

Why Doing A Good Job Won't Get You Anywhere

The Skillset That Puts You At The Head Of The Pack

By
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If you think doing a good job is what it takes to get to the head of the pack, you're naïve, confused, delusional, or all three. Take your pick.

And here's why. Doing a good job is the starting point, the baseline. It's what's expected. There are plenty of people doing a good, even a great job. But they're dead in the water. They aren't going anywhere, other than out the door in the next restructure.

Tough words, but they don't need to be the last words. Here's what to do:

1. Drop the idea that doing a good job is good enough.
2. Next, stop dwelling on what your company should do for you. It will only make you angry, resentful, and useless.
3. Now that you're rid of the junk that's in your way, focus on getting to the head of the pack.
4. Develop a skillset for solving problems, where you will get attention.

Skill #1. Make stuff make sense. Very little of what passes as communication in business—emails, letters, memos, reports, webpages, proposals, ads, or presentations—makes sense to those who can benefit from their message. Or, to put it bluntly, very few people make sense even with 140 characters.

What causes this incredible communication failure that ends in massive misunderstanding, wastes time and money, crushes productivity, and drives customers bonkers?

The answer is that most messaging starts with everyone asking, "Will what I'm saying pass the boss test?" And it doesn't take long to learn what's acceptable and what isn't. When people think and write this way, what comes out is gobbledygook, mealy-mouthed nonsense.

Now, the good news. If you rid your mind of what's acceptable, you can make sense to your audience by moving the focus to them—whether they're co-workers, vendors, or those you want to do business with. Picture these people looking over your shoulder. Ask yourself what *they* want to hear.

If you do it, you'll be in demand—and maybe even named "Director of Making Sense," or, better yet, the boss.

Skill #2. Get out of yourself. Is this *really* a skill? You bet it is, although most people don't see it that way. They think if they take the right classes, get the right degrees, and have the right experience, they're all set. They can do any or all of that, but it won't be enough to get to the head of the pack.

We beat up on Millennials for being too self-centered—obsessed with selfies and constant texting. Besides, we value talking to each other when dining out. Maybe we're just jealous and feel left behind, overrun, and out of place with these 79 million young adults. Could it be that we're the ones who feel entitled and expect accommodation just because we've been in line longer?

We put the brakes on our future unless we get out of ourselves.

Skill #3. Let your mind run wild. Even though such an idea is a treasonable offense in some companies, it's the mental engine that stimulates thinking, fosters dialogue, and most of all drives creativity.

For example, letting the mind roam is the cure for "Solution Think," the disease that bedevils marketing and salespeople, in particular. Their programs are always firm and overflowing with unwavering certainty as to what customers want and what will work and what won't. And before long, they're gone.

What's helpful is contrarian thinking that challenges what "sounds good" and what others want to hear. If that had happened at Samsung, someone might have said, "The Note 7 isn't ready for market." Would the outcome be different if minds could have run wild?

Skill #4. Be a magnet for the tough jobs. Having spent decades taking on tough assignments across the world for AT&T, Randall Stephenson was chosen by CEO Edward Whitacre, Jr, as his successor. "This his one looks easy," Stephenson said to Whitaker, who replied, "Why do you think I chose you?"

If you want to get to the head of the pack be a magnet for tough, problematic, jobs that need fixing, those that others run and hide from. Companies want people who want to make a difference, a contribution, not those who mark the years and the days on their calendar.

Skill #5. Make yourself memorable. Doing a good job is like living in the shadows. You're just another invisible. To change that and start moving to the head of the pack, make yourself memorable.

That's what one couple learned about marketing and sales when looking for a second home. The first agent was enthusiastic and lined up a couple of showings

quickly, but neither was of interest. Promising to get back to them with other properties, she went “offline.”

They contacted another agent, who asked questions and sends them a weekly eBulletin featuring an in-depth description of only one property that’s based on their profile. Not long ago, the husband asked his wife, “What was the name of that first agent?” Thinking for a moment, she said, “I don’t remember.”

Customers buy when they get ready from those who make themselves memorable.

There are many helpful skillsets and some can help move you forward, at least for a while. But there’s only one that can take you to the head of the pack.

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