

# How to Be Extraordinary: 9 Qualities Only the Best Employees Possess

*To paraphrase a Supreme Court Justice, true excellence can be hard to define... but you know it when you see it.*



By Jeff Haden

Published by: LinkedIn

Every boss says she wants her employees to be reliable and dependable. Every boss says she wants her employees to be proactive and diligent. Every boss says she wants her employees to be good leaders and good followers.

That's what every boss says they want... but what they really want are employees that go above and beyond, possessing qualities that never appear on performance appraisals but make a massive impact on a team and business.

Here's what the extraordinary employee knows that the average employee never even considers:

## **1. Job descriptions should be ignored.**

The smaller the company, the more important it is that employee can think on her feet, adapt quickly to shifting priorities, and do whatever it takes, regardless of role or position, to get things done. When a key customer's project is in jeopardy, the extraordinary employee knows to jump in without being asked – even if it's not her job.

## **2. You can be genuine (and even offbeat.)**

The best employee is often a little different: quirky, sometimes irreverent, even delighted to be unusual. He seems slightly odd, but in a really good way. Unusual personalities shake things up, make work more fun, and transform a vanilla group into a team with flair and flavor. People who aren't afraid to be different naturally stretch boundaries, challenge the status quo, and often come up with the best ideas.

## **3. There's a time to fit in.**

An unusual personality is a lot of fun... until it isn't. When a major challenge pops up or a situation gets stressful, the best employee stops expressing individuality and fits seamlessly into the team. The exceptional employee knows when to play and when to be serious; when to be irreverent and when to conform; when to challenge and when to back off. It's a tough balance to strike, but the extraordinary employee walks that fine line with seeming ease.

## **4. Praise should always be public.**

Praise from a boss feels good. Praise from a peer feels awesome, especially when you look up to that person. The exceptional employee has high emotional intelligence, so she recognizes the contributions of others – especially in group settings, where the impact of her words is even greater.

## **5. Criticism should always be private.**

We all want employees to bring issues forward, but some problems are better handled in private. Good employees often get more latitude to bring up controversial subjects in a group setting because their performance allows greater freedom.

The best employees come to you before or after a meeting to discuss a sensitive issue, knowing that bringing it up in a group setting could set off a firestorm.

**6. When to speak up (hint: when others won't).**

Some employees are hesitant to speak up in meetings. Some are even hesitant to speak up privately.

An employee once asked me a question about potential layoffs. After the meeting I said to him, "Why did you ask about that? You already know what's going on." He said, "I do, but a lot of other people don't, and they're afraid to ask. I thought it would help if they heard the answer from you."

Truly great employees have an innate feel for the issues and concerns of those around them, and step up to ask questions or raise important issues when others hesitate.

**7. When to volunteer (hint: as often as possible.)**

Whenever you raise your hand you wind up being asked to do more.

Great... no, really: That's great. Doing more creates the opportunity to learn, to impress, to gain skills, to build new relationships – to do something more than you would otherwise been able to do.

The great employee knows that success is based on action, and the more he volunteers, the more he gets to act. He knows that successful people step forward to create opportunities, but extraordinary people sprint forward.

**8. You don't need to be satisfied.**

Some people are rarely satisfied (I mean that in a good way) and are constantly tinkering with something: Reworking a timeline, adjusting a process, tweaking a workflow.

Good employees follow processes. Extraordinary employees find ways to make those processes better, not only because they know you want them to... but because they just can't help it.

**9. When to give up (hint: almost never.)**

Success is often the result of perseverance. When others give up, leave, stop trying, or compromise principles and values, the last person left is often the person who wins.

Other people may be smarter, better connected, or more talented. But they can't win if they aren't around at the end.

Sometimes it makes sense to give up on ideas, projects, and even businesses, but it never makes sense to give up on yourself... and extraordinary employees know that.

And you should too.

***You can always be the last to give up on yourself.***

<http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/how-to-be-extraordinary-9-qualities-only-the-best-employees-possess.html>

*Submitted by Alison Edwards – Cardinia Shire Council*