

Throughout my career, responsibilities always came to me before titles. And I usually gave responsibilities to others before giving the corresponding titles. If this seem unfair, it's more considerate than giving a title too quickly and having to take it away when it doesn't work out. So rather than feeling under-appreciated when you're given assignments that fit the next position up the ladder, consider it a sign of leadership's confidence in your potential.

You should let your leader know what you aspire to and ask what it takes to prove yourself worthy of it. You may be doing great things now, but are you doing the *right things* great? Are you hitting the *most important* goals of your position, or just the ones that come easy? Can you sacrifice what you like to do in order to accomplish what matters most?

Two things have to come together in order for a promotion to make sense:

**1) The organization must need the position you aspire to.**

Let's say you're a Manager wanting to become a Director. Those two job descriptions should be distinct. If the organization only needs a Manager, it wouldn't be responsible to pay for a Director in that role. I know, that's frustrating when you want to move up to a position your company doesn't need. But think about it: If three people are ready to be CEO would you make three CEOs? If you feel constrained, you have to weigh your career advancement options elsewhere against the positives of your current job. But be careful about trading opportunities to build solid skills over time in favor of quickly reaching your highest level of incompetence!



**2) You must be ready for the responsibilities of that role.**

Remember that the privilege of a higher title comes with increased responsibilities. How well are you handling your current load? Are you always complaining that you're overwhelmed and too busy? How will you manage even more responsibilities? Even if you're on a fast-track development plan, broad, deep experience isn't gained overnight. Don't be surprised if "more time in your current role" is a requirement for promotion. Demonstrate patience and take advantage of the opportunity to grow. Don't push it faster than you can learn to manage the ever-increasing stress of added responsibilities. Far better in the long run to have a reputation as a Manager who exceeds Manager-level expectations than as a Director who is just barely functioning at a Director level.

You won't get a promotion every year (or two or three!) in your career, although your responsibilities will probably grow every year. Career happiness is richer when it comes from fulfillment in what you're contributing and learning than when it depends on titles and raises. As C.S. Lewis said, when you put first things first you get the second things thrown in; put second things first and you get neither first nor second things. Believe it or not, titles and raises are second things.

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