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## @marybethwest: Self-Direct, Self-Educate, Self-Critique for Better #Leadership

By [Mary Beth West](#), APR

As we cap off our blog theme this month, “Empower Yourself and Be a Better Leader – For You and Your Clients,” I’ve been thinking about the best ways that public relations professionals – and, really, any professional – can self-lead toward better client / employer service . . . and reap their own rewards in the process:

- **Self-Direct** – As we advise our clients, the quickest way to fail in attaining a goal is to forget to set one in the first place. In our day-to-day jobs, we are often awash in a sea of goals, objectives, metrics and dashboards – all pertaining to the companies we serve. But what about *you*? What is your career goal over the next one, three or five years, and what must you specifically accomplish to meet it? Do you also have the tools and support in place to help you get there?
- **Self-Educate** – I often tell students majoring in public relations that some of the greatest gems of knowledge come in the form of knowing what you don’t know. Only when you understand what’s missing in your knowledge or skill set can you road-map your way to bridge those gaps. Plus, online intelligence-gathering is extremely easy nowadays. Whatever you need to learn, often the only thing standing between you and the answers – or at least a good starting-point – is an effective keyword search.
- **Self-Critique** – Look at your job performance through the lens of the person who pays you. Don’t wait for a client or supervisor to tell you when your performance is not quite up to par. When you purposefully develop the mindset of your client or employer, fewer criticisms will ever take you off-guard. Better yet, you will be in a much better position to course-correct before minor issues become big problems.

The biggest common denominator here: *initiative*.

That’s what leadership largely is . . . taking initiative in proactive, insightful ways. Effective leaders not only show that initiative in how they work within their organizations but also in how they manage their own careers.

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