

9 essential qualities of highly promotable employees

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One of the most common questions asked by an employee of his or her company is, “What can I do to get promoted?”

The thinking behind the question is obvious: The employee assumes there be some key initiative, some specific action, some high visibility project, or some critical role the employee should take on, and if they do, promotion is almost guaranteed.

And maybe, just maybe, that is occasionally true.

But there’s a much better approach.

The key to advancing — whether professionally or personally — is not based solely on what you should do (although what you do is certainly important). The key to advancing is based on what you should *be*.

Attitude informs action. Attitude informs behavior.

Attitude is the driving force behind every achievement, every accomplishment, every success. Attitude, where performance and therefore advancement is concerned, is *everything*.

Here are some of the attitudes and perspectives that inform the actions of incredibly successful people — in all walks of life:

1. Are humble, not arrogant

Arrogant people think they know everything; humble people are always learning. Humble people ask questions. Humble people ask for help.

Humble people automatically share credit because they instinctively realize that every effort, no matter how seemingly individual, is actually a team effort.

Humble people are willing to take on any job, no matter how menial, because they realize no job is beneath them, and in the process they prove that no job is above them.

Ultimately, success is not limited by how high you can stretch ... but by how low you are willing to bend.

2. Are servants, not self-serving

No one accomplishes anything worthwhile on his own. No one.

Great teammates make everyone around them better. Take an unselfish basketball player: He makes his teammates better by delivering pinpoint passes in space, by boxing out, by setting solid screens, by rotating on defense ... all the things that don't show up in the statistics but definitely improve the stats of his teammates.

Great leaders focus on providing the tools and training and culture to help their employees do their jobs better – and achieve their own goals.

Even great businesses serve their customers first; they know that by serving their customers they ultimately serve the interests of their business.

The employee only in it for himself will someday be *by* himself. The employee in it for others may not get all the limelight, but trust me, the right people definitely notice.

3. Are optimistic, not pessimistic

Optimists add energy to a situation, or meeting, or business; pessimists suck energy away. Optimists try more things and take more (intelligent) risks simply because they focus on what can go right. Pessimists never get started because they're too busy thinking of what might go wrong.

Optimists don't feel they need to wait – to be promoted, or accepted, or selected, or “discovered” – they feel they can, if they work hard, accomplish almost anything.

Optimism is infectious.

4. Think execution, not just planning

Planning is definitely important, but countless shelves are filled with strategies that were never implemented.

The best employees develop an idea, create a strategy, set up a basic operational plan ... and then execute, adapt, execute, revise, execute, refine, and make incredible things happen based on what works in practice, not in theory.

Success starts with strategy — but ultimately ends with execution.

Employees who advance are certainly good at planning, but they're awesome at execution.

5. Think forever, not today

Real leadership isn't situation or short-lived. Real leaders are able to consistently inspire, motivate, and make people feel better about themselves than they may even think they have a right to feel. Real leaders are the kind of people you follow not because you have to ... but because you *want* to.

You'll follow a real leader anywhere. And you'll follow a real leader forever, because she has a knack for making you feel you aren't actually following — wherever you're going you feel like you're going there together.

Creating that level of respect, that level of trust, and that type of bond takes time. Great employees consider not just the short-term but also the long-term — and then act accordingly.

And, in time, are placed in positions where they can truly influence the long-term success of their team, their unit, and their company.

6. Are volunteers, not draftees

Sure, you have a manager, or a board, or some higher authority. They may often ask you to do things.

Still: The best employees are natural volunteers. They volunteer for extra tasks. They volunteer for responsibility before responsibility is delegated. They volunteer to train or mentor new employees. They offer to help people who need help — and even those who don't.

Why is that important? Volunteering demonstrates leadership aptitude. Leaders are proactive, and proactive people don't wait to be told what to do. They're already doing it.

Successful employees earn their promotions by first working harder, just like successful businesses earn higher revenue by first delivering greater value, and like successful entrepreneurs earn bigger payoffs by first working hard, well before any potential return is in sight.

Draftees expect to be asked. Draftees expect to be compensated more before they will even consider doing more.

Volunteers just do it – and, in time, their careers flourish.

7. Are self-aware, not selfish

Self-aware people understand themselves, and that awareness helps them understand the people around them. Self-aware people are more empathetic. They are more accepting of the weaknesses and failures of others because they know how it feels to fail.

They can lead with empathy, compassion, and kindness because they know how it feels to be treated with disregard, disdain, and scorn. They do everything they can to help others reach their goals, because they know how it feels to fall short.

Self-aware people solve for the team, the organization, and the customer – not just for themselves.

Every organization needs self-aware people in key roles. (What is a key role? *Every* role.)

8. Are adaptable, not rigid

Things constantly change in high-growth companies. Inflexible people tend to grow uncomfortable with too much change and consciously – even unconsciously – try to slow things down.

Best practices are important. Methodology is important. Guidelines, procedures, policies... all can help a business run smoothly.

But anyone can follow guidelines and procedures. Great employees are willing, even eager, to change. Great employees respond to new circumstances and new challenges with excitement, not hesitation. Employees willing to adapt and adjust tend to advance more quickly because that is what every company – especially a high-growth company – desperately *needs*.

Otherwise growth will be a thing of the past, not the future.

9. Are teachers, not truant officers

The best people like to teach. They don't hoard knowledge; they spread it. They share what they know.

A truant officer's job is to make sure people show up. A teacher's job is to make sure people *learn*.

Besides, truant officers tend to give “advice”: Do this. *Don't* do that. Go here. *Don't* go there.

A teacher gives knowledge. A teacher helps other people gain experience, gain wisdom, gain insight, a teacher willingly and happily gives other people tools they can *use*.

In the process a teacher build teams.

And a teacher advances, because a true team builder is a rare, precious gem.

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Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/essential-qualities-of-highly-promotable-employees-2013-11#ixzz3do3E8C4p>