

# CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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## Other People's Problems

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By Douglas E. Welch

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It can be a hard lesson to learn, but when you succeed in your high-tech career, or life in general, there will be those around you who are less than enthusiastic about your success. Call it fair-weather friends or simple jealousy, but it can be difficult when those who supported you in the past suddenly show a different side.

Worse still, these people can cause you to doubt your own actions, even when you think you are doing what is best for you. Pressure from friends and acquaintances should never drive you to make career decisions that aren't in your own best interest.

### Jealousy

No matter how dissatisfied or worried you might be about your own career, there will be those around you who will be jealous of what they see as your good fortune. While I might bemoan the lack of billable hours in any given week, others look at my life and wonder at the amount of time I have to spend with my family. You might be worried about layoffs or making your next promotion, but others might see your corporate job as an easy road to success. The smallest success can lead old friends to worry about their own position and success, and pass on that worry to you.

The worst form this jealousy, or fear, can take are efforts to make you feel guilty or undeserving of your success. People might try to convince you that you could be much more successful—that you are experiencing merely a tiny success when you deserve much more. They might try to persuade you that your success will lead only to failure in the future. Sometimes, people will make subtle, or not so subtle, comments about how undeserving you are, or how you have simply fooled your employers.

### Proper Perspective

When you encounter people like this, you must first remember that their comments are much more revealing of their attitudes than your abilities. You must always be careful to maintain a proper perspective about your career and your success. Unless you have purposely manipulated your job environment, there is a good reason you are being rewarded for your work: You are good at it. You must also face the unpleasant realization that some people you once thought of as friends are driven more by their jealousy than you ever realized.

This can be a difficult lesson to learn. Often, the people who are the most jealous of your success can be those

who have supported you the most in the past—or those you supported in their early successes. They may have assisted you financially when times were bad. They may have gotten you interviews or jobs with their friends. Suddenly, though, when faced with your success, they may turn petty, angry and cruel. This can be extremely disturbing. No one wants to believe that lifelong friends are capable of such venom, but I have seen it happen too many times to ignore it.

It is important for you to understand and remember that anyone who belittles your success, or berates your attempts to better your life, does not have your best interest in mind. No matter how charming the presentation or convincing the arguments, a true friend should be supportive of your success, not dismissive or angry.

I am sure that if you look back on past successes in your life, you will find instances similar to those I have just described—friends who drifted away after you made the football team and they didn't; relationships that faltered when one of you earned significantly more than the other; marriages that suffered when your friends questioned the fact that your wife was the major breadwinner for the family. You may even recognize points in your life when you have made bad decisions, based on the pressure of others.

As you gather more and more successes in your life—and I am sure you will—you must remember that you cannot allow the pressure of others to cloud your career decisions. If you are happy with your life and happy with the career decisions you have made, then you are probably on the right path. Despite the fact that those around you, sometimes those closest to you, might be disturbed by or jealous of your success, you should continue to do what is best for you. You should never be made to feel guilty for your successes. They show that you are on the right track, in both your career and your life. □

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