

10 Rules for Being Personally Effective

Our president, Ron McDonald, was asked to give a speech a while ago on the importance of having every employee engaged in making a company successful. As a part of our preparation, we came up with a list of things that every employee should do to be personally successful and to help their company be successful. Here they are.

1. **Be a customer.** Your customers are the reason why your company and your unit or team exists. If they are not satisfied and occasionally delighted they will go somewhere else. Looking at what you do, what you accomplish, how you operate and everything else from your customer's viewpoint is essential. But understanding what customers want is only the first step. Being willing to change and improve to meet these expectations is where the "rubber meets the road."
2. **Be a good team member.** First, you must know your job well and consistently create excellent results. Then you must be willing and eager to step outside your job to help others in your team when this is needed to create the best result. Team results and accomplishments are most important. This is how every team is successful. Lastly, you are responsible, along with your other team members, in setting the standard for what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Peer acceptance and pressure is a primary determinant of your team's culture and its ultimate success.
3. **Get things done.** Be someone who accomplishes things that are worthwhile; that help your customers and your company. Avoid being the person who always finds fault and reasons not to do things. Be the one who finds solutions, who is a leader in making changes and improvements. There's enough organizational inertia in most companies to keep mistakes from happening and to identify them when they do. It doesn't need your help. Also avoid being one of those employees who are involved in everything. The social aspects of company life are important and help smooth relationships but don't let this become too important. Only attend meetings that are worthwhile and be one of the people in the meetings you do attend that ensures there is a worthwhile result.
4. **Don't worry about who gets the credit.** Everyone has experienced the situation where a colleague got credit for an idea or result that was yours. This inequity may have happened on purpose or by accident. But let it go. While this is annoying, it usually isn't very important over the long term. The truth is that the people you work with will always understand who the good performers are and who are the sliders and slackers. And customers measure you on results; what your team produces. The best formula for success is to produce so many ideas and results that you don't have to worry about who gets the credit. The flip side of this is also true. If you're spending a lot of time making sure you get credit for things, maybe you're not doing enough.
5. **Understand the big picture.** I'm a firm believer that everyone always tries to do what is right and good. When mistakes are made it is usually because we choose a short term good instead of choosing an even better long term benefit, like eating a really great meal while we temporarily go off our diet. By staying focused on core business goals and what you need to accomplish over the long term you can usually avoid making these kinds of mistakes. You'll also find that your overall decision-making is better.

6. **Streamline everything.** Stop doing things simply because that's the way they've always been done. Look for ways to eliminate unnecessary or unproductive work. Find ways to do what must be done most efficiently. Be relentless. A dollar saved is a dollar of profit -- but even more importantly your efficiency can result in better prices for your customer, more growth from this new competitive advantage and more security for you as the company prospers.
7. **Work hard and be efficient.** I came home from my first job when I was a young boy and complained to my dad about being tired. His response was an unsympathetic, "That's why they call "work" work. I learned quickly that accomplishing anything worthwhile takes a lot of effort and energy. Its part of the contract you have with your company and is expected. Even more importantly, it's necessary to be successful. It's rare that anyone can coast and accomplish anything meaningful and it's impossible to coast and live up to your potential.

Don't waste time. Keep focused on things that are important. Prioritize what you do and manage your time efficiently. Get the biggest result in the time you spend. And when you find a better way to do things, share this knowledge with others so your whole team, department and company will become better.

Senior executives and other key employees whose main responsibility is in obtaining results through the effort of others should manage their time so they spend most of their time initiating results instead of reacting to problems. Make sure problems are resolved at the right level, by the right people. They'll do it better and faster. Also, plan your time so you can set aside some time each day to focus on opportunities of your own choosing that you can have the best impact on.

8. **Learn something every day.** People and companies are like trees. When they stop growing they die; maybe not literally but at least professionally. In today's world, the most effective way to maintain job security is to keep learning and find ways to be more effective and valuable every day. Become the captain of your own ship. Avoid being the person who sadly says, "No one ever trained me how to do that."
9. **Set and make goals.** It's important to do this on two levels. First, you need to set personal goals so your career and personal life is well managed and you attain the financial and other objectives you need to be happy and fulfilled. You'll need to do and redo this periodically because your desires and expectations will change as you become older and hopefully more successful. Be realistic, but always include a little stretch in what you want to accomplish. Secondly, you need to set and work towards goals that support your team's objectives. This will determine how you spend a lot of your work time. Do it well and the rewards will follow.
10. **Be an owner.** This means two things. First, be accountable for everything you do. Make sure you create the best result. Correct your own mistakes. Secondly, look at your job and what you do as if you owned the company and were responsible for its final results. If you maintain this viewpoint in everything you do, you almost can't go wrong.

As I finished this I thought of an eleventh rule. Call me if you're interested. In the meantime I'll follow David Letterman's rule -- "No one wants to hear more than ten of anything."

If you would like to discuss any of these concepts and how to put in the infrastructure that supports and enables your extraordinary people to attain their full potential, please call me or send an Email. Also please visit our web sight at McDonaldConsultingGroup.com. You'll find further explanations of these ideas in our Concepts and Ideas section.