

BALANCE

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Star Performance

There are common traits that outstanding employees exhibit. Every one of them can be learned or developed. Knowing what they are may inspire you!

Passion. When you are passionate, you are enthusiastic and almost tireless in your pursuit of a goal. Passion stems from a deep appreciation of the positive outcome of your work. Invest yourself in activities that regularly help you realize this connection, and you will increase your passion.

Determination. Determination refers to the act of deciding definitely and firmly. You believe that something you value is achievable. You can see it in your mind's eye. Determination is “jet fuel” for your belief in—and attempts to achieve—a desired outcome.

Talent. Talent is often mistakenly viewed as “naturally” possessed. Not true. In the workplace, talent is developed by challenging oneself until skills for superior performance are eventually acquired.

Self-discipline. Self-discipline is the ability to maintain a state of action in pursuit of a goal. There is no absolute self-discipline. It's a skill. Develop the art of self-discipline by studying interventions that work to help you stay focused and undistracted.

Belief and Trust. Outstanding employees believe an outcome will be achieved, even though they can't see it yet. This skill or trait is learned over time and is perfected through experience. Eventually, believing and trusting in what one is trying to accomplish become personal strengths that can be valuable resources when one is faced with setbacks.

Business Travel & Temporary Assignment Tips

If you are an employee who frequently travels for work, you have extra challenges and stressors—being away from family and friends, unpredictable travel schedules, meeting and working with people you've just met and, perhaps, the feeling of being left entirely to your own resources. Make your travel on assignment more exciting and enjoyable by remembering the following advice:

- 1) **Be flexible.** This will help you cope with the unexpected and adapt to changes, including new environments, policies and procedures and work cultures as well as unforeseen travel delays or work requirements.
- 2) **Be assertive.** Speak up for yourself when you accept assignments so that others on the job know your position and your needs. Understanding and conveying what you are willing to do and what your limits are will help you avoid resentment or burning out.
- 3) **Be organized.** Traveling requires organizing to manage your personal and family needs, communications, paperwork, travel arrangements and unpredictable changes.
- 4) **Be ambitious.** Enjoy the challenge of business travel and look for the benefits you can derive from it—friends and customers in distant places, new worlds to explore, an ever-changing routine and maybe even higher pay!



Autism

Just 10 years ago, the word “autism” for most people probably conjured up images of the shuffling Dustin Hoffman in the movie, “Rain Man.” Times are definitely changing as a rapid increase in the number of children found to have autism has led to greater awareness of the condition. Also, the range of severity and the broadness of the symptoms show it to be a dynamic condition, not easily identified or depicted.

In fact, very few people with autism look anything like “Rain Man.” The complexity of cases identified has led medical experts to define autism as a “spectrum disorder.” On one end of the spectrum the symptoms can be very mild and barely noticeable where on the other end of the spectrum, an autistic person can not function without constant supervision and care.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), roughly 6 of every 1,000 children are found to be on the autism spectrum. This is a large increase over the course of just a few decades. But it is not known if autism is becoming more common or if the growth in knowledge and understanding of the autism spectrum has caused the increase in cases.

While autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a broad category, there are some basic similarities among those found on the spectrum. Children with ASD will show problems with verbal and non-verbal communication; social interaction; and repetitive behaviors and interests. In addition, a child’s sensory experiences are likely to be different—they may be irritated by specific sounds or feel uncomfortable wearing certain types of clothing, for example.

Many children on the spectrum have problems being friends with other children. They may not respond when asked to play and choose to be alone. Parents may notice their children playing with toys in unusual ways like lining them all up in a row rather than playing with them in a more traditional way. Also typical in children on the spectrum is a delay in speech or talking in an unusual way. They may just say one word over and over or simply repeat words that they hear out loud when there is no reason to.

Experts are finding that some children can be identified as early as 18 months and most will start demonstrating symptoms by age 2. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), the following are possible indicators of ASD:

- Does not babble, point or make meaningful gestures by 1 year of age
- Does not speak one word by 16 months.
- Does not combine two words by 2 years
- Does not recognize their own name
- Loses language and social skills
- Demonstrates poor eye contact
- Doesn’t smile
- Develops attachment to one particular toy or object

Studies are finding that chances for behavioral improvement for children on the spectrum are better when the condition is identified early. But while early intervention can be very helpful for children on the spectrum, the NIH estimates that only 50 percent of children are diagnosed prior to kindergarten.

To address this problem, the American Academy of Pediatrics has just recently provided pediatricians with a report that includes universal screening and surveillance tools and advises them to use them on all children at age 18 and 24 months even if the parent has not noticed anything unusual. Parents who have concerns at all about their child’s development in that period are advised to inform their doctor as soon as possible.

For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism>
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/summary.shtml>
<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/oct07autism.htm>

Protect Yourself from MRSA

Awareness is growing about the importance of proper hygiene practices after the recent news of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) cases in schools. “Staph” is a common type of bacteria generally found on the skin or in mucus membranes. MRSA is a staph that is resistant to several types of antibiotics. This makes it difficult to treat, and it can be fatal. MRSA may look like an infected cut, boil, infected hair follicle, fluid-filled blister or a skin sore that looks like an insect or spider bite.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified five factors that make it easier to get MRSA—the 5 C’s:

- 1) **Crowding:** such as in schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, day cares and locker rooms.
- 2) **Compromised Skin:** skin cuts and abrasions.
- 3) **Contact:** the bacteria are spread through skin-to-skin contact (not through the air) or skin comes in contact with objects that are contaminated.
- 4) **Contaminated items/surfaces:** sharing items or touching surfaces that have come in contact with the drainage of a wound infected with MRSA. MRSA can live on surfaces for more than 24 hours.
- 5) **Cleanliness:** lack of good general hygiene.

To protect yourself and your family:

- Practice good hygiene—wash hands frequently using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Shower immediately after exercising.
- Use bandages to cover skin wounds and abrasions until they are healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items that come in contact with the skin such as razors and towels.
- Use a barrier such as a towel or clothing between skin and shared equipment.
- Clean weight and exercise equipment before and after use.
- Report any wounds that have drainage and/or pus to a healthcare professional (skin with redness, swelling, pain or tenderness, pimples, boils, blisters or warm to the touch).

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools/> and <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mrsa/DS00735/DSECTION=2>

Angry at Work?

Are you angry with your employer, but not sure what to do about it? Consider a confidential appointment with the EAP as a starting point to get the situation resolved. Don’t remain in a chronically angry state that can harm your health. Cynicism, resentment and more conflict may be the result. Trust the EAP’s ability to help you find the answers to the toughest questions and issues you face so you can be your best at work—and perhaps even reach a new level of job satisfaction.

Can Gratitude Pay Off?

If family dysfunction exists in your home, are there still plenty of positive things about your family relationships? If your job is stressful, are there coworkers you really do admire and enjoy? Is your health fairly good? These are all anchors for practicing gratitude. We live in a culture that places great emphasis on getting rid of problems. The promise—focus hard on the problems and happiness will be revealed. But there’s another approach—encouraging people to focus on gratitude—finding what to appreciate and feeling thankful for it. The strategy suggests that achieving more and finding solutions to life’s problems are more swiftly accomplished when we expect good things to come to us. There’s nothing new about the strategy, but what is getting attention is how this happens when we practice experiencing gratitude. In other words, when the switch “turns on,” the things we want begin to flow toward us. The gratitude approach to life improvement is not about fooling ourselves into thinking our problems don’t exist. Instead, feeling grateful nourishes us, prepares us, and facilitates our ability to spot opportunities and solutions as they present themselves. We are less likely to overlook or dismiss the “knock at our door.” This approach also energizes and creates excitement about the future. Would the gratitude approach be a useful switch for you?



Off to a Fresh Start

The start of a New Year provides us with an opportunity to reorganize our daily lives, revitalize previous goals and can inspire us to take on new challenges. Consider the following steps to get yourself off to a fresh start this year.

Go through your records: We are inundated with mail, bills, receipts and so on. While it is a good idea to save these items for an appropriate time frame, you probably don't need to hang on to that department store receipt from 10 years ago. Set aside some time specifically to go through your files to clear out the stuff you don't need anymore and reorganize what you do need. For information on financial record keeping, visit: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p463/ch05.html>.

Simplify daily life: A new year is a good time to take inventory of what fills your daily life—work, running errands, transporting kids to and from school or activities, preparing meals, exercising, etc. Identify the areas that you want to change or do away with all together in order to maximize the time you have for what really matters to you. For example, if you find that TV is eating up much of your or your family's spare time, consider moving it to another room or put restrictions on it.

Think about your finances: Does the word “budget” mean penny-pinching and sacrifice to you? Financial experts say many people fail to budget because it feels negative and restrictive. Their advice is to alter this attitude by developing a “spending plan.” This feels positive and much more flexible. (Just like the difference between going on a diet and deciding to eat healthy foods.) Track all of your expenses for a month so you know where your money is going. Develop your spending plan to meet your financial goals. Write down your financial goals, break them into steps you can measure, set a date for meeting each step and evaluate your progress on a regular basis.

Put your plans in action immediately—don't wait until tomorrow, next week or next month—take advantage of the motivation a new year brings! And, remember the services of your EAP are available anytime.

To speak with an EAP professional,
please call: **800.327.2384**

