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Don't Let an Indifferent Boss Hold You Back

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If you want to advance in your career, but your boss isn't invested in your professional development, it can be demoralizing and frustrating. If you're feeling underutilized and underestimated, remember this: Your career is yours — and yours alone — to define and navigate. It's essential that you know your worth, even when it's not being reflected back to you.

Through my work as a career coach, I've learned that while our managers should be advocates for our advancement, that's not always the case. Here are four approaches to help you move forward without your manager's support.

— **FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL:** Your mindset and actions are your keys to success. It's not your boss's actions (or inactions) that are pivotal to your advancement. What truly matters is how you decide to respond to a situation — and what you do next.

Embrace a positive mindset — that's a proactive choice you can make no matter the circumstances. Continue to do your best work for your boss, endeavor to exceed expectations, keep lines of communication open and be a positive team member. At the same time, remain laser-focused on your career objectives and next steps.

— **MAKE YOUR OWN CAREER COMMITMENTS:** Creating a personal set of commitments enables you to be intentional and impactful when setting your goals and planning the next steps for your career. To do this, reflect on the next 12 months. Ask yourself questions such as, What do I want to do more of at work? What skills do I want to acquire?

Next, look at your responses and assign one immediate action item to each one. Then, decide what you'll work on first. Use your responses to create a career map that aligns with your goals and puts you in the driver's seat.

— **BROADEN YOUR VIEW:** There are so many stakeholders who impact how you work. Make a list of people who matter to your career, in addition to your boss. This list may include your peers, direct reports if you have them and senior leaders. Explore how you can continue to cultivate relationships with these people.

Creating this list and taking positive actions based on it will remind you that your career doesn't start and end with one relationship dynamic. Remember, even if your direct manager is not investing in your professional growth, there will be other people who can impact your growth. Keep setting your intentions and exploring options, ideas, opportunities, conversations and connections that can help establish the foundation for your next actions.

— FORGE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP YOU GROW: After you've made your "people who matter" list, think about any gaps in your network. The most important roles to consider are mentors and sponsors.

Do you currently have a mentor? If you don't, commit to identifying more than one. Is there a person at your company who could be a sponsor? If your boss cannot fulfill that role, consider who could become an advocate for you.

Don't let an indifferent manager derail your ambition, career values or goals. Align your actions with your ambition. If you know you can do better, commit to aiming higher.

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