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# Future Proofing

To catapult your way to job security in an insecure economy, stretch yourself.

Constant change is the status quo of business. That means anyone who relies on the same skill set risks being left behind. Here's how to ensure ongoing job security and future-proof your career.

**Learn your shortcomings.** One marketing executive I know spots his professional weaknesses by making PowerPoint presentations of his own skills and experiences. Then he asks whether he'd hire himself for the positions he desires most—and deliberately takes steps to acquire the skills and capabilities needed to fill in any blanks.

**Take on stretchwork.** Researchers at Boston University found that the most successful

professionals in contract IT and filmmaking—two careers short on job security—pursued “stretchwork,” roles that emphasized learning new skills over increasing income. Over time, they actually earned more than their peers.

**Don't think of a ladder.** The steady climb isn't the only way to advance a career. Think also in terms of the sidestep, the backstep, and the all-important slingshot. Suppose you find your career plateauing. Consider moving sideways into a position of equal rank and pay, in an organization or division that offers more advancement opportunities. Or you could step back, working for less pay at a more innovative start-up. A slingshot entails taking a sidestep and a backstep at the same time—for example, moving to a department or organization that offers fewer accolades but provides training and experience that promises to be in demand.

When you apply the knowledge, experience, and skills gained through these moves, you increase your chances of leaping far ahead.