

The importance of initiative

America's foremost business philosopher, Jim Rohn, says the biggest mistake people make is thinking they work for someone else, rather than themselves. When you pretend that you work for yourself, you're more apt to take initiative.

Why? It encourages you to dream big, pay attention to detail and look outside of your own department for opportunities. Initiative makes you an outstanding employee, creating job security during economic downturns.

Look for ways to add value to your customers, colleagues or the company. One afternoon, Judy received a call from her supervisor asking for an out-of-town client's cell phone number. Judy saw an opportunity to more fully support her supervisor and made it a practice to input necessary telephone numbers directly into her boss's cell phone prior to a travel engagement. Upon return, Judy takes the phone and deletes the past info before entering in the new.

When Judy's supervisor commented on her initiative, she was savvy enough to write down his comments and place them in her personal file to reference in her yearly performance evaluation.

Do what needs to be done. Students at a beauty college were consistently frustrated due to the unorganized patient files. Students would do their best to alphabetize by patients' last names, but with so many hands in the files, they were never accurate. Although everyone complained, no one did anything—except Barbara.

She asked for her instructor's OK to stay an hour later each night to reorganize the file drawers. The instructor was so impressed with Barbara's initiative; she not only wrote a glowing recommendation but mentioned her to job recruiters, resulting in an offer prior to graduation.

When in doubt, ask! A recent poll of executives asked, "What do you feel is the single best way for employees to earn a promotion or raise?" More than 82% responded, "Ask for more work and responsibility." If you're rolling your eyes right now because you have too much work on your plate, look for ways that won't cost you a lot more time, but provide more visibility.

Rather than see a need and say, "That's not my job," become a valuable employee by displaying initiative in the workplace today!

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