 version of you as an inspiring leader, in this case?

Let's say, for argument's sake, you think you're a four out of 10. Depending on how you do this, you can get people's input on what success looks like, especially your boss. What does success look like and input to that look like? You can assess yourself. You could ask your boss to assess you and it doesn't have to be a detailed assessment. It can be like, *On a scale of one to 10, how close do you think I am to this number? Let's be honest.*

Here's the thing. Here's the challenge of what happens in organizations. Once that ideal 10 out of 10 vision has been set, all of a sudden, they don't need to do this. But everyone thinks you need to start acting this way. *I just told you yesterday that you're being controlling, and today, you're still controlling, why haven't you fixed it yet?* And if you ask your boss, you're like, *No, I don't expect you to fix it in a day.* But they kind of do. They kind of do not consciously, maybe, but they sort of kind of do.

Let's say, an inspirational leader never solves problems for their team. They're always helping their team solve their own problems by being patient, asking questions, letting their team work through it, and not panicking. You have this vision for what problem-solving looks like with one of your team members, versus what you're doing now, which is, *Do ABC and fix it fast. Oh my god, how did you let this happen?* No, you're not going to be that person anymore. You're going to be the other person that is like, *Tell me what's going on. Tell me the problem. What's your objective? Tell me what do you think you should do about it? Why are you confused about it? what Let's just brainstorm. Have you thought about this?*

You're basically helping them get to their own answers. That's what you want to be, let's say. But on day one of this plan, you are not going to behave that way. I guarantee you, you're not going to be a 10 out of 10 on day one. But if you are, let's say, you've graded yourself as a four out of 10 right now, what does the five out of 10 look like? Because you're not going to go from four to 10. It's just not going to happen. You're going to go through 5-6-7-8-9 whether you let yourself know that or not. But you want to incrementalize your improvement. That's where incrementalize comes in.

You're going to say, *I know what a 10 out of 10 looks like. I know what a four out of 10 looks like. What does a five out of 10 look like?* Decide what that looks like. Get agreement from your stakeholders. If it's just your boss that

needs to see you doing that, then say, *Boss, I know I need to get to 10 out of 10. I'm going to focus on being a five out of 10. For the next three weeks, I'm going to focus on five out of 10. This is what I'm going to be trying to do.*

Now, all of a sudden, your boss isn't looking for you to be 10 out of 10. Tomorrow, they're looking for you to be five out of 10. They're clear and they understand that. That's the same thing. You can actually set that tone if you have another critical stakeholder, or you're working on a relationship and you have set how you want to show up for that relationship, whether it's a peer or a report or something, you can still do that. You can work with the other person to let them know how you intend to behave.

Otherwise, every time you blow it, every time you're not at a 10 out of 10, people are going to say, *See, they're not getting any better.* They're going to be focused on when you blow it versus focused on when you're trying. You want them to not only buy into your incrementalized approach to solving the issue. But number three, which is to market, you want to get them to notice.

Step one, you're assessing the situation. Step two, you're developing an incrementalized plan for yourself to solve the obstacles. So you have this list of obstacles and conclusions. You're going to take each one of those. You're going to set an ideal state. You're going to assess yourself where you are right now. Then you're going to build an incrementalized plan and you're going to get a buy-in from whoever needs to be bought into your incrementalized plan.

So you're setting expectations with your audience. Because you need to manage the organization. That's how you manage the organization for anything. Let's say, you have a project that you're working on. You've done your situation assessment, and then you say, *Here's our ultimate objective. Here's where we're starting.* You have status meetings, you tell them where you are, and you manage your boss's expectations along the way. You do this all the time, anyway. You're just going to be doing it for your own development now.

Not only do you need to do this for yourself, but also one of the things that a lot of people need to work on aren't necessarily actions or relationships, they're mindset issues. One of the things I struggle with so much is my self-confidence. I always go to what was wrong with me. I would beat the shit out of myself every time I failed. I wouldn't do things because I was afraid to fail. Everything needed to be perfect all the time. It wasn't really all the time but I had perfectionist tendencies. I had people-pleasing tendencies. I had a fear of failure tendencies that was kind of my go-to place.

I needed to recognize that. I still have those tendencies stumped on time, especially around perfectionism. I've worked through a lot of my stuff around self-confidence. I still have a ways to go. I'd say, I'm a seven out of 10, whereas I used to be a one out of 10. Fear of failure is not really an issue for me as much anymore. But those are things to work on. You have to find a plan to work on them. So I got a coach who really helped me because I wasn't able to work through my mindset drama on my own.

But if that's something that's in your way, it's something that you need to say, *So that's an obstacle, how do I solve it?* And it really just depends on the intensity of the problem, how chronic it is, how long it's been showing up, and that sort of thing. I have to say this, and I say this all the time, but I wish I had gotten coaching 10 years earlier than I did. If you're someone who's not sure you need a coach, you could figure it out on your own, or if you think

of mentors enough, please just look into it. Look into it. Talk to some coaches. Most coaches have free sessions so you can get to know them. I have one, too.

But if you have mindset issues holding you back, the investment in getting coaching is huge. It can really help you get past those things. So figure out what it is. Build a plan. Incrementalize your improvement. Get people bought in along the way. You can do that with coaching, too. My clients and I agree on what they want to work on. They check in with their boss like, *This is what I'm working on right now*. It's just like anything else.

I have to tell you, as you do this, one of the things that I hear so much from my clients is their bosses love it. Their bosses love it because it really helps their boss get involved and help them grow while the employee is doing all the work, which is great for the boss, and they love it. They love to be able to be involved in this way. And they know exactly what they need to look for.

That brings me to number three, which is *Market*. There are all these decision makers, including your boss, who are going to be involved in this decision to promote you. For some companies, depending on how small, it's just your boss. For bigger companies, like McDonald's, there's a table full of people who have to agree. So you have to figure out what your situation is. And then you need to market yourself.

For instance, when you're doing the incrementalizing work, one of the things I always say to people is to ask for your boss's help. Tell your boss that *This is what I'm working on. I want you to notice every time I'm doing it right and point it out to me so that I know my boss thinks this is where I need to be*. Not only is that going to help you get in your boss's head more, but it's going to get your boss looking at what's working with you. And you don't have to just do that with your boss.

If you have someone else, a key stakeholder you're building a relationship with, or a peer with whom you want to show up, get your peer to notice, and get your stakeholders to notice. If you have a critic, for instance, sometimes there's a critic stakeholder who just does not love your style for whatever reason. And they're just going to get in the way. They're going to be that hurdle, or an obstacle, or a roadblock, in some cases, for you to get to the promotion that you want to do. Sit down, have a meeting with that critic, listen your face off, and do not defend.

Listen your face off, hear what they have to say, understand why, and come back with the recommendation and an incrementalized recommendation based on what you believe you want to do. Just because they don't like things about you doesn't mean that you have to change everything about yourself. So you can listen to them though and say, *Here's what you said. Here's what I want to work on. And here's how you can help me. Will you help me?* And they might, especially if they're a senior stakeholder in the company, their job is to help people grow.

They're going to have a hard time saying they're not going to help you. Meaning they're not going to help you notice when you're doing, that sort of thing. So you want to work that in the organization to get people to notice what you're doing. But I want you to use all the touchpoints, not just ask people to notice you. What are your touchpoints, meetings where you're presenting, when you're speaking, informal discussions, how you present your style and organization, and how you say things?

Leverage everything, leverage every meeting, every moment that you're in with these people to demonstrate that you are incrementalizing your improvement to be hitting your goals. I think it's really important that you use all those touchpoints. And I would still say, depending on where you are, I would still keep my options open. I always

have my resume ready, and start networking, whatever that looks like. Whether it's online networking, or just going to LinkedIn.

If you went into LinkedIn, let's just say, half an hour a week, and your focus on LinkedIn was just to comment on other people's posts in the areas where you're working on. You want to be known for certain things. You want people to know who you are. You want to go after certain kinds of jobs. Find those people who make those decisions or work in those places you want to work, comment on their posts, and get them to know you. Get them to know what you believe about stuff like what kind of leader you are and what you believe in. Build rapport. You can do all those things, while you're also still doing the things that you want to do in the company that you're in.

If you're 100% all in on just getting promoted where you work right now, then just focus on that, for sure. I'm not saying split your focus. I'm saying, if you think, *I'm going to try this, but my next step is going to be looking for another job*, then maybe you want to start to diversify a little bit. But that's entirely up to you. I'm not telling you one way is better than the other. My go-to position is focus. Do one thing at a time. But sometimes, you have to work on a couple of strategies at the same time. I get that. It's the real world. I get it. So keep your options open.

First of all, the benefit of doing all of this is that you are taking control. You are driving the bus on your promotion. You're not leaving it up to *I'm doing the best I can. Can you guys go decide?* You're not. You're saying, *I am going to get active and make this happen. I'm going to get active and solve the problems on this just like I solve problems on everything else.* You're driving the bus and you're creating options for yourself. Most of the time this works.

Sometimes you have to take a secondary option like finding another job, whatever it is. Either way, it is very rewarding to do this work because the worst thing that can happen is you get better at a bunch of stuff and find a job somewhere else. That's the worst thing. You're going to get better at all this stuff faster, you're going to work on your mindset stuff, you're going to work on your skill set, you're going to build stronger relationships. There's no downside to all of this. That's the best part about this.

When you're doing this, you appreciate yourself so much more. When you feel in control, you do your best work, you appreciate yourself, you're focused on what's working, and you love the career you have. Of course, you do because that's what this is about. We hate our jobs when we feel out of control. We think our jobs are happening to us. You are at the effect of what's happening to you in your work, that is a very powerful place to be. You're going to love your job more.

Then of course, when you love your job more, you're doing better work. It's a big cycle, I love it. So really focus on taking control of the entire promotional process, just like you're doing a project for anything else at work. You are the project. Assess the situation. It's not just skillsets. It's relationships, it's money, it's whatever. Assess all of the things that are getting in your way. Draw some conclusions on what it is that you need to work on. And that could be skills, it could be relationships, it could be mindset, it could be exposure issues, and it could be a bunch of different things.

What are those things? How are you incrementalizing your improvement versus what you think success looks like? Then make sure that people know and are with you as you are incrementalizing. You're setting the expectation of what your incrementalized improvement looks like. And you're constantly checking in and you're getting people to notice, and you are using every touchpoint at your disposal. And you're laser-focused on getting



that promotion. You're using your day job, essentially, as leverage points to do all the things that you need to do on your promotional plan. I love it. I love it, this is so good.

One last thing I'm going to say to you. Remember, this is business, not personal. I know it's so hard. I say that. It's not always easy for me to even believe that. But it doesn't mean that I don't try to constantly remind myself that these decisions aren't personal, they're business decisions Just like if you leave a company, it's not personal. It's business. You're doing the right thing for you. For whatever reason, you do all this work and they don't promote, don't take it personally. Just do what you need to do for yourself. That's kind of the big benefit, I always say of having a career plan.

One of the first things I work on with people who come one-on-one with me is to ask them what's the plan, not just for their overall career, but what we're working on. When you have a plan and you have boxes to tick, it becomes very dispassionate. *I'm ticking these boxes. And when these boxes don't get ticked at this company any more, I'm going to go find another place to tick some boxes.* Because this is all about you. It's not about anyone else. It's about achieving the most for you.

That's what I have for you this week, my friends. I hope you're having a great day and I will talk to you next week. Bye for now.

