



The Work Solutions Group because work matters....

The Top 10 Core Competencies of an Exceptional Employee

While there are hundreds of skills to be aware of in the workplace, the following summarizes the top ten for all employees whether you are flipping hamburgers or are on the fast track to partner in your law firm. See if there's one on this list that you need to work on or process. (Note: These are in no particular order).

Understand the Contract(s) - It's imperative to understand that there are *formal* and *informal* contracts between you and your employer, even though they're probably unwritten. The *formal* contract is: You agree to show up per your schedule and perform your assigned work. In turn, your employer agrees to provide you a safe environment to perform your work and then pay you the agreed to rate on a specified schedule. The *informal* contract consists of the rules that govern which people are successful in an organization. Think about where you work now, is there an unwritten rule about working 60-70 hours per week in order to get promoted/noticed? Is there a rule about not disagreeing with the boss in order to be considered a "team player"? The rules of the *informal* contract are not written in an employee handbook, nor are they (hardly) ever talked about. Being aware of the *informal* contract is helpful in figuring out what is valued in your organization and understanding *their* rules of the game.

Be Flexible - Products change, environments change, people change, customers change, job duties change, management changes. When you are unable or unwilling to adapt to change, you immediately reduce your effectiveness and worth to your organization.

Accept Ambiguity - Be able to endure, adjust to, and accept *lots* of ambiguity. The truth is, rarely are things black and white. You need to be able to go with the flow, make your own decisions and understand that you will rarely have all the facts. For most positions in most organizations, training is very informal and you are expected to "fill in the blanks". There will be *huge* gaps of information that isn't communicated during training and beyond. You must be capable of finding your own solutions, based on the minimal information you are given and most importantly, not blame the organization and your co-workers for not telling you everything.

Stay Engaged – This is not about “looking busy”. If you stay engaged and don’t let yourself get bored, you will be the most productive employee, and be assured that the right people *will* notice. It’s about *reputation* and being *trustworthy*.

Be Curious – Being curious is how you learn, it's how you understand someone else's position and it's how you come to understand the “why”. Remember to always question for your own understanding, not to show someone they are wrong. Curiosity is a very useful way of asking questions, getting information and most of all learning! Being genuinely curious is one of the best ways to show you care about your job, your department and your organization. People love to talk about themselves and what they do, so after you have expressed your curiosity, listen to what they have to say!

Become The Expert – Become the expert in your group, department, division, organization, company – worldwide! Employers and colleagues go to, rely on and most importantly, *"experts" are usually promoted and are not laid off or fired!* Be the “go to” person and you become the most valued and recognized employee in your organization.

It's Not What You Say, But How You Say It – It's well known that our words convey only 7% of our message and that the other 93% of our communication is conveyed through body language, tone and inflection. Slight shifts in tone make a *huge* difference in how you are received by the other person and the bottom line is, YOU are responsible for how your message/comment is received by the person you are talking to.

People Are Doing The Best They Can – While many of us find this hard to believe at work, coming to accept this as a framework and paradigm can radically shift your attitude at work. It is false to assume that co-workers and/or management are being malicious unless you have solid proof. Most people *are* doing what they think is right. Typically we jump to the conclusion that people are purposefully conducting themselves in a manner that we do not agree with or that we find offensive. However, the truth is we almost never really know “why” someone has done something or made the decision they did unless we ask them. Do this enough times and you will see the wisdom in always giving people the benefit of the doubt.

Attitude – While this seems an obvious one, how many people do you work with who have lousy attitudes? Have you been guilty? When all other areas are equal: intelligence, experience, education, wouldn't you rather deal with someone who has a positive attitude? Most employers and colleagues would rather hire and work with someone with a positive

attitude since other factors can be taught/learned. Generally, it is believed that an employee's disposition is harder to change than their job-related skill level. Have you ever noticed that when you get your own attitude in check, the good in other people shows up that you were not able to see before?

And maybe most importantly.....

Lighten Up! - The goal with this proficiency is to not take yourself so seriously! We have all "marinated" in the fact that someone at work has said "something", or looked at us "that certain way", only to find out later that the reason a comment was made or a look given actually had nothing to do with us. Typically our inability to lighten up is rooted in fear, feelings of inadequacy or pride. It's amazing that when we *stop* taking ourselves so seriously, our negative characteristics are released and our humor and fun returns!

The bottom line is this: *You do not need to struggle at work, unless you're working at it!*

Notice the twist in this - most of us falsely believe that to work *means* to struggle. The truth is, *if you are struggling at work - you are working at it*. What would it mean to you to get up in the morning and know you were *not* going to struggle with your workday, workplace environment or your co-workers?

It is possible!

**Contact The Work Solutions Group to find out how:
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