

How to Expand Your Job

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If your current job isn't all it's cracked up to be, but you love the place and your coworker camaraderie, why not think about expanding or growing your existing role instead of moving on? While job descriptions can sometimes feel like a strait jacket, they don't need to be and provided you're **bold** and confident, with some strategic thinking you can turn your job into something a bit more exciting, dynamic, and suited to your evolving skill set.

Part
1

Part 1 of 5: Thinking About Boundaries



1 Think about the limitations on expanding your role first. This is important because you don't want to overstep boundaries and barge in on other people's roles. Trying to wrestle away tasks already done perfectly well by other colleagues won't win you any fans, so think through your expansion strategy with care.^[1] Some things to consider include:

- Choosing to expand into tasks the company or organization needs but are currently not being fulfilled by anyone;
- Checking that the company or organization hasn't already decided to recruit someone to attend to the issues you've identified as needing doing;
- Discerning between tasks that would truly be of benefit to increase work productivity and outcomes and tasks that, while they would be great if more resources and time existed, the workplace can still thrive without.



2 Think about your own boundaries. Do you have time to involve yourself in additional activities and a bigger role? Will your current tasks suffer if you try to take on more work or will they benefit and go more smoothly as a result of adding in new work? Perhaps your tasks are already on the wane due to technological or staff changes and your existing tasks might be better left behind and replaced with new tasks. This is something you need to think through with care. Also, identify your strengths—are you well placed to take on new tasks as a result of your existing skills and personality traits?[2]

- Be careful not to over-extend yourself. It is great to have ambition and be ready to tackle new tasks but not if they come at the price of eating into your personal time or require you to stay longer at work without being compensated for it. If you think that this might be needed initially to prove that your ideas work, be sure to set a deadline on such a trial, in case the workplace gets used to you doing too much without having to compensate you.



3 Look around at existing change opportunities. It might be wise to see what existing possibilities for change are on offer before forging your own trail. Is there a new project occurring that would allow you to sign on as part of your usual work role? If so, this could provide a great opportunity to expand your current role without you having to do all the groundwork.^[3] This can be really fruitful if the project is outside your usual work area.^[4]

Part 2 of 5: Identifying What the Workplace Needs



1

Look for unfulfilled gaps when seeking to expand your role.

This refers to the unsolved problems hanging about your workplace and the opportunities.

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1 Look for unfulfilled gaps when seeking to expand your role. This refers to the unsolved problems hanging about your workplace and the opportunities;^[2] there are bound to be some of each arising out of meetings, discussions and everyday experiences on-the-job. If you can see solutions to current problems in how things get done at work and nobody else is paying them much attention, they are there for the taking. Spend a little of your time taking these under your wing and brainstorm ideas for fixing them relying on your own strengths and skills.^[5]

- Consider talking to coworkers and your supervisor about what they think might help the workplace run better in terms of someone doing specific tasks.
- Depending on where you work and what your skills are, areas that might prove fruitful to expand into include: Client relations, office management systems, social media outreach, database improvements, purchasing, updating documentation/styles/approaches, etc.



2

Note the opportunities as they arise.

If you have a gift for noticing how things could be done better, more clearly, faster, etc., note them down as they occur to you.

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2 Note the opportunities as they arise. If you have a gift for noticing how things could be done better, more clearly, faster, etc., note them down as they occur to you. This allows you to come back at an appropriate time later and work through them when you can. Learning [how to define a problem](#), then implementing a solution, is a natural part of self development at work and will help you to demonstrate initiative, enthusiasm and an understanding of your organization's needs.

- Know the mission, principles and values of your organization inside out. It is vital to stay connected to the purpose and intended direction of your organization when aiming to self implement improvements; you are seeking to add value, not reroute what your organization does.^[6]

Part 3 of 5: Assessing the Value of Your Proposed Solutions



1 **Ensure that the gap problems you've identified are worth solving, doing or spending time on.** It will harm your career or trade trajectory if you're not doing your job properly, so make sure that before you take on additional tasks, they are completely aligned with what benefits the workplace and its mission. Working on the new tasks must not detract from your properly assigned job. To help you work out whether it is worth attacking the gaps from an organizational perspective, ask yourself these questions:[7]

- What problem is my proposed change seeking to solve?
- What benefits will accrue to the organization if I solve this problem? (List them.)
- How will my new activities benefit my coworkers? (For example, better workflow for everyone, fewer delays, improved connections, etc.)
- In what ways will the workplace be more efficient as a result of my changes?
- What workplace or team goals will be met by my proposed changes?
- What costs or resources are required (if any) to implement my proposed changes? Are savings a high possibility? Is profit a possibility?
- What opportunities or improvements will this provide others in the workplace?



2 Consider also the personal value to you. When thinking about expanding your job role, be honest with yourself about what you think the benefits are likely to be for you personally.^[8] Ask yourself such questions as:

- Will my work benefit personally? Is there a likelihood of improved job chances?
- Will the time spent on this detract from my usual job?
- If so, am I willing to give some extra time to it?
- Am I able to **solve this problem** by myself/at all, or will I need help from others?
- Will I enjoy this challenge? It's important to enjoy what you're taking on, to keep you enthusiastic and focused.
- Will I need training to be really useful in the areas I wish to expand into? ^[9] If so, this needs to be your first priority.

Part 4 of 5: Proving the Value of a Role Change



1 Get proactive. Once you've identified the possible opportunities for new tasks around the workplace, and determined they are worth the effort, it's time to initiate them in small yet useful ways. The more small-win solutions you can build up, the more likely it is that your initiative will be accepted and permitted as part of your role.

- In many cases there might not be a need to ask for permission provided you aren't neglecting your existing duties and you are making the changes incrementally; it will be a case of developing an evolving interest and gradually advancing ideal solutions, perhaps during your lunch hour or for an hour before work proper starts. The latitude allowed will depend on how receptive, flexible and open your organization is.
- In other cases, it might be wise to develop a proposal rather than taking over new tasks without a heads-up.^[2] This might be essential in a very formal and conservative organization; do some research and groundwork first, present the case along with your proposal and remain enthusiastic about the outcome. Remember that you can still display initiative, even within the constraints of a very conservative organization.



2

Be prepared to do extra work, not simply swap your existing work for new work.

As earlier mentioned, it is probable (and indeed desirable initially) that you will need to devote some personal time to the gap problems beyond your normal job.

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2 Be prepared to do extra work, not simply swap your existing work for new work.

As earlier mentioned, it is probable (and indeed desirable initially) that you will need to devote some personal time to the gap problems beyond your normal job. Provided this doesn't go on for a long time, it will usually be helpful for you to do a few extra hours here and there during the work week to prove that these new tasks are of benefit to the company. A small sacrifice initially may help to persuade your supervisor and other relevant persons that your new activities are of great benefit to all.



3

Think about who else you might bring on board to either help you expand your role or support you generally.

If other people can confirm that what you're doing is needed, essential, and useful, then you're more likely to get managerial buy-in.

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3 Think about who else you might bring on board to either help you expand your role or support you generally.

If other people can confirm that what you're doing is needed, essential, and useful, then you're more likely to get managerial buy-in. Get testimonies from coworkers as to how they consider your changes are improving their productivity and outcomes; this will help you to build a case for a permanent role change.



4

Find ways to present your solutions clearly.

Be organized about your solutions and keep records, notes, photos, etc., of progress and results so that you can demonstrate the improvements with ease.

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4 Find ways to present your solutions clearly. Be organized about your solutions and keep records, notes, photos, etc., of progress and results so that you can demonstrate the improvements with ease. It also helps if you can develop something of broader utility, such as a manual, a system, or even signage, that helps colleagues to benefit as well. Be prepared with fast, pointed, and accurate explanations of how your solutions have improved the workplace. Then read [How to Get a Promotion!](#)



1

Do follow-up with people who can authorize your changed role.

Be prepared to explain why what you're doing is making a valuable difference and how it benefits the company or organization.

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1 Do follow-up with people who can authorize your changed role. Using the experience you've gained from undertaking the new tasks or approaches, along with the records of the outcomes, talk to your supervisor/manager or other people who are in a position to agree to the changes. This step is crucial, otherwise your efforts may be overlooked or simply assumed as part of your existing role. Be prepared to explain why what you're doing is making a valuable difference and how it benefits the company or organization. Show as well as tell, providing evidence of improved workplace outcomes. Arguing the case for your role change will be easier if you can demonstrate clearly how things have already improved with the small changes you've been tackling.



2

Request formalization of your new role.

If you've been given the go-ahead to expand your role into the new areas, ask that human resources formalize this by way of a new job description.

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2 Request formalization of your new role. If you've been given the go-ahead to expand your role into the new areas, ask that human resources formalize this by way of a new job description. This will ensure that the new activities and the role expansion are officially recognized and become an expected part of the workplace routine. It also allows the role itself to become more desirable and to have ongoing value when you get promoted later, leaving your expanded role as a real position for someone else to step into at a later stage.



Expert Q&A

Question

How do you find a job that makes you happy?



Devin Jones
Career Coach
Expert Answer

Think about what things you've enjoyed doing in your work in the past and how you can create more opportunities to do that. Deep down, we all want to make an impact. Think about the ways your unique skills can make a difference somehow, big or small in the world. If you think about your career in terms of a service you can provide, it can help you find a job that fulfills you.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0

Question

What skills do employers value in the workplace?



Devin Jones
Career Coach
Expert Answer

Employers value skills including empathy, communication, teamwork, and collaboration. Though hard skills are also necessary, interpersonal skills that have to do with emotional intelligence can help you be an effective collaborator and leader in an organization.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0

Question

Should I expand my role at work?



Devin Jones
Career Coach
Expert Answer

Before you expand your role, consider how the changes will benefit you. What are you getting out of your job now? What do you want to get out of it? Use the answers to these questions to decide what kind of changes to your job make sense for you.

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐

Question

How do you create a positive change at work?



Devin Jones
Career Coach
Expert Answer

Look for unfilled gaps that you can fill. Try to fix current problems to help your coworkers and yourself more easily complete your workplace's goals or missions.

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐



Tips

- It is a good idea to seek confirmation of your newly created role in some way, as this helps to ensure that you either get to keep this work as part of your expanded role, or it sets you in great stead for promotion or a raise. Have a chat with the boss about how your expanded role proves that you are ready for more money/responsibility/influence, etc.
- Think about using your social media, blogs, networking events or public speaking as ongoing ways to prove your worth in the areas you want to expand into.^[4] Getting know for new skills outside the workplace can help you in the goal of expanding your role. Much of this can be done from home, such as blogging and social media.



Warnings

- Watch that you don't overstep the mark or boundaries and walk into someone else's work. You are looking for unattended gaps in the workplace, not trying to take over someone else's role. Trying to take on other people's existing responsibilities risks making you look difficult and suggests that you think you can do their job better. This can risk having you lose your boss' confidence in your initiative and ability to work.

References

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Devin Jones**. Devin Jones is the creator of "The Soul Career," an online career incubator for women. She is certified in the CliftonStrengths assessment and works with women to clarify their purpose and create meaningful careers. Devin received her BA from Stanford University in 2013. This article has been viewed 36,169 times.

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