

Taking Charge of Your Career Path

What is the best strategy for asking your company for a new assignment?

Asking for a new assignment requires a 'request' strategy and patience. The request strategy should consider the following:

- Status of your project. The best time to request a new assignment is when your current project is in a good or stable state.
- Prepare an itemized list of experiences and skills that you would take to the next assignment.
- Determine what knowledge or experiences you would like to gain from the next assignment.
- In a collaborative manner patiently discuss your next assignment with your manager. Early discussions regarding a new assignment allow your manager time to seek or create new assignment options. Finding the assignment that is a match for you can take time. Mostly importantly, be open-minded to assignments within or outside of your present business unit. Be sure to communicate to management if you are open to both.

Resilience

Is personal resilience built mostly from a person's own internal resources or outside support?

Both! Perhaps 80/20. I believe personal resilience is primarily built on your internal resources. Your character, faith, drive, and determination are internal resources that shape your resiliency. There are outside resources and training that can teach you to recognize your shortcomings and support you in creating strategies to overcome them. Lastly, your support system—family, friends, and professional mentors—provide opportunities and motivation to count all experiences as growth opportunities.

Personal Satisfaction

What gives you joy in your job?

Joy in my job comes from people and product. It is most fulfilling when a group of people come together as team. A team that is greater than the individuals. A team that respects one another and contributes to the best of their ability to bring the best possible product to production. There is nothing better than seeing vehicles on the road you know your team worked extremely hard to execute. People and product bring joy in my job.

What causes you the most angst?

People and organizations that don't respect others or lack integrity give me the most angst.

Elizabeth Griffith

*Director of Engineering and Program Quality-GM Interior Systems
Faurecia North America*



Spanning over 45 years in the automotive industry, Griffith's career in the industry has been diverse. In her role as the director of engineering and program quality of Faurecia Interior Systems, Griffith supports a team of 14 people on the GM global account. Some of her responsibilities include growing the business and developing customer relationships; achieving GM and Faurecia safety, quality, and cost objectives; and understanding the complex customer product systems to ensure that the product, processes, and people are focused on success over the product execution timeline.

Before coming out of retirement to join Faurecia in 2010, Griffith held various positions—among them vice president of advanced engineering and program management—at Magna's Intier Automotive from 2001 to 2007. Prior to that, Griffith was the vice president of engineering and program management at Peregrine In.

Griffith's career began at General Motors, where she was part of the first large class of women to go through the General Motors Institute program. After graduating from the program in 1977, she held various positions within General Motors, including manufacturing general supervisor, platform program manager, and chief manufacturing engineer for mechanical components and interiors.

Beyond her professional accolades, Griffith was named one of the "100 Leading Women in Automotive" by *Automotive News* in both 2005 and 2015. She also champions various women in automotive groups, inspiring

women to join science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and careers. She is also the chair of AutomotiveNEXT, inspiring and supporting the next generation of automotive leaders. And was awarded in 2017, the Kettering University Alumni for Management Achievement and has joined the Kettering University Engineering Board.

Griffith holds a bachelor's of science degree in mechanical engineering from General Motors Institute (Kettering University) in Flint, Mich.

Education and Lifelong Learning

How did you learn emotional intelligence and how has this helped you be successful?

After a career spanning 47 years, I've frequently been asked how I survived and apparently thrived in automotive manufacturing and engineering. This question is generally asked in an utterly shocked tone as my career started at GM in 1972, a decade not known for a plethora of women in those fields.

To me, emotional intelligence (EI) has been the foundation of that successful technical career. My EI blossomed concurrently with my leadership style, and it was refined over decades by countless people and problem interactions—from the tough inner city UAW manufacturing floor to the various functional and executive levels and government representatives and multiple workforce generations—a hierarchy of complexity. What worked? What didn't? Why can't I get everybody focused? Obviously, having one older and two younger brothers allowed me to practice EI from an early age. With a dominant older brother and sensitive younger brothers, mama expected me to get things done while she was at work without fights or crying—neither me nor them. In the professional world this is even more important.

The ability to know when and how to pull, push, or just leave someone or something alone; to just say a few words or go in depth with background; or to just smile or catch a glance became a powerful, intrinsic skill. It has been fraught with immense successes (highly effective teams performing virtual miracles) and abject failures (dysfunctional team not even willing to speak to one another or me). The patience needed to develop EI and use it—especially when all I wanted to do was just tell someone to do it, and do it now—has made me not only a much more empathetic leader but more humane.

As an engineer, data is crucial. How do you know you've successfully acquired EI? Well, when people want to work with you and for you, bounce ideas off of you, keep in touch with you, and the ultimate is when they want to follow you, that is when you know you've achieved EI success. They know the authentic you, with integrity and the ability to see them, to have the tough conversations, and to help them reach their potential. You evoke positive potential.

Work-Life Integration

Manufacturing continues to cause a divide in gender—why is this? What can be done to support more diversity?

My General Motors Institute (now Kettering University) co-op sponsor was the GM Fisher Body Fort Street Plant. It was formerly part of the Ternstedt Hardware and Trim

Division and known as the “mother plant” since union pioneer Walter Reuther’s mom had supposedly worked there. Walking in those doors in 1972, I knew that I had made a horrible mistake (this started the screaming in the back of my head that continues to this day in highly stressful situations). I should be signing up for my music scholarship classes at the University of Michigan and focusing on achieving my lifelong dream of majoring in music with a minor in library science, not walking into a dark and dirty cacophonous factory with aisle after aisle of men at incredibly large presses (1000T blanking) staring and catcalling.

So from that thought to now? Why do I always recommend that everyone should work in manufacturing? Manufacturing has long had a stigma of being dark, dirty, and not sexy like industrial design, product engineering, or marketing. I’ve heard so many people express “Why spend all that time getting a degree and waste it in operations/manufacturing?” Why? Because you learn what’s important about the company and yourself. It is a crucible for developing unparalleled leadership skills—fast paced, quick thinking, constant change, and a melting pot of people. The thirteen years I spent at the Fort Street Plant and the subsequent two years later in my career I spent as a plant manager was a transformative experience. The confidence of knowing I might not know something now but could learn quickly, the ability to listen and communicate to a myriad of people, to know I could excel in one of the toughest automotive environments and garner respect while continuing to be true to myself really defined my road to success. Yes that screaming in the back of my head continued (and it does to this day) but experience is a great antidote.

The gender divide can certainly narrow with a three-prong approach. First, as parents, as family, and within the education system, young girls must be taught to compete. They must compete with themselves and boys. They must know the power and confidence boost that comes with winning individually and with a team—to know that stepping into the limelight is okay. They must know that being the best does not make them less. An excerpt from the book *Confidence Code for Girls* as published in *Time*, April 2018, had many salient points. Of note, “that between the ages of 8–14, girls’ confidence levels drop by 30 percent.” And what I found particularly poignant is that the authors found once the gap is open, most women do not fully recover. I have seen this many times; incredibly talented women undervalue themselves and take a lesser role because they do not think they are good enough so they do not try. They have listened to that voice screaming in the back of their head.

Second, we need to remove the social and economic stereotypes that preclude or sway young women from developing to their full potential. That tough job getting your hands dirty might be the best thing ever. Manufacturing today has some of the best leading edge technology. STEM is not a dirty word. You can be whatever you want and it is okay to make more money than your significant other—you both win. Smart confident women live life to the fullest. And they have taken the lessons learned from the book above, they have learned to “risk more, think less, be yourself.”

Third and last, every woman needs to be a vocal, visible role model for those women coming up through the ranks. They should be quick to lend a hand or encouraging word to network. There is a psychological imprint with women that “unless they see it, they can’t achieve it.” When there is a dearth of women as role models (such as in manufacturing and other technical fields), women find it difficult to believe or even aspire to obtain a position in this field. Fear of the unknown is real. Mama raised all of us with the belief that we could be anything if we studied hard. And with three brothers, I didn’t recognize until well into my automotive career that what I was doing was not normal for a woman. During my career of being in so many instances, the first woman, the only woman, one of the critical few executive women in my field, to me it was not special, it

was just me plowing through with my job and working hard. Now, reflecting on that attitude, I hope I've set an example for others to achieve more than they ever thought possible—to utilize the power of women's friendships.

Mentor and Sponsor Relationships

In your experience, what makes a mentor/mentee relationship fail?

Being a mentor has been and continues to be one of the most important and enjoyable parts of my life. Like fingerprints, every mentee is unique. I currently actively mentor 18 people. I have been a mentor in both company structured and unstructured programs, and have also mentored outside of my company. To be a successful mentor there has to be a sincere effort on your part to actively listen and to explore a myriad of topics with your mentee. I've had mentees who still seek advice even after thirty years, or others who transition from colleagues to, in a few instances, great friends. It is similar to what I imagine a psychiatrist might do—listen and explore without telling someone exactly what to do, lead them to the realization of what they need to do—be a sounding board. Mentoring works best when there is an easy rapport established; mentoring cannot be predicated on a title within the company—not all vice presidents are successful mentors.

Mentor/mentee relationships fail when the expectation is not clear at the start. A mentor is not going to solve the mentee's functional problem or actively advocate for the mentee. Mentorship works best when it remains above the daily business and focuses on middle- to long-term development and serves as a resource to explore and encourage potentials. One of the worse things you can do as a mentor is utilize your experience(s) or clout to solve a problem for your mentee—they learn nothing other than you are good at, solving problems.

Many of my most successful mentor/mentee relationships have been encouraging young engineers to get out of their comfort zones and into functional areas they deemed too risky (finance, program management, and manufacturing). My failures have been when the mentee was assigned to me, and they wanted me to resolve a problem with their immediate supervisor who was my peer. After multiple sessions it became apparent that their need was not a mentorship. I encourage everyone to be a mentor and to seek a mentor—utilize all resources to improve you.

Taking Charge of Your Career Path

What was the biggest surprise in your career when you faced a new opportunity thinking it was a terrible move, but tackling it in any case—what did you learn and how did it change your view?

The biggest surprise in my career came as the first and really biggest career failure. I had been put in place to clean up a mess: a launch of a major complete interior program in the middle of building more than 200 large injection tools and installing millions in equipment. The internal team was in disarray, and the customer was not happy. There were daily escalation calls at the executive vehicle chief level. This was a situation I had dealt with many times before and it was a forte. Initially, great progress was made. But during the final weeks of the launch, I let dimensional issues become adversarial with the customer; it became very personal. I was removed, and I was devastated. Yes, tears happened, and I was determined to quit. Obviously, no one really appreciated my hard work.

It took me a couple of days to return to rational thinking (and a quick discussion with my mentor). I've never been a quitter—and a tenet of my leadership inner voice (when it is not screaming) says “don't let them see you sweat.” My team also needed to see I was okay—they were about to mutiny. So I went from a team of 18 to a team of me—as a staff assistant to the engineer-in-charge. No direct reports, no direct authority. It turned out to be one of the best jobs I ever had. The access to upper leadership, developing presentation and speech writing skills, getting people to do things with implied authority, organizing and facilitating executive staff meetings, understanding how engineering impacted other functional groups—I learned more than I thought possible. And the unexpected result, after just 18 months, was a promotion to the executive ranks.

The lesson learned was very clear to me: while it is fine to have a healthy ego, exercising it with the customer is not. Hubris does not work.

Resilience

Do you consider yourself resilient? If so, how did you become that way?

Adaptability, tenacity, and an unerring sense of fun aid in my resiliency. Life is too short not to have fun, and I chose to be happy every day.

Resiliency started for me growing up in Southwest Detroit where daddy had moved us from South Carolina for a job at Cadillac. Daddy died when I was young, and mama struggled to raise my three brothers and me—grannie wanted us all to move back South. We stayed and mama got a job but it didn't cover everything. So there was food stamps, Goodfellow Christmases, and early morning paper routes. The prevailing attitude, however, was always “we will do the best we can” and there was always laughter.

My role model for resiliency was mama—work through issues calmly, and if the original plan doesn't work or you can't control it, have confidence that something else will work. And when in life you lose someone who causes you immense joy, know that time does heal the pain and memories are always there. A huge drain on resiliency is never letting go of the past. So many people dwell on looking back with regret that they lose sight of the road in front of them.

I have a couple of coping mechanisms. My teams, for instance, have always appreciated my calm demeanor and urging to “let's just take a breath” (yoga does help). I've also found that taking a stressed-out person through a short visioning of “what is the worst that can happen” tends to put things in perspective. And what has been a foundation for me is that I can have stress at work or stress at home, but not both. Luckily I have an absolutely fantastic husband of 31 years who has been a successfully retired United Automobile Workers (UAW) member for 19 years. He keeps me grounded and laughing every day. I have two special nieces who attempt to keep me young and edgy. And when my resiliency reservoir needs replenishing, there is always a long Harley motorcycle ride (yes on my own bike) with my husband and friends or a quiet morning reading in the sunroom with my Birman cats snuggled close.

Personal Satisfaction

What gives you joy in your job? What causes you the most angst?

When I see people working together to achieve personal and professional goals while having fun—that gives me joy. The burgeoning autonomous and electrified technology

has just added an additional layer of interest for me. My automotive journey has been spectacular—the people I’ve met, the places I’ve been, and the tremendous technology changes. But the most joy I’ve derived is when someone I’ve met along that path delivers a simple thank you—“you took the time to encourage me, and I became an engineer,” or “I’m working in a plant and I love my life,” or “my dad said you were the best, and I’m going to be an engineer like you,” “you have really inspired me.” Faurecia has afforded me the tremendous opportunity to spearhead leadership, diversity, and STEM topics in various forums. It’s something I enjoy, and it’s critical to the sustainable future of automotive/mobility to engage young people today. To share personal stories and get them excited about automotive.

Do I have angst? A prior question answered this. Every day I chose to be happy. There is no room for angst, only a confidence that the future is a road to be travelled and enjoyed...with curves and switchbacks galore.



Mary Gustanski

*Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer
Delphi Technologies*



Mary Gustanski is the senior vice president and chief technology officer of Delphi Technologies, formerly Delphi Automotive. In this role, Gustanski is responsible for the company's innovation and global technologies, including advanced propulsion systems for future vehicle electrification. Prior to this role, she served as vice president of engineering and program management for Delphi Automotive, which spun off its propulsion business to become Delphi Technologies in 2017.

Ms. Gustanski began her 37-year career as a college cooperative student at the former AC Spark Plug Division of General Motors. She was hired full time as an associate manufacturing engineer in April 1985 and went on to hold several positions in engineering and manufacturing, including senior manufacturing project engineer, senior project engineer, and production superintendent, prior to being promoted to divisional plant quality manager in 1997. Ms. Gustanski became chief engineer at Generators in 1998 and was promoted in 2001 to technical center director. In 2003, she was named global director of manufacturing engineering.

In 2006, Ms. Gustanski was appointed as a member of the powertrain systems executive staff as the divisional director of engineering, customer satisfaction, and program management. She was named as Delphi powertrain's vice president of engineering, operations, and customer satisfaction in 2012 and, in August 2014, was appointed to

the corporate engineering team as vice president of engineering and program management.

Ms. Gustanski was recognized as one of the “100 Leading Women in the North American Auto Industry” by *Automotive News* in 2010 and 2015.

Education and Lifelong Learning

How have you structured your own approach to lifelong learning?

I’ve approached lifelong learning as a journey, not a destination, believing there is always more to learn and with every task presenting an opportunity. Certainly, formal training cannot be replaced, especially in the more technical areas of our industry, but I prefer to think of this as foundational. My degrees (bachelor of science in mechanical engineering with electrical option and master of science in manufacturing management) provided the basis of my engineering knowledge, structured problem-solving, and management capability to prepare me for my career. Ultimately, however, it was each and every work assignment and personal challenges, such as my first executive assignment in a mostly male-dominated field, that filled my toolbox of knowledge.

All of my international experiences have also been very influential to my lifelong learning. From the interactions during visits to my manufacturing plants and technical centers around the world to the very interesting customer dynamics that I’ve experienced in this global industry, I’ve adapted my leadership style to accommodate various cultures. I continue to be touched by each and every encounter.

With each new position I held came more challenges but, more importantly, significantly more opportunity to expand my knowledge. Bottom line, lifelong learning can only be accomplished when you truly tackle every challenge presented—including those outside of your area of expertise—and search for opportunities that enhance your skills, increase your knowledge base, and allow you to ultimately become a better person.

Work-Life Integration

Technology has enabled the move from work-life balance to work-life integration. Do you think that the pendulum will swing back to more separation?

I can’t believe that the pendulum will ever swing back to more separation. Yes, technology enabled the move to work-life integration, and from my standpoint that is a great thing! When I think back to the early days of my career, you had to choose between work and personal because, at that time, you had to be physically there. Now, with technology, I can be productive at any time and from anywhere. Technology has been transformational for managing a balance. However, the risk that must be avoided is swinging the pendulum to the point of using technology to work 24/7, causing you not to be present in your personal life because the tools available create a constant distraction.

As we launched Delphi Technologies (a split from Delphi Automotive) a year ago, we embraced an initiative to create a culture that achieves results while making the company more human. To accomplish this, we initiated coaching for our entire leadership team, and one of its main principles was to “Be Here Now.” The premise is that in