

19 ways to do it  
**Messing Up On The Job Without Even Knowing It**

By  
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There's everything right about looking out for yourself and your career. Right now, with more jobs than people to fill them, it's easier than ever.

One month in mid-2018, job postings exceeded the number of unemployed by an eye-popping 659,000. With this happening, it's no surprise that 3.6 million workers voluntarily quit their jobs in the first seven months of 2018. This 2.4% quit rate was the highest since April 2001.

No one can miss the message: more vacancies and not enough takers to fill them equals better opportunities and higher pay.

*But not so fast.* All this may be true in some situations but not everywhere—and not forever. If you believe jobs are “temporary” and the best is yet to be, you can create an easy-to-spot trail of behaviors that can put a cap on your career. In this environment, here are some of the ways to mess up on the job without even knowing it:

1. *Take advantage of your team.* To do this, make it clear from the get-go that you're a “team player.” This is what everyone wants to hear today, so keep repeating it. Now that you've set the stage, make sure everyone knows you have too much on your plate to support the team.
2. *Cover up your mistakes.* To make this work, act totally innocent. Rehearse your story so you can act shocked if someone calls you on an error. Never crack; never confess. Once you get it down pat, you're ready for the next time—and the next.
3. *Always agree but don't perform.* When asked to do something, act interested and even excited, but never get around to it. After you've done this several times, the word will get around and you'll be left alone.
4. *Position yourself as the exception.* You've figured it out and thought it through. There are good reasons why what applies to everyone in your group doesn't apply to you. Don't bother telling others about it. They've figured it out on their own.

5. *Do only so much and nothing more.* You're not going to be around long; you're already looking for your next gig. So, why knock yourself out? Just ignore the pressure to do more. Act busy, but take it easy on yourself.
6. *Make it known that you're meant for better things.* Sure, you do your work, but you also talk about how great it was at your last job or how good your friends have it where they work.
7. *Disappear when there's a crisis.* Coming in early or staying late when it's needed doesn't work for you. Always have a reason ready why you can't alter your regular schedule time or, better yet, even come in late or leave early.
8. *Pass the blame around.* The directions were incorrect. Someone gave you inaccurate information, misled you, waited to the last minute to notify you, or had it in for you—on and on it goes. There's plenty of blame to go around.
9. *See yourself as a silo of one.* You're an island, entire of yourself, to paraphrase John Donne. "It's blindness, which causes people to do stupid things," states Gillian Tett in *The Silo Effect*.
10. *Behave inconsistently.* This is the most useful on-the-job strategy for hiding in plain sight. One time you're up and the next time you're down. Friendly, and then aloof. You're unpredictable; no one knows how you're going to react. It doesn't take long before they stop counting on you.
11. *They can't do without you.* You've been in the job for a while and you know the ropes, so you're feeling good about yourself. You talk more openly about coworkers and play a little loose with the rules. While you believe your job is secure, others see a train wreck coming.
12. *Get upset if you're not getting a regular dose of praise.* In fact, you've come to expect it. It's almost an addiction. When you don't it, you're quick to complain that you're not appreciated.
13. *Ask for help but never offer it.* You can't understand why your coworkers are reluctant to help you. It isn't because they don't like you. With you, helping is a one-way street.
14. *Make it a point to play it safe.* Whether it's because you want to avoid criticism or you just can't be bothered, never take a chance and step outside of your comfort zone. Everyone can see what you do, but not what you're capable of doing.

15. *The rules don't apply to you.* When the rules benefit you, you make sure everyone knows about it. When they don't, you come up with way to make it clear that you are the exception.
16. *Overestimate your capabilities.* Hey, you're not alone on this one. Most of us tend to exaggerate our skills, capabilities, and our performance, but some do it more than others and they're surprised when they're no longer needed.
17. *Always be ready to come up with a complaint.* It's one thing after another. We can count on you to make a big deal out of almost anything. Then, when something comes along that may be worthy of a complaint, we ignore you.
18. *Don't learn new skills or expand your knowledge base.* You don't seem to recognize that no one arrives on a job perfectly prepared. It takes time to learn the ropes and then continue learning to become and remain highly productive.
19. *Bluff your way.* If you haven't found a way to successfully mess up on the job, there's always the other option: faking it. Claim to know something, you don't. Make up a story about an accomplishment or even awards or commendations. In other words, bluff your way. It will work—until it doesn't.

There may be other ways to mess up on the job that will jeopardize your future, but these are a good start.

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