

How to Avoid Being a One-Hit Wonder

Living in Los Angeles, I'm constantly meeting people who had a breakthrough moment sometime in their career. Perhaps they acted in a successful TV series, wrote a screenplay for an acclaimed movie or published a best-selling book.

But after that success, they dropped off the radar, unable to keep the momentum going. Perhaps that's happened to you. Your past success might have been in business, the arts, media or elsewhere, but when it was over, you've never been able to get back into the game. Life is complex, and while there may be many reasons for your detour, here's a few things to consider that might help you keep your career momentum moving forward, and avoid becoming a "one-hit wonder:"

1. People skills are far more important than your skills at your job. There are plenty of gifted directors in Hollywood and in TV commercials that no one wants to deal with because they can't get along with anyone. Be a great writer, producer, actor, whatever—but never forget that relating to other people is critical. Learn to inspire people, and you'll become a magnet in the workplace.

2. Don't get caught behind the curve. Many people fall behind because they can't keep up with evolving technology, changes in the business or new relationships. The people who approve projects change jobs, and technology changes the way we do our jobs. Take the time to keep up. If you're not sure how, read my book, *Jolt!*

3. Stay aware of trends in the culture. Movie producer Ralph Winter once said that creating a successful movie isn't about knowing what's popular now. It's about knowing what will be popular five years from now. Writing a book, producing a movie

or launching a business takes time. Will your subject still be timely when it actually hits the street?

4. Be nice to people on the way up, because you'll meet most of them again on the way down. Far too many people crash because of their arrogance when things were going well. They were rude and inconsiderate, and guess what? People remembered. And sure enough, on the way down, people that could have helped walked away because of how they were treated on the way up.

5. Man up. Stop blaming everybody else. If your career hits the rocks, take responsibility. Even if it wasn't your fault, blaming others won't help. Nothing positive will happen until you take charge of your own life.

6. Finally—keep the long view. I meet many people who are so caught up in pitching their dream project that they stop working on anything else. Even if that dream project happens, once it's over, they have no follow-up. Always have three-four projects ready to create, pitch or produce. This is more difficult than you think, but it's absolutely critical. Nothing is worse than having a great success but having nothing to follow it up. Even Oscar winners make this mistake, and it's one of the quickest ways to becoming a has-been.

Success is so hard to find. Once you have it, stay humble and do your best not to squander it.