

Slightly
Unconventional
Early Career Advice
For Extraordinarily
Talented People
in technology

DISCLAIMER

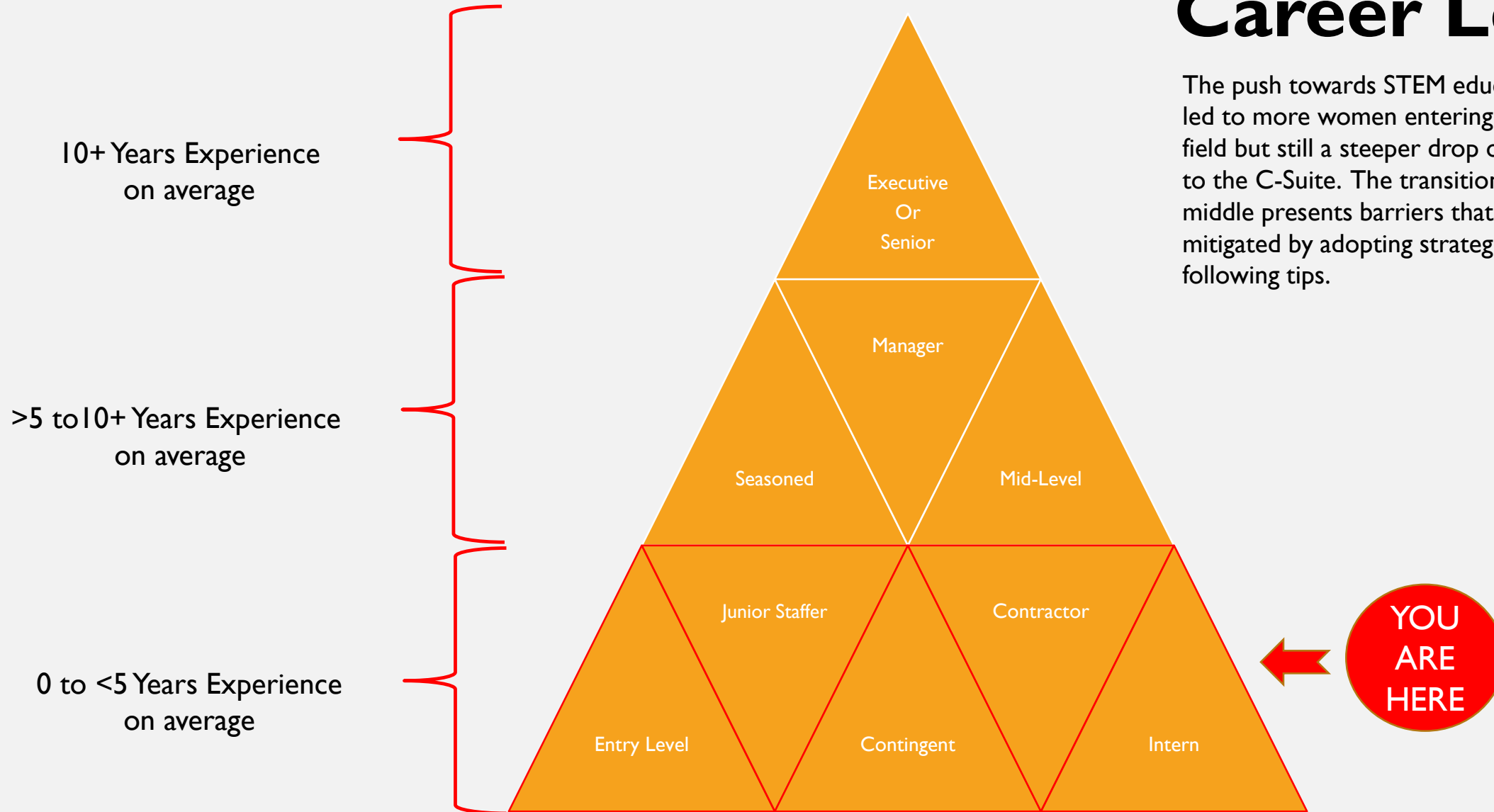
The following are my observations and bits of advice that over the last two decades in the tech industry as a tech support lead and project manager that I wish I had considered or heard much earlier in my career.

Some of it may apply to your situation; some may not. Some of it you will agree, so you may not. No two careers will be the same; your trajectory will depend on many variables.

The following content is a reflection on my journey, and I hope it gives you some notions to consider as you embark on your journey.

Career Levels

The push towards STEM education has led to more women entering the tech field but still a steeper drop off leading up to the C-Suite. The transition from entry to middle presents barriers that can in part be mitigated by adopting strategies based on the following tips.



1. Know How Your Job Fits Into “The Big Picture”

- **For most, your career in technology will be working for a company where technology is an enabler that supports the company’s focus not the focus.**
- **It is very important to understand your employers core business; how do they generate profits, what factors impact their business, what did they do before technology, what priority does technology have from upper management. Of course these answers vary from a bank to a bakery.**
- **Most importantly know how your job plays a role in the overall business success.**

2. Focus On Leadership Skills No Just Tools

- **It might seem strange after working so hard on your technical skills but understand technology changes, the need for people to lead, coordinate, harness, and align technology does not.**
- **Aptitude in a certain technology may get you the job but stay too long as a niche expert and you will likely be passed over for broader roles.**
- **Work on being a “people person” start by practicing how to clearly explain what you do; look for opportunities train others or be on problem solving teams.**

3. Double Check Your Market Value

- **Always know the market value of your job. Use sites like Glassdoor, LinkedIn, etc.**
- **Even if you are not asking for a raise right now, knowing where you should be in relation to your industry peers is important information to have handy when it is time to discuss your next raise or promotion when the window for negotiation is narrow making it too late to do the research then.**

4. Know What Your Time Is Worth

- **Annual salaries are nice! But they are generally based on a mythical 40-hour work week. If you regularly work late to make deadlines, come in on weekends, are encouraged to come in early, answer emails after-hours, take work calls on vacation. The relative per hour value of your inelastic salary is reduced.**
- **Prioritize and work to maximize the relative value of your salary as much as possible by mastering working efficiently in the confines of a normal workday whenever possible.**
- **Question if it is regularly taking 60+ hours a week to do what you are being paid 40 hour a week for accomplish. This could be an indicator you are over leveraged.**

5. Don't Blindly Subscribe To Your Employers Progression Model

- **It is important to know what your company values. What skills are prized; what metrics are used to promote. It may not be what you think.**
- **What is the manager to employee ratio, where does management come from, do they rotate, is hiring from within a thing. Each company is different.**

6. Have A Plan That Doesn't Involve One Company

- **Sometimes the opportunity for promotion is not within the company you want to promote within. There may be situations where spending even a small amount of time elsewhere is your key to climbing up the ladder.**
- **Every situation is different but embrace an out of the box plan such as taking time elsewhere to round out and gain attractive experience that your employer may prize but cannot offer such as work internationally or more diverse projects.**

7. Sometimes To Best Position Is The One You Make

- **Your career is in your hands! Understand that every title and job description at your company is as arbitrary to a degree.**
- **You may create and suggest your own role or at the very least not view what you do in limiting rigid confines of your job title but rather your contribution.**
- **On resumes and LinkedIn always remember your job title exists as a matter of HR necessity your job role is another matter altogether.**

8. Find Counterparts Elsewhere

- **To fully gauge and get the best idea of your worth you need a network of peers outside your immediate company.**
- **Take part in networking, training, conventions and find people doing your role elsewhere that are roughly the same age, education, and job level.**
- **Don't stalk but do offer to help and shop talk when possible.**

9. Avoid Burnout On Minor Tasks

- **Perfectionism can be the enemy of career mobility; budget the time you spend on a given task to the value of the task so that the truly critical gets your best.**
- **Obsessing over small typos in an email to a few team members or taking 30 minutes to spellcheck an urgent email can be counter-productive.**

10. Ask For Help

- **No one has accomplished great things alone. Being "self-made" often take dozens of people.**
- **Remove the idea that asking for help is a sign of weakness or incompetence; embrace that it is rather a sign of desire for understanding, clarifications, and respect for other viewpoints.**

11. Make Vacation Time Count

- **Avoid the trap of bargaining that after “X” work you will “Y” wellness.**
- **You are your most valuable asset.**
- **Make time for wellness.**

12. Life Outside Work Is A Must

- **Remember everything teachers told you about being well-rounded—turns out they were right.**
- **The world is bigger than your job or your current company.**
- **Feeling passion for doing good in the worlds translates to a healthy mental outlook and when you feel purpose you exude it.**

13. Learn Another Language

- **Learning is forever and outside knowledge is crucial to your success.**
- **Make it a point to learn something new every year.**
- **Learning a language for example, even Klingon, can add both words and concepts to your mental vocabulary, knowing alternative ways of articulating make you a better communicator.**

PARTING THOUGHT

A grandmother once was passing down a precious antique watch to her granddaughter; “This watch is more than 100 years old. But before I give it to you, go to the pawn shop and tell him I want to sell it, and see how much they offer.” the grandmother said. The granddaughter did as she was told and then came back and said, “They offered \$50.”

She then said, “Go to the watch shop, and ask what they would give for it.” She went and then came back and said, “They offered \$500.”

“Now go to the museum and show that watch.” She went then came back and said, “They offered me a \$1,000,000!” The old woman then said, “I wanted to let you know that the right people value you the right way. Don't find yourself in the place where you are not fully valued, don't stay in a place where nobody sees your value. Know your worth.”



END OF PRESENTATION