

How to Make Yourself Indispensable

PREVIEW



HRDQ[®]

Course Objectives

After you've completed this course, you'll be able to:

- Take ownership of your responsibilities and results.
- Take initiative to go above and beyond what is expected of you.
- Expand your sphere of influence.
- Perform well under pressure.
- Adapt to changing situations.
- Be someone others want to work with.
- Help others improve their performance.

Introduction

When you think of someone who is indispensable, what do you think of? Indispensable people come in all shapes and sizes, yet they share these characteristics:

- Take ownership of their responsibilities
- Go above and beyond
- Perform well under pressure
- Are adaptable
- Are team players
- Are replaceable



Act Like a Business Owner

The first trait of indispensable employees is that they take ownership. In fact, they act like business owners. They do this by **taking time to focus on their top priorities.**

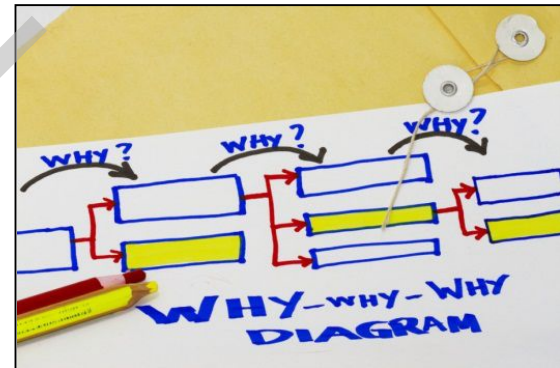


- Schedule time to think and plan.
 - Don't check your email and cell phone continuously.
 - Anticipate and think about the big picture—great business owners stay several moves ahead of their best competitors.
- Use the 80/20 rule to guide your priorities: 80% of your results come from 20% of your effort. So make sure you focus on the right 20%.
 - Show passion and enthusiasm—they are the fuel that drives your job.
 - Make customer satisfaction a high priority.
 - Systemize what you can. Review processes and structures to improve consistency and quality.

For Every Problem, Bring a Solution

Indispensable employees don't wait for their boss to solve a problem for them. Instead, they go to their boss with a problem—and a recommended solution. The first step is to **correctly identify the problem**.

- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Make sure you're addressing the root of the problem, not merely a symptom.
- Use root cause analysis tools.
 - 5 Whys Diagram: Keep asking "why?" until you get to the source.
 - Fishbone Diagram: Create a chart of all the possible causes and effects of the problem/symptom and investigate each possibility.



Research Potential Solutions and Assess Options

As you research potential solutions, consider these factors:

- What resources (time, money, staffing) do you have to solve the problem?
- Do you know anyone who has dealt with a similar problem? How did he or she handle it?
- Brainstorm with others.

When assessing options:

- Develop criteria to objectively rate each option—determine the pros and cons of each option.
- Ask: Which option will result in the best outcome? Will it solve the problem?

PRO's | CON's



Super You

In today's competitive workplace, it's not enough to do your job well. To be truly indispensable, you need to go above and beyond your job description. Think about the following questions:

- What would make you impossibly good at your job?
- If your organization wanted to replace you with someone better at your job, what would they look for?
- What are concrete steps you can take to get closer to becoming super you?

The purpose of these questions isn't to scare you, rather, it is to give you the opportunity to brainstorm and do some "blue sky" thinking about what would really make you stand out in your job and at your organization.



Take Initiative

If there's one trait that people associate with being indispensable, it's taking initiative—doing things without being told.

- If you're nervous, take small steps. The only way to overcome the fear of doing something is to go out and do it.
- Learn from others—observe how others have successfully taken initiative and follow their strategies.
- Don't give up—keep going when you run into obstacles.
- Remember, it's better to be proactive than reactive.



Perform Triage

Indispensable employees figure out the issues they are most able to influence. The medical equivalent of this is *triage*, where a medical team determines who might benefit the most from immediate care.



- Determine the most critical issue and document the circumstances surrounding it. Choose one or two issues at most; the others must simply wait.
- Determine how quickly the issue must be dealt with.
- Create a simple to-do list, identifying the steps that must be taken to resolve the issue—then complete each step!
- Capture what you learned from that crisis in an after-action report.

Increase Your Intellectual Flexibility

Indispensable employees are adaptable. Being adaptable means having the ability and the motivation to change—and this requires intellectual flexibility.

The characteristics of intellectual flexibility are:

- **Curiosity:** Desire to acquire new information
- **Creativity:** Tendency to seek out new ways of doing things
- **Mental agility:** Ability to switch focus between the big picture and the details
- **Future orientation:** Ability to anticipate what's coming and stay ahead of the curve
- **Ability to handle ambiguity:** Ability to hold opposing perspectives while evaluating information



Strategies for Dealing with Change

Following these steps will help you deal with change positively.

- **Anticipate:** Remember, the only constant is change!
- **Recognize:** Acknowledge your feelings about the change. If they are negative, determine the source of your fear or worry.
- **Reframe:** Identify at least one positive potential result of the change.
- **Focus:** Concentrate on what's the same rather than dwelling on what's different.
- **Commit:** Choose at least one positive action you can take to implement or adjust to the change.
- **Align:** Spend time with people who support the change.



How to Make Yourself Indispensable Practice

Read the question, then click on the answer.

Which action is an example of reframing to deal with a change?

- a. Choose at least one action you can take to implement the change.
- b. Spend time with people who support the change.
- c. Identify at least one positive result of the change.
- d. Remember, the only constant is change.

Be Someone That Others Want to Work With

An indispensable employee is someone others want to work with. What makes an ideal team player? These traits are a good start!

- Be reliable.
- Be a good communicator.
- Be engaged.
- Be pleasant and positive.
- Begin every relationship with openness.



We'll look at these in detail over the next few slides.

Be a Good Communicator

The best communicators are good listeners.

- Listen first, speak second.
- Suspend judgment while you listen.
- Be open to other opinions; don't automatically argue about them.
- Then, if you disagree, debate respectfully.

Excellent communicators are succinct, clear, direct, and honest. They keep others informed and share task-related information, knowledge, expertise, and experience.

The best communicators offer feedback constructively, and are willing to receive it in the same way.



“Pick Up the Trash”

Instead of waiting for someone else to handle a problem or make an improvement, do it yourself. This is called “picking up the trash.” If you take the initiative to improve something yourself, the result may positively affect the team’s performance.

Here are some sample fixes to typical irritations:

- Redesign a form to make it easier to use.
- Contact a vendor to change a standing order process.
- Speak to a team member who chronically misses deadlines or arrives late to meetings.



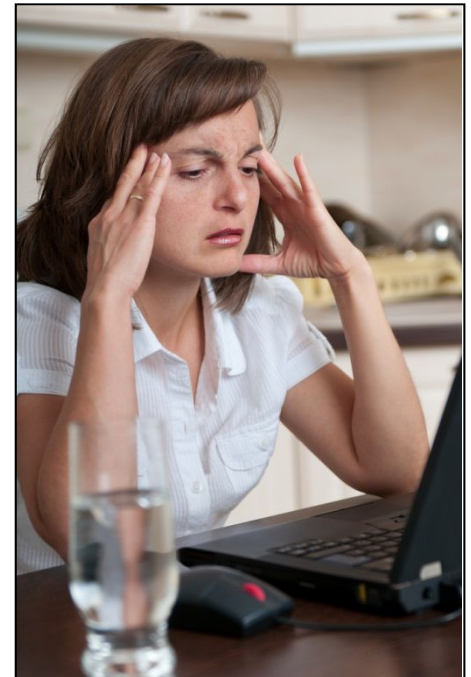
Apply What You've Learned

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow in order to put your skills into practice.

The organization: A manufacturer of small kitchen appliances and gadgets.

The people: Monica, a manager in the Communications and Public Relations department; Wes, the VP of Manufacturing; Mark, the COO; and Darlene, a team member.

The situation: It's a bad day at the office for Monica—the internal email system has crashed and is unavailable. The COO is scheduled to have a conference call with some important investors in an hour and has come down with a 24-hour bug. The product release event has already been scheduled for their new product, but Monica just heard from Wes that a key component of the product has a glitch and fixing it will delay the release.



Questions to Consider

1. Which traits of being indispensable did Monica exhibit? Which were absent?
2. Monica didn't crack under pressure. What behaviors did she use to stay calm and collected?
3. Was Monica a good communicator? Why or why not? How could she have helped others perform better?

Review the ideas and suggestions provided on the following slides.



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