

# How-To Tell When an Employee Is About to Leave



Employees at every level are the backbone of any successful company or organization. Without quality people on your team productivity suffers, profits go down and the morale of everyone involved can sink to dangerously low levels. In a day and age where everyone is always on the lookout for a better opportunity and loyalty isn't what it used to be, employee turnover is a real concern. Not only are your best employees a tremendous asset, losing them and onboarding someone new can be prohibitively expensive. That's why now more than ever it's important to recognize the signs when a valuable employee is about leave.

## Less Active in Meetings

Employees that are engaged are quick to share ideas and ask questions. If you notice that someone continuously shows up to meetings just to go through the mandatory motions, it might be a sign that they are less engaged and on their way out. Even if there is just something going on at home or with a family member, you should take note of this withdrawn behavior and at the very least ask if there is anything you can do to help.

## Increased Absences

When a particular employee first started maybe they never called in sick or took extra time off. Now, all of sudden they either consistently show up late and leave early or simply don't show up at all. This is a red flag that you need to address right away as it's a clear sign that something is going on you aren't aware of.

# **No Longer Willing to Commit to Long-Term Projects**

If you notice an employee is no longer willing to commit to long-term goals or assignments, it's likely a sign that they want to finish what work they have left and jump ship. It might even be the case that these types of assignments interfere with the start date of a new job. In this case, there might not be much you can do.

## **Starts Taking More Personal Calls**

If you notice someone frequently excusing themselves from meetings or stepping into the hall to take personal calls something is definitely off. They could be dealing with a family emergency or talking with a prospective employer. While you can't make any assumptions, it's a good idea to check in with this person to make sure everything is alright.

## **Didn't Receive the Raise or Promotion They Were Expecting**

When someone expects to move up in a company and it doesn't happen, it's only natural for them to become less enthused with the work they do day in and day out. At this point, there's a high likelihood that they might begin looking for employment elsewhere. If you value this employee enough to keep them around, you'll probably have to provide some incentive for them to stay.

## **Major Life Event**

Major life events like getting married, a sick family member, giving birth or a spouse finding a new job can change someone's reality in a heartbeat. When these sorts of events happen, they may change how an individual feels about their current employment situation. In some cases, there might be not much you can do but if the person is a critical asset you might want to make them an offer they can't refuse. It's up to you to make that call.

# Friends Are Leaving

If someone has been at a company for any length of time, they have likely bonded with their colleagues and become friends. Not only do these people enjoy working together, they might even share hobbies outside of the office. If someone experiences a mass exodus of their friends leaving, they might be more inclined to leave too. In some cases, if an employee leaves, they may even recruit their colleagues to follow suit.

# Difficult Relationships With Other Employees

Numerous studies have proven that happiness is more important in the workplace than salary. A major key to happiness is an individual's relationship with others. If friction exists between even just two employees, especially employees that work closely together, it may prove too much for them to take and they might quit. In order to prevent this from happening it's a good idea to regularly check in with everyone on your team to make sure everything is on the up-and-up.

# You Just Know

As someone in a position of [leadership](#), you've had to develop the skills of reading people and trusting your intuition. From time to time you might get the sneaking suspicion that all is not well with a certain employee. The majority of the time you're probably right. When this happens, you're best to address the situation upfront instead of waiting and continuing to wonder. By being proactive you place yourself in a position to address whatever the problem may be and your chances of retaining the employee are much greater.

It's unfortunate that days of loyal relationships between employees and the organizations they work for have largely diminished, but such is the reality in which we live. While this is a two-way street, employees are always going to look out for themselves first and foremost. If you want to lessen the amount of turnover you experience and save yourself the headache and cost of constantly having to hire new people, take note of some of the signs above. By doing so, you'll quickly find that your employees see you in a favorable light and will have

much less of an incentive to look for work elsewhere.

If you are at the point of needing to hire a new employee or looking for a new job, contact me, Jeff King, for [recruiting in the Bay Area](#). I work with the [pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries](#).

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## Traits of Indispensable Employees



If you've ever managed a team or overseen a department you've surely noticed people in your organization that stand out. Sometimes it's for the wrong reasons but other times it's because these individuals set themselves apart in ways that others don't. These people go above and beyond the call of duty, move up faster than their colleagues, have the best interests of the company in mind and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of the organization and everyone around them. In short, you would do anything keep these people around.

So what traits do these folks have that sets them apart?

## Want for Continuous Improvement

One trait that all great employees have in common is a will to get better at what they do. While most employees are satisfied to remain in their roles and simply do what they are asked, the superstars are always finding ways to improve their performance. What these people understand that others don't is that in order to stay on top, they constantly have to keep learning and getting better. Whether

that means continuing education or an insatiable desire to move up quickly, these people are any organization's most valuable asset.

## Personal Growth

Not only do [exceptional employees](#) do a great job in the workplace, it's evident that they're obsessed with personal growth. These individuals have curious minds. In the evenings and on the weekends, you'll find them reading books about business, science, history or philosophy. They're always seeking new ideas and perspectives that shape who they are as people. In the workplace, you'll often hear them sharing fresh ideas or new perspectives with those around them. Simply put, these people have a zest for life and new experiences and that translates to workplace as well.

## Discipline

It's no secret that discipline leads to success. That doesn't pertain to only the workplace though. Employees that stand out have their lives in order. You won't find them out partying on weeknights, eating unhealthy foods or wiling away in the EZ Boy for hours on end when the day is done. It's evident that the best and brightest see their work as part of a larger picture that is their life and they have the discipline to maintain a healthy balance in everything they do. They know what's best for them, their co-workers and the organization and would never do anything to compromise what's important.

## Self-Deprivation

No one enjoys doing things they don't want to do. Indispensable employees however, understand that doing things they don't enjoy is a fact of life and necessary at times. They are tough and courageous. In the workplace, they aren't afraid to have difficult conversations if it means bettering the organization or those around them. They're also the ones willing to take on tasks that no one else wants to perform because they know the job has to be done.

Away from work these people are experts at saying no. When everyone else chooses to stay out late or blow off steam, you'll find these people doing things that relax them and help them get recharged because they know they have to be

at their best the next day.

## **Emotional Stability**

Everyone has ups and downs both at and away from the workplace. How individuals handle the constant ebb of highs and lows says a lot about who they are as employees and people. When most employees can't help but bicker, gossip and backstab, the best of the best know that this behavior is poisonous. These people celebrate successes and acknowledge low points but remain even keel and are low-maintenance. They know they have a job to do and aren't going to let anything distract them from achieving the results they want.

## **Make Others Better**

While your best employees are very much focused on their own development and improvement, they recognize the value in making those around them better as well. If they learn a new skill or come up with a more efficient way of getting things done, they readily and enthusiastically share it with everyone involved. The best employees have a fundamental understanding that if individuals in the organization improve, the entire organization becomes better as a result.

Indispensable employees are few and far between. Sometimes they're hard to notice because they aren't the attention-grabbing power-hungry type. Often times they fly under the radar because they are so laser-focused on improving themselves and those around them. It's important to recognize these folks though because they are your greatest asset. Failing to do so could result in a catastrophic loss for your team, department or company.

If you are struggling to put together a strong team, contact me, Jeff King. I am a [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter in the Bay Area](#). I provide [hiring services for biotech, pharmaceutical, and medical device industries](#).

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# Questions to Ask Candidate's References



Never before has hiring the right person for your organization been so important. With such an emphasis on specialized skill sets and company culture, finding the perfect candidate is vital to the success of the entire company. While knowing what questions to ask and how to gauge responses during an interview is a necessary skill, there are other things you need to take into consideration as well. One facet that often goes overlooked is thoroughly vetting a candidate through their references. Sure, a person's references are most likely going to speak highly of them but if you ask the right questions, you'll glean some useful insight that you might have otherwise missed.

## What is Your Relationship to the Candidate?

If you ask this question at the outset of the conversation with a reference you gain context to process the information that is shared. Did the reference oversee the candidate in their previous job? If so, their insight might be especially valuable. Is the reference a co-worker that shared the same responsibilities? In this case, the information you get might be a little biased one way or another.

## Can You Verify A Candidate's Job Title and Dates of Employment?

While this question seems like a no-brainer, it's amazing how many hiring managers fail to ask it. Even this rudimentary information can tell you a lot about

a candidate. Were they in the same position with a company for a long time or do they show a history of never being in one spot for very long? Based on their job title, what were their responsibilities? Do these responsibilities align with what they would be doing in their new role with you?

## **Can You Tell Me About their Job Performance?**

It's easy for anyone applying for a job to beef up their resume with items like inflated sales numbers or claiming responsibility for managing a huge budget and large number of people. The only way to make sure the information on someone's resume is accurate is to ask. If a reference is able to verify the information, great! On the other hand, if there are gaps in the information, it's a sure sign you need to ask some tougher questions to get clarification.

## **What Are the Candidate's Strengths and Weaknesses?**

This question is worth its weight in gold. When you're considering hiring someone, you're going to want to know how they'll fit in culturally and if they have the skills needed to excel. Equally important however, is having an idea of what their weaknesses are. Weaknesses aren't a bad thing, everyone has them, but knowing what someone's shortcomings are will allow you to further deduce if they are a good fit. There's no more reliable source for this information than a previous employer who knows the candidate well, so make sure you don't let this question fall through the cracks.

## **What Was it Like to Work With the Candidate?**

When you ask a reference what it was like to spend a day working with the candidate you'll gain some critical insight into who they are as a person. Were they jovial and fun-loving? Or were they task-oriented preferring to keep to themselves? Did they get along well with others and demonstrate a willingness to work as a team? Or were they primarily concerned with fulfilling their own

duties? How well did this person take direction? Were they open to new ideas and ways of doing things?

## **Why Did the Candidate Leave Their Previous Job?**

While this question can reveal red flags like someone being let go from a previous job, it also gives you an idea of how long they might stay with your company should you end up hiring them. Does this person have a tendency to jump ship thinking the grass is always greener? Or have they demonstrated loyalty in their previous posts?

## **Would You Hire This Candidate Again, and Why or Why Not?**

If you only have time to ask one question, this should be it. A reference's response to this single question can sum up everything that might be revealed in a lengthier conversation. If the reference says they would hire the individual back in a heartbeat, you've probably got a quality candidate. However, if they say no or seem unsure, you might want to do a little digging.

Hiring the wrong person for the job can be costly. A 2017 survey conducted by Career Builder found that companies lost an average of \$14,900 for each bad hire they made. While there is no way to tell for certain how a candidate will perform until they're hired, consistently hiring the wrong people can be devastating for the bottom line. If you think it's difficult to manage with the position open, just imagine how difficult it will be to manage a bad hire.

If you ask the right questions in the interview and take the extra step to ask references some poignant questions, you'll arm yourself with all the information necessary to choose the right person for the job.

As a [Regulatory and Quality recruiter](#), I can help create a list of essential questions to send to candidate's references. I help life sciences employers in the [biotech, medical, and pharmaceutical industries in the Bay Area](#). Contact me, Jeff King, at [jkking@rqfocus.com](mailto:jkking@rqfocus.com) or (541) 639-3501.

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# How to Deal with Difficult Employees



If you're in a position where you manage an entire department or even just a small team you've certainly had to deal with a bad egg or two. Whether the individual wasn't a good fit with the company culture, chronically showed up late or had problems with authority, you had to deal with them somehow. Though it's never a fun experience, it's a reality that every manager is going to have to deal with at some point.

Sadly, many managers let these people hold them captive because they are afraid to take action of any kind to either correct a behavior or dismiss the employee if that is what is necessary. This hesitation can have negative consequences for both you and the people you manage. In order to keep that from happening we've laid out the best ways to deal with difficult employees below.

## Effective Feedback

Quality feedback, even if it is critical, is essential for handling employees that aren't performing up to standard. Where most managers spend weeks, months and even years complaining about employees and nothing else, good managers are willing to have difficult conversations and provide honest feedback if there are issues that need to be addressed.

How you go about providing this feedback is what makes all the difference

though. Screaming, yelling and personal attacks only serve to add fuel to the fire and usually put the subject employee on the defensive. If you find yourself in a position where you're left with no choice but to have a difficult conversation with an employee, make sure you do so in a way that doesn't put them on the defensive and gives specific information on how they can improve.

## **Document Everything**

If you're faced with having to reprimand an employee or even let them go, you're going to need documentation of behavior that provides grounds for disciplinary action. In addition to writing down detailed accounts of incidents that happened, you'll need specific dates, times and names of people that were witness to the behavior as well. While you might feel like you're being too negative about an employee by writing everything down, you have to realize it's the prudent thing to do.

## **Listen**

If you're frustrated with someone you manage it's easy to lose sight of what's really going on. You might find yourself blinded by irritation, the seemingly hopeless state of the situation and the thoughts you already have in your head about the person.

When the time comes to sit down with this employee it's vitally important to be in a space where you're able to see things through their eyes. The reality is that your only chance of finding a solution is having a clear understanding of situation in its totality; that includes the perspective of the employee.

When you actively listen to someone, you'll often be surprised about what you can learn. Maybe the employee is having problems outside the office and you can recommend a place to go get help. Maybe you were unaware of some legitimate concerns they have that need to be addressed. Perhaps all this employee needed was just a chance to be heard and voice their opinion.

# Be Clear and Consistent

You should create a plan of action for the employee to correct their issues and also ask for their input on what they are willing to do to fix it. This will get better cooperation from the employee if they have a say in the plan. When you set expectations make sure they are ones you can stick to as well. If you expect someone to perform a certain task by a certain time you have to hold them to it. If you hold employees to expectations sometimes and other times you let things slide, you send mixed signals and the results can be devastating for your team or organization.

# Don't Be Afraid to Set Consequences

If you've worked through the proper channels of trying to be proactive and nothing seems to have changed, it might be time to make some consequences known. The conversation might be something like the following.

**Manager:** "We identified (issue) a while back and but we haven't seen much improvement. I still believe you can turn this around, but we are at a point that if things aren't better by (specific date) than we won't have a choice but to (write you up, cut your hours, let you go, etc.)."

When people are faced with tangible consequences that could affect them negatively it's often the motivation they need to change. If not, as a manager you can rest assured you gave this person a fair chance.

# Stay Professional

When you're frustrated with an employee it's human nature to think negatively of them. You're going to be tempted to gossip or vent to your colleagues but that's the worst thing you can do. When you disrespect people behind their back you foster an environment of distrust and pollute other peoples' perception of the troubling employee. Simply put, avoid this type of behavior at all costs.

# Be Courageous

As a manager, you've assumed the responsibility of making tough decisions. There's nothing fun about having to fire someone but sometimes you're left with no other option. When you get to this point, don't put it off, don't make someone else do it and make sure you do it as professionally you can. Even though you're sure to feel bad, you have to remember you're doing the right thing and your team or organization will be better off.

No one is going to deny that dealing with difficult employees isn't any fun. As a manager though, this is part of your job. How you handle these tough situations is what makes all the difference. If you do nothing and continue let problems persist, you'll be causing yourself undue stress and you risk sabotaging your teams' morale and productivity too. You may even lose your best employees if the problem is allowed to persist. Instead, if you employ some of the strategies listed above, you'll set yourself up to handle these situations proactively and professionally in a way that is best for everyone involved.

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## How Transparent Should You Be With Your Employees?



At some point in your career you've probably worked for a boss that always made you feel like you're constantly walking on egg shells. You never knew where you stood with this person. They rarely provided feedback, instruction or guidance on

how to do your job or what they expected of you. You always were left wondering if the work you were doing was exceptional or didn't make the grade. The closed-door meetings you were left out of caused you undue stress and no matter how hard you tried you never received the praise you thought you deserved. At work the word used to describe the culture was fear.

Having learned from your own past experiences, you make it a point to be transparent with your employees. Such begs the question though, how transparent is too transparent?

## **Being Transparent Has Its Benefits**

There is no denying that being transparent has its benefits. Perhaps the most obvious positive is that being transparent builds trust. By being transparent as a team lead or manager, you make clear what the expectations are for everyone in the organization. When transparency is present at the top, roles are clearly defined and people are free to do their jobs without having to wonder if they are meeting expectations.

Another benefit of being transparent is that it makes employees feel valued because they are more likely to be involved in the decision-making process. When employees feel like the job they do is important and they are valued as people, your organization will experience far less turnover and everyone will be much better positioned to maximize productivity and efficiency.

## **Avoiding Information Overload**

While it's beneficial for everyone when transparency exists, the fact remains that employees don't need to know absolutely everything to do their jobs. For junior employees who aren't charged with the responsibility of a C-suite executive, there's no need to give them information they don't need. In fact, overloading people with unnecessary information can create a sense of anxiousness and stress. When this happens, people have a hard time focusing and their [productivity suffers](#) as a result.

# Should You Make Salaries Public Information?

It is becoming more and more a trend for companies to make public the salaries of all employees. While this is considered risky business by some, the practice has some potential benefits. Those that employ it believe it demonstrates openness and equality. The policy takes many of the unknowns out of the hiring process, makes expectations clear amongst [team members](#) and leaves plenty of room for people to grow within their respective roles.

## The Importance of Maintaining an Open-Door Policy

There's no worse feeling for someone than wondering if they fit into an organization. When employees feel that they can comfortably come to you and ask even difficult questions, trust is created and you make it clear to everyone that open lines of communication exist. By keeping an open-door policy you foster a culture of inclusion and openness that can only be a benefit.

## Working as a Team

When transparency exists within an organization, space is created for individuals to come together, share ideas, openly communicate and work as a team toward a shared goal. If everyone is on the same page and can get behind the vision and mission set forth by people in positions of leadership, the sky is the limit for how successful an organization can become.

## Creating Transparency

If your company is in its infancy or you simply feel greater transparency is needed, it's a process that has to start from the top and be implemented at every level clear to the bottom and back up again. In order for it to work, transparency is something that has to be embraced by everyone in the entire company. Information and expectations need to be clearly stated in order for habits to change. If more open communication is what you're after, you may have to make

an investment in new technology or infrastructure that makes the sharing of information easier.

You'd be hard pressed to find someone in business that says transparency is a bad thing. The truth is no one likes to feel like they are walking on egg shells, not valued enough to be included in the decision-making process or left wondering if they are meeting expectations. Transparency has many positive characteristics that can help organizations grow and become more cohesive. It's important to make sure you are transparent in the right ways however. The last thing you want to do is give people so much information that they become crippled. If implemented in ways that create a cultural of inclusion, open lines of communication and trust, your organization will be in a position to flourish.

Interested in learning more about a [productive workplace](#)? Contact [Jeff King](#) with RQ Focus. He is a [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter](#) in the Bay Area.

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## Why You Need to Think Outside the Box



Maybe you've been in your current job for a number of years, or you've been on a long-term project. That flare and excitement you had when you started has slowly dissipated. You're still engaged and the work you do has value, but for some reason you've lost the motivation to go the extra mile and you don't feel

challenged. Maybe the days, weeks and months all seem to run together and you feel like a hamster on a wheel. No one can fault you for your seeming indifferent in the workplace.

If this sounds familiar the simple question you have to ask yourself is what can do differently to get yourself out of the rut?

Even though the answer might not be obvious, a good place to start is by thinking outside the box. Clearly repeating the same habits and routines isn't working so it's time to do something different. So what exactly does thinking outside the box mean? Quite simply that you're open to some alternative solutions to reach a desired outcome. Below we discuss some different ways to gain fresh insight and why doing so can be beneficial to your career.

## **Don't Be Afraid to Go Against the Grain**

If humans always stuck to the regimen of how things are "supposed" to be done, the word innovation wouldn't exist. History has proven time and again that our greatest breakthroughs in technology, thought and social change were sparked from people who questioned the status quo. Even more, some of the influential business people of our time are individuals that everyone thought was crazy.

If you find yourself feeling stuck, don't be afraid to take a leap of faith and do something completely different. If that means going back to school and starting an entirely different career, then great. If it means taking a few months off entirely, then go for it. Only you can truly decide what course of action is best for you. The important thing to remember is that while whatever you decide to do might seem scary, you'll be stronger and better off for it in the end.

## **Broader Perspective**

It's easy to exist in a bubble. It's safe there and where you feel most comfortable. The problem with staying in a bubble however, is that you lose out on different perspectives and fresh ideas. If you're willing to expose yourself to alternative ideas and ways of thinking, you gain tremendous insight and just might find a solution to whatever the problem is from a place you least expected.

When you make a conscious effort to welcome new ideas and consider different

possibilities, you'll likely be pleasantly surprised by how quickly your situation improves.

## **Environment is Everything**

Take a moment and think about the environment you work in. Are you stuck in a cubicle cut off from the world? Or does your space encourage creativity and collaboration? When you're at work are you able to focus on the task at hand yet still have the freedom to share your ideas and explore new ways of doing things?

These are all important questions to ask when considering how the physical space around you affects your productivity. If you take the time to honestly evaluate where you work, you might just find that a simple change of scenery is all you need to get back on track.

## **Be Willing to Adapt**

The saying that the only constant in the world is change is especially true when it comes to your career. As technology advances, training becomes better and new ideas emerge that you're going to have to adapt to. Even when you don't agree with the direction something is headed, your ability to embrace change and learn makes a huge difference in determining your success. Even though it might be easy to just keep going about your business as you always have, if you're willing to learn and ask questions you'll set yourself apart from the competition.

## **You're Going to Stand Out**

Anybody can be just another face in the crowd that follows directions. Again, there is virtually no risk involved here and it's a comfortable place to be. However, if you're willing to ask difficult questions, share your ideas and aren't afraid of failure, you position yourself as someone that is capable of finding solutions to complex problems and that alone is invaluable.

Thinking outside the box can mean different things to different people. While it's important to make sure your decisions are grounded in an element of reason and logic, being afraid of what might happen if you take a chance is a crippling thought that is only going to hold you back. If you feel like you're not where you

want to be or the current way of doing things isn't working, make an effort to look at your situation through a different lens. If you keep an open mind, welcome new ideas and are willing to adapt, you're well on your way becoming happier and [more productive](#).

Contact Jeff King, [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter](#), for more information work happiness. He can find qualified individuals jobs in [pharmaceuticals, biotech, or the medical device industry](#).

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## The Importance of Starting Your Morning Out the Right Way



There's no denying that we all deal with stress throughout our day. [Managing employees, meeting deadlines](#), getting the kids to school on time - our minds are constantly jumping from one worry to another in a constant juggling act takes its toll on your health, emotional well-being and relationships with others. While daily stresses and concerns aren't going to disappear anytime soon, the good news is that if you start your day out in a healthy way, you can increase your productivity, have a clearer mind, better health and more meaningful relationships with everyone both inside and outside of the office.

### Practice Gratitude

What do you do when you first wake up in the morning? Do you reach for the night stand and immediately check emails for the latest fires? Or do have

conscious thoughts about being thankful for the roof over your head, your family and how lucky you are compared to those less fortunate?

Science has proven time and again that if you start your day by practicing gratitude in some way, you realize the day in front of you is a gift to do with as you please. One of the most effective ways to practice gratitude is to journal. By taking even just a few minutes to make a list of the things you're thankful for you gain clear perspective and put your mind at ease.

## **Meditating**

There are more types of meditation than you can count. Whether you take just a few minutes or set aside some significant time, practicing meditation every morning goes a long way in helping you feel content. If practiced on a regular basis, meditation's benefits also include increased confidence, self-esteem and presence.

While meditation can be done any time of day, practicing it in the morning is highly effective. If meditation is new to you, start out by finding a quiet space where you can sit just for a couple minutes and close your eyes. From here your options are limitless. You can choose to focus on your breath, do a scan of your entire body to see how your feeling or repeat a simple mantra. Whatever method you choose, remember this is your time to acknowledge your thoughts and practice self-love.

## **Affirmations**

While it's easy to let the troubles of yesterday linger into the day ahead, happy and productive people see each new day as a fresh start. Affirmations are a great way to put yourself in a positive mindset. Examples of simple affirmations include:

- I am capable of making smart decisions for myself.
- I let go of negative thoughts and am grateful for everything that is good.
- I'm a loving, caring, kind, compassionate, grateful, happy, healthy human being.

These are just a few of an infinite number of positive affirmations that you can say out loud to yourself and even write on post-its and tape to your bathroom mirror

so you'll have no choice but to read them every morning.

## Make Your Bed

Even though making your bed seems like a menial task that should have little to no affect on your day science says it's quite the opposite.

Taking a couple of minutes to straighten the sheets and comforter each morning gives you an immediate sense of accomplishment that puts you in a positive frame of mind. In this mindset, you're more apt to have the motivation to get the most out of your day and accomplish the things you need to in a timely manner.

## Exercise

Physical activity is great way to begin your day. Whether it's a trip to your personal trainer, a yoga session at home or a leisurely walk around the block, exercise gives your body and mind a chance to wake up and get ready for what lies ahead. By getting your blood flowing and allowing your body to release feel-good chemicals to your brain like serotonin and dopamine, you put yourself in a positive frame of mind that will carry over to the workplace and stay with you throughout the day.

Not everyone is a morning person. Maybe you're a fan of hitting the snooze button a couple of times before you get out of bed. Even if that's the case, when you finally decide to begin your day, incorporating some simple healthy routines can make a world of difference in how the rest of your day goes. If you take a little time to care for yourself in the morning before you jump on a conference call or start replying to emails, you'll quickly find yourself much happier, healthier and experience more fruitful relationships with everyone around you.

Contact Jeff King, [Regulatory and Quality Recruiter](#) in the [Bay Area](#), for more information.

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# Soft Skills that Employers Want in a New Hire



We've all been in the position of looking for a new job for one reason or another. Whatever the reason may be, searching for a job that fits your skillset comes down to more than having the best cover letter and updating your resume. Sure, those things might land you an interview but if you want to set yourself apart from the competition it's crucial that you demonstrate to your potential employer that you have the intangibles, or soft skills that it takes to do the job. Not sure exactly what soft skills are? You're in luck as we define them below and highlight the most important ones that employers are looking for.

## What's the Difference Between Hard and Soft Skills?

There's no denying that hard skills are needed in every job. These skills are teachable and quantifiable. Skills like language proficiency and computer programming may be essential for the job and your performance can easily be measured.

On the other hand, the term soft skills references things like your ability to show up on time, meet deadlines, communicate with clients and work in a team. Though they are tougher to measure on a standard review or evaluation, soft skills are noticeable and can make or break your chances of landing the job you covet.

# Solving Problems

Let's face it, the vast majority of jobs in the modern workplace entail far more than what is written in a job description. While certain tasks and expectations should be explicitly laid out in front of you, you're going to be expected to think outside the box and handle challenging situations in an effective manner. If you're headed in for an interview, you best be prepared to discuss situations in which you've had to be resourceful and overcome adversity in the past.

## Cultural Fit

Even if you have hard skills that jump off the page to a hiring manager it's equally important that you're a good fit for the company culture. Is the company one where both hard work and fun are valued? Are you expected to wear a tie every day or is denim on casual Fridays the norm? If you take the time to do some preliminary research about the company and its culture, you'll not only be better prepared for the interview but be able to gauge whether the company's core values align with yours or not.

## Dependability

One of the top skills that employers look for is dependability. Though they may seem simple, habits like showing up on time, meeting deadlines and being readily available go a long way in determining your value as an employee. If you land an interview be prepared to honestly answer questions about your work ethic and share examples of how you've demonstrated dependability in previous jobs. This is also becoming more important as some employers are allowing employees to work remotely on occasion or on a regular basis. And if you seek a position that allows the flexibility to work from home, or should make sure you have some good examples of when you've done that and met your deadlines.

## Coachability

Let's say that you have all the skills and experience necessary to do the job you're applying for. It's easy to think that you'll jump right in be a catalyst for success. Even if such is the case though, it's a virtual certainty that the processes and

systems you'll be working with are different from what you're accustomed to. Having an open mind and being willing to listen shows your employer that you're open to learn and can easily adapt. In my years of recruiting, I've seen numerous occasions where the person that was hired was not the one with the strongest technical skills, but the one that showed more enthusiasm and willingness to learn what they didn't know.

## **Being Open to Feedback**

If you're just starting out in a new job there's going to be a significant learning curve. It's almost a guarantee that you're going to make mistakes, and that's understandable. How you handle feedback however, is what can set you apart. Are you open to suggestions or do you shut down and see constructive criticism as a personal attack? If you take your ego out of play and welcome feedback from others, you'll quickly be seen as a team player that adds value to the organization. Conversely, if you take criticism as a personal attack, you may be viewed as someone who will cause problems within the group.

## **Taking Initiative**

While it's important to do more listening than talking when you first take a new job, employers value people who aren't afraid of taking initiative. During an interview you'll likely be asked to talk about a time when you came up with a new idea and how it was implemented. If you can demonstrate that you're comfortable with thinking outside the box and putting those thoughts into action your employer will know that you bring a lot more to the table than simply being a task master.

## **Flexibility**

There's little doubt that rigidity can be the kiss of death in the workplace. Whether you're working in accounting or as an events coordinator you're going to be asked to adapt to change and reprioritize at some point. Do you become flustered or are you able to take everything in stride? Your ability to meet a deadline a day earlier than expected or change the scope of a marketing campaign at a moment's notice goes a long way in the eyes of your employer.

There's no doubting the value of a polished resume and being prepared to highlight your skillset in a job interview. What's going to set you apart however, is your ability to demonstrate the soft skills necessary to be effective in the workplace. Are you willing to listen, learn and adapt? Do you work well with others in a collaborative environment? Are you capable of voicing your opinion and implementing new ideas and methods? If you can answer yes to these types of questions and demonstrate soft skills to your employer, you'll set yourself apart from the competition and greatly increase your chances of landing the job.

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## How to Increase Your Team's Productivity



Leading a team of people in the workplace is a monumental responsibility. Not only are you charged with maximizing productivity and efficiency, but it's your job to keep morale high, have an open door and make sure expectations are clearly communicated. If you're in a position of leadership you're sure to encounter difficult situations that hamper the productivity of your team. How you handle these challenges can be the deciding factor in whether your team is successful or not. Below we discuss our best strategies for managing your team effectively and making sure productivity is maximized.

# Communication is Essential

At some point in your career, you've probably had a [manager](#) that constantly made you feel like you were walking on egg shells. You never knew whether you were exceeding expectations or failing miserably. Simply put, this individual didn't communicate and trying to do so with them was difficult at best.

If your team is going to succeed, it's paramount that you not only clearly communicate with each member of your team, but make clear the expectations of up-front professional communication to everyone involved. If communication happens through [appropriate channels](#) in a safe space, job responsibilities are clearly defined and people feel empowered to ask questions or seek help, cohesiveness can thrive.

# Know Strengths and Weaknesses

Whether you want to admit it or not, as a leader you have strengths and weaknesses. While being aware of your own skills and shortcomings is essential, knowing those of each team member is vital as well.

Maybe someone on your team is great with analyzing raw data and numbers. You probably don't want to employ this individual to strategize a creative presentation. Leave that to the outgoing creative person that thinks outside the box.

When you create an environment that allows everyone to stay in their lane and utilize their innate abilities, you foster a freedom that allows everyone to feed off of each other and be excited about the work they are doing.

# Environment is Key

It has been widely documented that the physical environment in which people work greatly affects how they feel. Does your team function best in an environment where everyone has their own office and a door they can close or is a shared space that welcomes creativity and sharing of ideas better? Whatever your team's work environment is, it should reflect the culture of the organization and allow people to comfortably go about their tasks in the most efficient manner

possible.

While the physical environment in which people work is key, having the necessary infrastructure in place is equally important. Making sure that your internet connection is solid, that IT help is readily available and that all systems are functioning properly and up to date allows team members to do their job with limited interruptions.

## **Incentives**

There is nothing more motivating than [incentives in the workplace](#). While monetary bonuses and rewards are always popular, there are plenty of other ways to motivate your team with minimal cost. If a deadline is on the horizon or a sales goal needs to be met, incentivizing your team with things like paid time off, a catered lunch or skipping out of the office early on a Friday for happy hour can do wonders. Frequent rewards for a job well done keep everyone's spirits high, are motivating, and make people feel like they are working toward something greater than themselves.

## **Stay Out of the Way**

One of the struggles for almost every leader is striking a balance between managing and giving people the freedom to do their job. While it's important that you make sure each person on your team is performing as expected, creating the space for individuals to fully utilize their skills is important as well. When you build trust within your team and allow individuals the autonomy to do their best work, they do so with tremendous pride and your team can flourish as a result. This is also a key to keeping your best performers from looking for challenges elsewhere.

## **Mutual Feedback**

It's human nature to want to know how you're performing. Consistent feedback is crucial so that everyone is on the same page and expectations are met. Scheduling frequent reviews with each team member is a must.

During these reviews, it's important that the conversation be an open discussion

about performance and anything that might be missing. This can go both ways however. As the manager of a team you need to have a conversation about a team members' performance, but taking it a step further and asking for feedback about the job you're doing as a leader as well can provide important insight. Ask them what you can do to help them be more effective in their job. You may learn about issues you hadn't even thought of. When professional back-and-forth dialogue exists that is helpful for all parties involved, your team only stands to benefit.

It's no mystery that leaders are needed in every organization. Without leaders to provide direction, motivation and oversight, most companies would perish. Some leaders are better than others though. If you find yourself in a position of managing a team or department, utilizing some of the tactics above can mean the world for your teams' productivity and set you apart as someone who is both respected and effective.

Do you want to learn more? Contact me, Jeff King, owner of [RQ Focus](#). I help business owners match with the right employee for their job opening in the [life science industries](#).

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## **The Importance of Punctuality in the Workplace**



The reality for many modern-day workers consists of constantly looking at their phones, checking e-mail and running from one important meeting to another trying not to be the last one in the door. In a world where technology reigns

supreme and productivity is the yard stick by which success is measured, it's easy to see how information overload causes you to become self-absorbed and lose all track of time and what is going on around you. If you're looking to separate yourself from those around you however, punctuality goes a long way. Even though being fashionably late is expected for a date or social gathering, nothing could be further from the truth in the workplace as everyone's time is valuable. Below we discuss what being on-time means and why it is so [important](#).

## First Impressions Matter

If you're interviewing for a new position or are brand new on the job, there are few excuses to ever be late. Being early or on-time doesn't seem terribly difficult but it's truly amazing how many people lose out on jobs or opportunities simply because they show up even just five minutes after the scheduled time.

If tardiness is something you think is too harshly considered, imagine the following scenario. You are in negotiations of business arrangement with a potential partner. You do all your homework ahead of time and show up early to prepare and make sure everything is all set. You wait and wait and the other party finally shows up 15 minutes after the scheduled time acting as if nothing is wrong. What are your immediate impressions of this individual? Are they reliable? If they can't show up in time for the first meeting can they be trusted to meet the demands of the proposed arrangement in the future? How will this behavior be reflected on by clients or customers?

Even though being late just once seems like a forgivable offense, it leaves a lasting mark that is difficult to overcome in the early stages of any professional relationship. If you truly care about [crushing an interview](#) or making a notable impression on your boss when you're first starting out, being punctual goes a long way in letting everyone know around you know you care.

## Repeat Offenses

Maybe you work in a job that requires weekly or monthly internal meetings that are mandatory for everyone to attend. You're probably not the only one that thinks these meetings are somewhat of a waste of time but continually showing up late for happenings that are on the calendar days or weeks in advance isn't a

habit you want to get in to. Not only does this behavior show a lack of concern for the immediate issues at hand, it speaks volumes to your greater concern for your job and the organization and can significantly hinder your chances for promotion.

## **Meeting Deadlines**

Being on time isn't just about showing up when you're supposed to for meetings and events. It also speaks to your ability to manage the expectations set upon you. If you continually demonstrate that you meet deadlines and finish tasks in a timely manner it won't go unnoticed. Doing so let's everyone in your organization know that you care about the quality of your work and the overall success of the company. Being reliable builds trust quickly and can be the deciding factor in determining your movement upward.

## **Job Security**

Have you ever noticed that the first people to be let go are usually the ones that are consistently late? While this behavior may be a sign of other symptoms that lead to someone being fired, it alone likely stands out the most. Not only is being late noticeable to everyone around you, it strongly conveys a lack of concern for the job you're doing, and a lack of respect of everyone else's time. In the event that your organization is forced to lay people off, being on time and working diligently to meet deadlines goes a long way in making sure your neck isn't on the line.

Even though some might not agree, the saying "five minutes early is on time and on time is late" still rings true. There's no disputing that the demands of the workplace today take a toll on everyone. However, if you consistently show up to meetings at or before the scheduled time and complete your work when expected, you send a strong message to those around you. It's a message that commands respect and let's everyone know you are to be taken seriously. This alone can separate you from others and can prove pivotal for career advancement and meeting your professional goals.