

# 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.

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# How-To Say No at Work



Do you find yourself not accomplishing everything you set out to do each day in the work place? Does the adage “not enough hours in the day” ring true on a regular basis? Do you constantly put the needs of others before your own? If your answer is yes to any of these questions you are likely what is commonly referred to as a “people pleaser.” Helping others is a core value and certainly an admirable one but if you’re not careful, it’s one that can be dangerous for your productivity, state of mind and physical health. If you frequently find yourself stressed and burned out at the end of the day, learning to tactfully say NO is a skill worth developing.

## Make Yourself a Priority

You probably make it a habit to help others and go the extra mile. But when was the last time you made it a priority to take care of your own needs before someone else’s? In order to be at your best, you have to be in the right spot to do so. Prioritizing things like exercise, getting enough sleep and taking a day off all go a long way in helping you recharge and stay fresh.

## Set Healthy Boundaries

By nature, the word “no” carries a negative connotation that most people are afraid to express. However, it has many positive benefits that not only will find you in a healthy frame of mind but being more productive as well. The first step to saying no is setting healthy boundaries and sticking to them. This simply means clearly stating your priorities and limits and communicating them to those around you. If you make this behavior a regular practice, it lets people know that you can’t be taken advantage of and they will respect you for it.

# Check Your Schedule

You're probably inundated with requests to take on more work or help with items outside the scope of what you normally do. While it's easy to immediately say yes to helping out with something, it's perfectly acceptable to let someone know you need to look at your schedule and will respond accordingly. If you have the time to fit something extra in great, but if you're already committed then letting people know is reasonable as well.

# What's in it For You?

While asking the question of what potential gain you might receive in return for helping someone out might seem selfish, it's important to consider. There are plenty of people out there that are all too ready to accept help but unwilling to return the favor in the future. Before you commit to taking on work for someone else, ask yourself the question of the likelihood of that favor being reciprocated.

# Ask Someone You Trust if You're Unsure

We are all asked to help out from time to time. If you find yourself on the fence of saying yes or no however, take the time to seek the opinion of someone you can confide in. By verbalizing your concerns, you not only gain a valuable outside opinion, but allow yourself to consider all the options more clearly. Even if you don't take the advice, you'll at least have more information to help you make the decision that is best for you.

# Delegate

The demands of the modern workplace can be overwhelming. Trying to accomplish every task on your own can lead to burnout in the office and negatively effect your health and relationships outside of work as well. If you work on a team or within a specific department, realize that your colleagues are there to help. By delegating tasks or projects to the people around you, you not only save yourself time, but demonstrate to others that they are valuable and can be trusted. This spells good news for everyone involved.

## Provide Context

One of the most critical components of saying no is providing context. If you simply tell someone no you risk coming off as aloof or not caring. But if you make it a point to honestly explain to the person requesting your help that your plate is already full and that you are willing to say yes in the future, you come across as respectful and honest.

## Say Yes to the Person and No to the Task

Empathy is a sign of high emotional intelligence. If someone asks for your help and you simply don't have the time or resources to do so, tell them that you understand the situation they are in but that you simply can't this time around. Saying no in this manner makes it clear that you value the person in question and are willing to help in the future.

Saying no is counterintuitive for most people. However, learning to do so in a tactful manner when it makes sense goes a long way toward increasing your own productivity and well-being. If you take the steps necessary to make yourself a priority, set professional boundaries and evaluate all your options before you say yes or no, you'll be in a position to make the best decision for yourself and those around you.

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## Should You Take that Promotion?



From the moment you finish your formal education, it's ingrained in your mind that you should always be looking to move up in whatever company you go to work for. The idea that if you show up early, stay late and consistently go the extra mile to set yourself apart is the key to getting promoted is what we are taught to believe. While getting promoted is usually equated with higher pay, more responsibility and a clear sign that your hard work has finally been noticed, there are a host of factors to consider before you sign on the dotted line.

Are you 100% ready to take the promotion? The obvious answer for most people is "absolutely". Even though getting the news that you're being promoted is sure to bring about feelings of elation in the immediacy, it's important to look at the opportunity from every angle as accepting could be life-changing. Below are some questions to consider with a clear head before you take the plunge.

## **Do You Have the Necessary Experience?**

Maybe you've been in your current role for a while and have proven time and again that you have what it takes to do your job. With your pending promotion however, do you have the skills and experience that will be required to meet the demands of the new post? For example, maybe you've been working in a role that doesn't require management skills and now you'll be charged with overseeing an entire team or department. If you plan on "figuring it out as you go," you may want to seriously consider the impact taking the promotion might have on you, the organization and your team.

## **Will You Receive the Necessary Training and Support?**

The truth is that not everyone who gives a promotion does so with consideration for what life will be like for the person in the new role. More often than you might think, managers don't have the clearest idea about what it takes to do the job effectively on a daily basis. This can result in a lack of necessary training and support which can not only make your life more stressful, but have devastating effects for the morale and productivity of the organization. So, before you dive in head first, make certain that you'll have access to the training, resources and support you need.

# **Is the Promotion Aligned with Your Goals?**

You have probably given some serious thought to the things you want to accomplish both professionally and personally. Maybe you want to become an influential leader but need more time to sharpen your skills or want to spend more time with your young family but the demands of the new job will have you spending your weekends at the office. While prestige and more money are alluring, your best bet is to carefully consider the implications the promotion will have on life as you know it before you make a decision.

# **Does the Promotion Fit with Your Strengths and Passions?**

Taking inventory of what you are good at and truly enjoy is a crucial step in deciding whether or not to take a promotion. Maybe you love working one-on-one with customers and colleagues and enjoy seeing the tangible difference you make, but your new job all but eliminates the opportunity for you to utilize your skills in a way you enjoy. What if you'll be chained to a desk away from the day-to-day or have to travel more than you'd like? Once again, it's easy to get excited about the benefits the job could bring in the short-term, but failing to realize the effects it might have on your core values in the long-term is a mistake you don't want to make.

# **Have You Asked the Right Questions?**

Just because you're up for promotion doesn't mean it's always your best option. Before you take on added responsibility, make sure you do some thorough research and ask the right questions. Was the previous person in the role fired? Is your promotion part of a reorganization? Does the new position see excessive turnover? What do your trusted colleagues, family and friends think about the opportunity? If you take the time to examine all the different dynamics of why you're being promoted, you might find some red flags that cause you to think twice.

Getting promoted is exciting, there's no doubt about it. It's a sign that your hard work has paid off and managers feel like you have the skills to take on more

responsibility. Not to mention you're going to be compensated accordingly. While it all seems wonderful in the short-term, it's essential that you consider every implication taking a new job will have before you make a commitment. If you take the time to look at the entire picture as objectively as possible, you'll be in a better place to make a decision that is best for you and everyone involved.

If you do decide the promotion is not right for you, let your manager know you really appreciate being offered the new position and explain what you like about the opportunity, and what your concerns are. This discussion will let your manager know you've seriously considered the opportunity and may help determine a training plan moving forward.

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## How to Be Taken More Seriously at Work



Maybe you're known as the life of the party, the fun guy or just someone that anyone can come to for some needed levity in the office. You're loved by your colleagues for this reason, but something seems to be lacking. You show up early, do more than is expected and stay late. While you're happy to be the lively one at work, you wish your professional efforts received the recognition they deserve. The good news is that you can still let your shining personality make the office fun for everyone AND be recognized for your merits as a valuable employee.

## **Be Assertive**

Maybe you're the one that your colleagues come to for advice or help in difficult situations. You always find yourself giving and expect nothing in return. This is a wonderful quality to have but if you're sick of being a pushover, don't be afraid to show your confidence. Doing so doesn't mean being the cocky person that toots their own horn, but giving yourself and your team credit and confidently displaying your expertise is contagious. When you adopt this attitude you'll garner the respect of everyone around you and you'll start to feel valued and appreciated.

## **Confide in a Mentor**

If you find yourself struggling to ask others for help, you're not alone. If you want to grow, you're going to need help along the way. Coming to this realization and seeking out a mentor that genuinely has your best interests in mind is invaluable. If you make the effort to let someone experienced know that you're passionate about learning more and becoming more skilled in your job, it can help catapult your career and you'll quickly set yourself apart from other colleagues in your same position.

## **Be Prepared**

There's nothing that lets others know that you care about your work like being prepared ahead of time. Whether it's getting a presentation done in advance or staying an extra hour late to finish up an important project, the smallest of extra efforts and preparedness don't go unnoticed. If you consistently show that you're not just on top of things, but ahead of the game, everyone around you will take notice and your level of respect will go up immediately.

## **Set Professional Boundaries**

While you take pride in the fact that you can be there for anyone at any time, setting boundaries is crucial to your health and that of those around you. It's all too easy for professional and personal lines to become blurred when you're too accessible. Having an open-door policy is great for everyone in your organization

but should you find yourself participating in someone's personal affairs, do the professional thing and recommend help outside of the workplace.

## **Look the Part**

As much as we all would like to admit that appearances don't matter at work, they do. There is something to be said for the way you dress as dictated by the environment in which you work. Whether it's a suit and tie or jeans and button-down shirt, people notice the way you dress. Your attire alone isn't going to win you that coveted promotion but making sure your clothes are clean and appropriate for your work environment goes a long way toward earning the respect of those around you.

## **Look for Opportunities to Help**

There is nothing better in a manager's eyes than someone that offers to help. Whenever you have the chance, offer to lend a hand with a difficult project or assignment. Doing so shows not only your willingness to go the extra mile, but sets you apart as a collaborative leader that is willing to take on challenges to learn more, and are capable of doing more. By performing tasks that don't necessarily benefit you directly, you make it known to everyone around you that you're reliable and care about the greater good of the team or organization.

## **Follow Up**

It's one thing to complete a task on time and to the best of your ability. Following up is an entirely different story. If you complete a project you have only satisfied the initial needs. Making it habit to check in every so often to ensure that all needs are met doesn't go unnoticed and can win you long-term relationships that prove invaluable down the road. If you find yourself scattered, give yourself email reminders or alerts so that you can precisely time all follow up communication.

## **Remember Names**

Think about the times you walk into places where you are a repeat customer. Having someone remember you by name sets your experience off on the right

foot. Though it's a difficult task, especially if you have a large number of people or vendors you work with, recognizing people's names is paramount. Even though much communication takes place electronically, there is no substitute for the personal touch of addressing someone by name.

Being taken seriously at work is something we all crave. You want your contributions to be noticed and valued. If you find yourself in a position where you feel that your diligence isn't being praised, take a step back and look at the bigger picture. Chances are that if you implement a few new practices and adjust your attitude accordingly, you'll find yourself on the fast track to more success before you know it.

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## **The Do's and Don'ts of E-mail Etiquette**



If you're like most people, email plays a major in your life. Maybe it's the first thing you look at when you wake up in the morning and the last thing you check before you go to bed. While personal emails between you and your buddies might not require much decorum, such is not the case when communicating electronically with colleagues, clients or anyone work-related. Even though you may not like it, how and when you communicate via email for professional purposes can have a tremendous and lasting effect on your reputation. To ensure you send emails that are not only professional, but set you apart from your colleagues, we've compiled our best list of Do's and Don'ts below.

# Introduction

If you're emailing someone for the first time, it's imperative to get your introduction right as it can make or break the entire conversation. Using a proper salutation such as "Good Morning" or even "Hello" is better than "Hey" or "Hi". From here, get right to the point of who you are and why you're reaching out. The tone of introductory emails should always be upbeat and courteous while remaining highly professional.

## Subject Line

You probably receive dozens of emails every day. Chances are you probably skip over the ones that aren't flagged as important or whose subject lines don't catch your eye. The same goes for emails you send as well. Using subject lines like "FYI," "Circling Back," and "Hi" ensures that your emails won't be read either. Your subject line should be concise and effectively communicate what your email is about. Subject lines like "Board Meeting Minutes" and "Time Off Request" directly communicate to the recipient what your message is about and are more likely to be read.

## Speaking of Concise

Professional emails aren't for sharing your thoughts and feelings in most cases. Instead, they are intended to communicate necessary information in an orderly, easy-to-read fashion. If you have several items to discuss in your note, use headings, short sentences and bullet points. Avoid using too many adjectives and excessive flowery language. Remember, your message is one of many that is going to be read so get to the point.

## Don't Hit Reply-All

Sometimes you'll get emails from C-Suite Executives or Administrative Assistants addressed to 10 or more people asking for your availability to volunteer for a community event or something similar. When responding, make sure you reply ONLY to the original sender. The entire thread doesn't need to know that you're committed to your kids' soccer game and can't make it.

# Why Are You Forwarding This to Me?

The forward option in email is a great way to share ideas and gather input quickly. Whether it's something you're passing along to another department, HR or a colleague, take the time to write a sentence or two explaining the reason you're forwarding the message. Failing to take this simple step will leave your recipient either clueless or guessing at the intent of your forward.

## The Power of One

As we've discussed, email is a form of communication that is meant to exchange information quickly and efficiently. While being concise is paramount, limiting the subjects you cover to one per message avoids confusion and makes organization easier for everyone involved. If you find yourself sending a message with multiple topics, make them brief and list them out in bullet point fashion.

## Emojis

When you're sending a professional e-mail, you're not telling your boo how much you miss them. At all costs, avoid using emojis. Though you might think you're being funny or playful, all you're really doing is causing people to question your competency.

## Why are You Sending Me This?

Make sure that the intended recipients are in the right fields before you hit send. There are plenty of stories of people that sent an email to the wrong person and the consequences can be devastating. Even if you're sure your message is bullet-proof, take the necessary time to give it a second look.

## Grammar Police

While you might not care if someone uses "u" instead "you," others might. And even if they don't, you're always better off being safe than sorry on this one. Taking the time to use the right "there" or "their," commas and semicolons goes a long way in avoiding confusion and conveys intelligence to your reader. Though

the occasional grammar mistake is forgivable, repeated or blatant offenses can damage your credibility.

## **All Caps**

Writing in ALL CAPS is something you should never do in an email. To your reader, it seems like you're shouting. Can you imagine reading a line in an email that says "NEVER BE LATE AGAIN"? Using all caps communicates unrest and is seen as confrontational. If you need to make a point, do it professionally and avoid language that incites anger or fear.

## **Read Receipts**

When you send important emails, you want to make sure they are read. Utilizing the read receipt option lets you know that your message has not only been seen, but read as well. This eliminates any potential breakdown in communication.

## **Before You Hit Send...**

Once you hit send whatever you've typed is gone forever. There are no do-overs. Before you hit send, take the time to thoroughly read what you've written to make sure that you are communicating the right message. Did you answer all the questions the original sender asked you? Were your directions clear?

Whether you hate e-mail or love it, it's not going away anytime soon. Being unprofessional or lazy in your electronic communication can prove costly. On the other hand, taking time to make sure your messages are professionally written, intended for the right recipient and communicate necessary information in a concise manner will set you apart from those that fail to make the effort.

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# How-To Delegate Effectively at Work



Many business leaders hesitate when delegating tasks. After all, they can get the job done right, the first time (or so they think). However, delegating can bring in new valuable perspectives and an increased productivity for the company.

Delegation in the workplace today is largely lacking and the result is insufficient communication and a general absence of positive morale. If you find yourself in a position of leadership or management, delegating work to others not only reduces your workload, but does wonders for your colleagues and the company as well.

## The Foundation

If you're going to effectively delegate work and responsibilities to others, there are some key dynamics that must be present in an organization to begin with. If any of the following are absent, effective delegation doesn't stand a chance.

## Communication

Every employee on a team or in an organization must clearly understand what is expected and what the objectives are. It rests on your shoulders to make sure that core values, policies and expectations are clearly understood by everyone involved.

# **Trust**

If you don't fully trust your co-workers or they don't trust you, you're in for an uphill battle. While trust takes time to build, it's hard to win back once it's broken. In order to achieve maximum productivity while maintaining high morale, trust is a must.

# **Honesty and Respect**

The relationships between everyone involved must be built on honesty and respect. We all are prone to mistakes occasionally, but if those mistakes are dealt with in an honest and respectful manner, everybody wins. You're in trouble though if there is deceit or lack of respect.

If you feel your work environment is healthy for everyone involved, you're in a fortunate spot where delegating can really do wonders. Now it's up to you to get to work. Below are some tangible benefits that proper delegation brings to all parties.

# **The Opportunity to Train and Grow**

As a leader, it's your job to identify opportunities for everyone on your team to learn and become better. If you're actively seeking out these opportunities there will be tasks and responsibilities that you can delegate to others. With the right encouragement and training along the way, most employees will jump at the opportunity to make a greater contribution. This can also help to retain your employees since they are feeling challenged.

# **Weaknesses Become Strengths and Strengths Become Stronger**

You're probably already doing a great job of identifying the strengths of your employees. And maybe you've already given them added responsibilities that align with those strengths. Some of the greatest opportunities for growth though, come from identifying weaknesses and giving an individual added responsibility where they need growth. This might seem terrifying to both you and the employee

at first, but with the proper guidance and feedback along the way, the employee and your organization can experience tremendous growth and empowerment.

## **Delegate Toward a Goal**

Delegating the occasional task here and there is great. For a short time, you feel relieved and the person you delegated to feels appreciated. But if you take this a step further and align delegated tasks with a greater goal or objective, everyone can be committed to the process. When everyone works together on a project from its infancy to the final product, the sense of accomplishment is infectious. If this process of delegation becomes a regular occurrence, your employees are sure to remain hungry and keep coming back for more.

## **Never Lose Your Identity**

Successful companies all have core values that govern everything they do. Delegating is the perfect time to not only reinforce core values, but to demonstrate how each and every task at hand reflects and promotes what you're about. When everyone can see your "WHY" in the work they do, it reinforces that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

## **Cross-Delegation**

Different departments within organizations see things differently. The classic case is the rift between sales and production where there is often disconnect and misunderstanding. A great way to bridge the gap between any subsets in a team or company is to delegate tasks that require collaboration. While there is sure to be some angst, it's up to everyone to find a way to get the job done. Collaboration provides broad insights that garner respect and understanding between departments that don't necessarily work alongside each other on a daily basis.

## **Always Celebrate Success**

When an important project is finished and meets or exceeds goals, is profitable, aligns people around shared values and creates momentum, it deserves to be recognized and celebrated. Whether it's a simple catered lunch on the company

dime or a trip to a sunny destination, recognizing the hard work and success of the people that made it all happen is essential and sets you up for continued success in the future.

If you are a business leader and find yourself overwhelmed, it might be worth taking a step back and evaluating the foundation of communication, trust, honesty and respect. It very well could be that there are some fundamental issues that can be resolved with collective input and discussion. If all the dynamics are in sync, you're in a great spot to spread responsibility, help each individual grow and realize success that you never thought was attainable. It's at this point that the hard work becomes fun for everyone.

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## Signs That You're Not Going to Get Promoted



Promotions are the goal for most employees. After all, who wants to stay in a dead-end job? Unfortunately, some employees are stuck in jobs with no opportunity for growth or a raise. If this is you, it might not be obvious at first. You could even receive extra responsibility, but without any extra recognition, there might be a problem.

As a recruiter, I see many people stuck in dead-end jobs. I have compiled a list of signs that you are not getting promoted. If you recognize some of these signs in your current position and are a Regulatory or Quality professional in the San Francisco Bay Area, I can help you find a job with opportunity for growth.

# **You Get the Work No One Else Wants**

Everyone gets their hands dirty from time to time- even your boss. No one really likes doing menial tasks, but they are necessary. However, when you're the one that ends up with this type of work day in and day out, it's a sure bet you're not as valued as you should be.

Whether it be your own fault for your willingness to do whatever it takes, or you're continually being looked over by your superiors and colleagues, it's now clear that you are replaceable. This is a safe place in the eyes of your boss and there's no need to fix a problem (promoting you) if it's not broken. Bottom line, you're not about to move up.

# **You're Out of the Loop**

People engage with you on a daily basis but it's only the cursory "good morning" or "how's it going?" Physically you're there just like everyone else but you're left out of closed-door meetings and conversations of importance. No one asks you your thoughts on that collaborative project that the rest of the team is excited about. These are all signs that when it comes time for quarterly bonuses or promotions, you're not high on the list.

# **Your Boss Isn't Interested In Your Ambitions**

Managers that care regularly check in with their employees about their aspirations. Even if it's not with the same company, they genuinely want the best for you and will do whatever they can to help you get there. Maybe you even go to them for advice but none is given. Unfortunately, this is an indicator that you're valued only in your current role and the chances of being promoted are slim to none.

# **The Math Doesn't Add Up**

Even though things seem to be going well you start to notice irregularities. You're asked to take a pay cut or give up company health insurance, bonuses and

recognition no longer exist, meetings between HR and company executives become more frequent. These are signs that there might be a problem beyond the control of you or your boss. If your company is on thin ice from a leadership or financial standpoint, it's a clear sign that any thought of a promotion is out of sight.

There are countless reasons that you might not be getting promoted. Whether it's poor leadership above you, financial trouble, or plain indifference on your behalf or someone else's, it's important to recognize the signs and take the necessary steps to improve your situation.

If you find yourself in this situation it's natural to feel discouraged. Not all is lost though! If you take the steps to update your resume in a way that highlights your contributions (I can help with that as well) and actively start looking for better opportunities, they are out there. There are plenty of clichés about making the best out of a seemingly hopeless situation but there's a reason why. Indeed, some of the greatest opportunities for growth and advancement stem from situations when you hit the proverbial glass ceiling. Look for signs that you can turn things around if you generally enjoy your job. But also look for signs that things will not improve and develop a plan to improve your situation.

I'm here to help. If you are looking for a new opportunity in the pharmaceutical, medical device, or biotech industries in the San Francisco Bay Area, contact me, Jeff King at [jking@rqfocus.com](mailto:jking@rqfocus.com) or (541) 639-3501.

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## **How Finding Your “Why” Leads to Success**



Your most basic needs for survival are food, water and shelter. While survival is the bare minimum, humans crave and are capable of much more. You seek to provide for yourself and your loved ones. Making money, learning new things, helping others, pursuing happiness, staying healthy, creating relationships, the list goes on. Without a clear sense of why you seek these things however, you're susceptible to disengagement, despair and shame. To cope, it's easy to turn to drugs, alcohol and other unhealthy habits. It's not surprising that dependence on antidepressant medication, suicide and depression is on the rise.

Disengagement in the workplace is at an all-time high as well. While we're the wealthiest we've ever been, there is a distinct disconnect between being well-off and well-being. Without a clear sense of purpose - or a why - this cycle is sure to continue. The first step to achieving your career aspirations and breaking out of the rut of complacency and indifference is defining your why. Having a why gives you motivation, energy, courage to take risks, and drive to keep going when times get tough.

## Five Why Questions

A good place to start when finding your why is having someone you know and trust, and that knows you, ask you the five why questions. Each question in this exercise is based off the answer to the previous and is designed to dig a little deeper. An example of what this conversation might look like is below.

Q: *"Why do you come to work every day?"*

A: *"So I can make money to support my family."*

Q: *"Why do you want to support your family?"*

A: *"Because I love and care for them deeply."*

Q: *"Why do you love and care for them deeply?"*

A: *“Because they enrich my life and bring me joy.”*

Q: *“Why do they enrich your life and bring you joy?”*

A: *“Because seeing them happy and successful make me happy?”*

Q: *“Why does seeing them happy and successful make you happy?”*

A: *“Because I care about others and when I see them doing well it motivates me to pursue my goals and dreams too.”*

As you can see, this simple exercise can quickly get you thinking about what your true motivations are. And the best part is, it is not limited just to just five questions. Keep asking “why” until you have some answers you’re satisfied with. Doing this exercise with someone that knows you pretty well can also give you a different perspective on some of your answers that you might not have even considered.

Now that you’ve entered a mindset that has you thinking about your life beyond the daily grind, Forbes contributor and award-winning author Margie Warrell suggests contemplating four questions that will help you identify the crossroads between your work, talents, expertise, passions and values. It is here that you can truly define your why.

## **What Makes You Come Alive?**

The immediate answers for you might be sailing in Greece, seeing your favorite band in concert or vacationing in New England during the fall. If you think a little deeper however, you’ll probably come up with some different answers. Instead of being about you, these answers will be about something bigger than you. They will let you connect with what you’re passionate about. Writes Warrel, “when you focus your attention on endeavors that put a fire in your belly, you grow your impact and influence in ways that nothing else can.”

## **What are Your Natural Strengths?**

When you’re in an environment that lets your strengths shine through, you’re bound to find increased personal and professional success. Are you the calming voice amidst chaos? Do you easily inspire or persuade people? Do your problem-solving skills set you apart? Do you find you’re most successful going against the grain? By taking the necessary time to identify your strengths, you’ll be better

positioned to make an actionable plan to achieve your greatest ambitions.

## **Where do you Add the Most Value?**

Maybe you excel at your job. Others come to for help, you get promoted more quickly than your colleagues and your superiors recognize the contributions you make. This is all good and well but if your heart isn't fully committed to what you do, chances are you aren't living out your why.

By knowing in what types of environments you add the most value and are most fulfilled, you're able to identify opportunities and career paths that allow you to make meaningful contributions and afford the greatest sense of accomplishment. Thinking about where you can best solve problems that you enjoy is a great way to focus solely on your strengths instead of eliminating weaknesses.

## **How Will You Measure your Life?**

Here again, your surface-level answers might be divergent from those derived if you think a little deeper. Perhaps making money is your immediate primary goal that you see as a means to an end allowing you to live the life you want. Perhaps a more thoughtful answer might be having an impeccable reputation for honesty or helping as many people as you can become homeowners. As Warrel writes, "the things that matter most are rarely things... deciding how you want to measure your life means making a stand for something and then living your life in alignment with it."

While the reality for most people is that they can't trade in making money for living a life based just on passion. If you look at this reality in the right way however, making money and following your heart don't have to be mutually exclusive. By focusing on how you go about your job instead of what your job is, you're likely to find more meaningful purpose.

Finding your why personally or professionally isn't something that happens overnight. It takes a lot of work and involves having some tough conversations with yourself. If you're willing to put in the effort though, the rewards can be unimaginable. If you feel like you're stuck in a rut or not progressing toward your goals as quickly as you'd like, asking yourself some of the questions discussed

here is a good place to start.