



Obligate ram ventilation

Careers are like a shark. To be successful we have to keep moving forwards.

In order to breathe, most sharks have to keep moving at all times. The forward motion allows the oxygen-rich water to pass into their mouths over their gills and out through the gill slits. If they stop moving forwards, their gills won't work, they won't be able to breathe and they will sink to the bottom and die. This system is called "obligate ram ventilation."

Obligate - as in obligatory, as in they need to do it.

Ram - as in forward moving.

Ventilation - as in air.

We've all been at points in our careers when we feel like we have trouble getting air. We're suffocating doing whatever we're doing. What resuscitates is often something very simple: moving forwards. Sometimes that means getting a new job, sometimes that means taking the bull by the horns with the job we have. But it always means looking much further beyond where we are now and swimming in that direction.

It doesn't matter if we go in a straight line to get there, as long as we're moving. Stop moving, we die. Keep moving, we live. It's that simple.

To keep alive, we need to make decisions. We can't sit around and wait...or we die.

To keep healthy, we need to know where we're going, we need to have a purpose or a cause or a belief, a reason to get out of bed. Without something to swim for...we die.

To innovate, to have ideas, to contribute, we need to do things outside our job specs: read books, watch movies, travel, meet new people, do new things. If we do the same thing everyday over and over with no forward momentum....we die.



To make progress, we need to execute, produce something, ship. If we spend all our time trying to make it perfect and never get it out the door...we die.

So the next time someone asks you the secret to a good career, tell them it's simple: obligate ram ventilation.