

Eleven Rules of *Super Valuable* Employees

Karen had been counting the days to her Hawaiian vacation. She worked hard at her job and deserved the time off. Little did she know that while she was laying on the beach, her boss and co-workers were counting the days until her return. In the few short years Karen had worked there she had become so valuable to her company that her absence was felt throughout the office. She was so valuable in fact that when a competitor moved into town and offered Karen a position with them her boss had fought to keep her, giving her a raise as an incentive. What was the secret to Karen's success at work? It was all about behavior. Karen had learned eleven important behaviors that anyone can learn to make themselves more valuable at work.



1. Treat your co-workers the same way you treat your customers.

Most people understand the importance of offering good customer service to clients. A cheerful attitude, prompt service, reliability and the ability to be flexible go a long way. But these positive attributes shouldn't be limited to just customers. When you treat your manager and co-workers with the same respect you show your clients you will give them every reason to want to work with you and the office environment will be a pleasant one.

2. Be proactive.

Let's face it, we all have good days and bad days. We can't always choose the things that happen to us but we do choose the attitude we're going to have. Choose to maintain a positive attitude. Don't let your bad day ruin someone else's day. The people who work with you will appreciate your enthusiasm and consistency. But how do you accomplish this when you're having one of those days where things keep going from bad to worse?

Here are some helpful ideas:

Keep a file with a list of the good things about your life and your accomplishments. When you start feeling down, pull out the file and look through it. Remember how good it felt when you reached a certain goal or met an important deadline. Let it re-energize you and bring you back to a positive frame of mind. Let the momentum this brings provide momentum for the current tasks of the day. It's not all about you. When things go wrong, as they sometimes will, it is not a direct reflection of you. Look at these things as opportunities to fix a problem and don't take them personally.

A simple fact of life is that we tend to become like the people we surround ourselves with.

When you spend time with positive people it will help you stay positive yourself and you will get to see how they handle difficulties. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Even when you're just not feeling it, make the effort to act pleasant and be someone that people find easy to work with.

Avoid looking for people to blame when things go wrong. Instead, focus on ways to fix the problem. Be honest with yourself. What is really causing the negative attitude? Look for signs and causes of stress. If you need help don't be afraid to ask for it.





3. Treat your co-workers the same way you treat your customers.

Most people understand the importance of offering good customer service to clients. A cheerful attitude, prompt service, reliability and the ability to be flexible go a long way. But these positive attributes shouldn't be limited to just customers. When you treat your manager and co-workers with the same respect you show your clients you will give them every reason to want to work with you and the office environment will be a pleasant one.

4. Be an agent of change rather than an obstacle.

Change is a part of business, and those who embrace the positive and help to facilitate change are valued and appreciated. Try to gain a head start in learning new systems, suggest ways to improve quality and efficiency, and help figure out how to implement changes. Determine how your skills and talents fit into the changes and assist co-workers in accepting new challenges and seeing the opportunities they bring. When problems arise, work to find a solution instead of complaining.



5. Build healthy relationships.

Develop friendships with co-workers and others doing similar work. Life would get pretty dull if it were all business all the time. It's okay to lighten up and have fun sometimes and encourage others to have fun as well. Be a person that people want to work with. When you see an area where your help is needed, step up and help. Teach valuable work skills and share critical work related information. If you find studies or articles that are of interest, share them. Thanks to social media it is easier than ever to network with others who can help you learn valued skills and build a client base. If your company policy permits online networking, this can be highly beneficial. Don't neglect the tried and true face-to-face networking too. Working as a volunteer at events and attending industry functions and meetings (when appropriate) are great ways to meet people. Through the power of networking (online and offline) you can meet the experts in your field, receive valuable feedback on your work and ideas, and learn how to handle problems in your organization.



6. Be a good communicator.

Valuable employees are thoughtful, direct, and clear in their communications. When information needs to be shared, they share it efficiently. For minor issues where a discussion isn't necessary it is perfectly acceptable to use email. If the matter is of greater importance and an issue needs to be discussed, call or talk in person. Be prepared before meetings and respectful of other's time. Get right to the point and avoid going over details that are of no importance. Be sure to always thank people for their time and for their help.





7. Take charge of your career – continually develop and learn.

Are you doing the same work in the same way you were two years ago? Then there is a good chance you're being left behind. Take time out to learn new skills and areas of expertise and stay abreast of changes. If your certifications and licenses are expired, renew them. Even if you've moved into a position that no longer requires them, you never know when they will be useful. Stay up to date on the changes of the industry you work in. Take classes, attend seminars and read books and professional journals in your field (at least one book per quarter is recommended). Make your boss aware of new skills you learn and find ways to use these skills in your work.

8. Seek out and welcome honest feedback.

How do your manager and other people in your organization see your strengths and weaknesses? Understanding how others see you will help you improve your knowledge and skills in the most effective way. Ask your manager "What is the most important thing I can do to make myself more valuable to our organization?" or "What college classes would help me the most in my current job position?" If the thought of having such a conversation with your boss makes you break out in a cold sweat, you can always request a confidential meeting with your human resources (HR) department and ask them to provide clarification for you. Keep in mind that employers often place a high value on aspects of performance employees see as less important, such as attendance and the ability to get to work on time.



9. Remain adaptable.

In today's economy, an employee who has the skills and flexibility to do more than one job is of high value to their employer. If a co-worker leaves for whatever reason, be ready and willing to take on some or all of their tasks. If your current skill level doesn't allow this, make it a priority to learn the skills necessary to take on these tasks now or in the future.

10. Let others see your value.

Market yourself by putting yourself where your value is noticed. Without being irritating about it, you can make sure your manager knows what you do and that you do it well. Use your performance review as an opportunity to list your accomplishments and to explain the challenges you've learned to overcome. Try to schedule regular one-on-one meetings with your manager. Volunteer for high-profile projects where your contribution will be noticed. Offer to mentor new employees and when you learn new skills teach them to your co-workers. They will appreciate the help and you will gain a reputation for being a source of expertise and a valued team member.





11. Take charge of your career.

One way to do this is by starting an employee self-managed 360-degree feedback leadership assessment. Let current and potential future employers see that you are taking the initiative to develop valuable leadership skills, abilities and characteristics.

Taking a leadership assessment allows you to evaluate yourself and receive online feedback from ten people you have worked with in different roles. These roles include:

Manager | Peers | Direct Reports | Other stakeholders

To bridge the leadership gap, a Personal Leadership Development Plan can be processed at the end of the feedback process. This tool can be used to identify, organize and plan your development.

What employer would not be interested in a candidate that has taken proactive steps to become a better leader? A 360-degree feedback assessment proves a willingness to enhance leadership skills. This is a quality that is both rare and desired. Employers are always looking for people with this type of self-initiative.