

# Extroversion, proactive personality linked to career success, researcher finds

May 10 2017, by Liz Mccune

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Nearly 4 million students are expected to earn higher education degrees in the U.S. this academic year, and many of them will be awarded this month. Research shows that those who obtain college degrees on average earn more and have greater job satisfaction. Now new research from the University of Missouri reveals another factor related to success—those who are the most outgoing and proactive also are most likely to have successful careers.

Daniel Turban of the MU Trulaske College of Business, assured that even if being extroverted and proactive doesn't come naturally, individuals still can make conscious behavioral choices that will enhance chances for [success](#).

"Previous research has found that mentoring plays a critical role in [career success](#), and this study affirms that finding," Turban said. "Those who are extroverted and have a proactive personality are naturally more likely to develop mentor relationships, which can help new employees understand their company's [corporate culture](#) and advance within a company. But, even for those of us who aren't extroverts, there is nothing saying you can't 'fake it until you make it.' "

The research was based on a sample of 333 employees with a diverse set of occupations. The average age was 30 and most had been with their companies for about five years. Career success was judged through measures such as income, promotions and [career](#) satisfaction. Personality results were based on surveys.

Turban said that behavior of the individual—not necessarily their inherent personality—is the most important factor. He noted that those looking to climb the ladder or just succeed in their current position should:

- Pursue social resources, including seeking mentoring relationships and establishing developmental networks
- Proactively attempt to learn the norms, values and goals of the organization
- Take responsibility for learning and development at work. Don't wait to be invited to a committee or asked to engage in professional development—seek out these opportunities and volunteer for training or networking wherever possible

Implications exist for companies as well since fostering [employee](#) success ultimately benefits an entire organization. In general, Turban said companies should foster mentoring by cultivating a climate that encourages informal developmental relationships and continuous learning. In particular, organizations should attempt to develop a climate of psychological safety, which allows employees to take risks and ask questions without fear of recrimination.

**More information:** "Linking Extroversion and Proactive Personality to Career Success: The Role of Mentoring Received and Knowledge," *Journal of Career Development*

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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