

This chart shows the 6 stages of career growth. Where are you now?

[cnbc.com/2021/09/21/the-6-stages-of-career-growth-and-how-to-tell-where-you-are.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2021/09/21/the-6-stages-of-career-growth-and-how-to-tell-where-you-are.html)

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Different people are destined to different career paths. But ideally, over time, you will take on bigger assignments and more responsibilities that will help you get to where you want.

As a CEO of more than 15 years, I've helped hundreds of people navigate their professional journey. My best advice is to seek out jobs and opportunities that will help you develop and demonstrate capabilities, particularly in four key areas:

1. Having a growth mindset
2. Dealing with ambiguity
3. Handling change
4. Working at a faster pace

The 6 stages of career growth

While not all career paths are the same, there is a master plan that governs just about any journey — and that plan is defined by six stages:

1. Follower

Typically, this is associated with your first job or internship out of college. As a follower, you are action-oriented and task-focused as you carry out what others tell you to do. You will never lead if you don't know how to follow someone!

2. Collaborator

Soon, you'll begin to work closely with others. You're still operating from your technical skill set, but you will develop valuable people skills through collaboration with peers on your team.

3. Instructor

As a first-time team leader, you're tapping your people skills when you give instructions to your team, which may comprise of several people or just one person.

The key here is whether you effectively instruct people on what needs to be done, instead of being the one to do it. Jobs that will help you progress at this level include:

- **Staff leadership:** At this level, you have the responsibility, but not the authority. Typical examples include planning projects, installing new systems, troubleshooting problems, negotiating with outside parties and working in a group.
- **Staff to line shifts:** This involves moving to a job with an easily determined bottom line or result, managing bigger scope and/or scale, demonstrating new skills or perspectives and taking on unfamiliar aspects of your assignments.

4. Manager

Your skill set builds as you manage larger teams with bigger goals and objectives. You will need to motivate direct reports and learn how to manage them by giving objectives and goals, as well as the means to pursue and achieve them.

For example, you may be in a "change manager" role — managing a significant effort to change or implement something of significance, such as total-work systems, business restructuring, new systems and procedures, or responses to major competitor initiatives.

5. Influencer

Now things get interesting! This stage is a transition away from directly managing a team to influencing people.

Influence is a key leadership skill that you need to develop in order to work well with people across the organization, especially with those who do not report to you.

In fact, you could be influencing people in other departments who are at your level, or even a level above you.

6. Leader

In this final stage, you spend much of your time empowering and inspiring others. Instead of telling them what to do, you tell them what to think about.

Your biggest priority is to motivate people so that they can do and become more than even they thought possible.

A pathway of possibilities

This journey isn't exactly a ladder, one job to the next. Rather, you'll travel through various stages of development, spending more time in some than others.

You may have one or two jobs in one stage, for example, and several jobs in another. You may traverse all six stages, or stop at some intermediate point. It's up to you.

But understanding these stages of growth can help you keep track of where you've been, where you are, where you're going, and where you ultimately want to end up.

Gary Burnison is a best-selling author and the CEO of Korn Ferry, the world's largest global organizational consulting firm. His books include "Leadership U: Accelerating through the Crisis Curve," "Advance: The Ultimate How-to Guide for your Career," and "Lose the Resume, Land the Job." Follow Gary on LinkedIn.

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