
Individual Contributor Development Program eLesson

Manifesting a Learning Attitude and Habits

A True Story

About ten years ago I was visiting with Jerry Owens, the founder of the successful company, Owens Country Sausage. Because I was curious about the differences between companies that grow and succeed and companies that do not grow and eventually die, I asked Jerry what the key was to his success. His answer surprised me but made a lot of sense. He said, "Well I did not have a master strategic plan, I just figured that when I hired good people and they continued to improve and grow in their abilities, then I had to grow the company so they would have things to do. I knew that good people would move on to other companies if they did not have more challenging things to do as they got better. And I certainly wanted to work with people who were growing and learning, because people who don't grow and actively learn are not stimulating or fun to be around."

Jerry Owens was not saying that every good employee has a drive to continually advance up the organizational ladder. He said that he had a number of employees who did not advance to higher positions but still continued to grow in their knowledge and abilities. Some people have so many duties and responsibilities outside of work that they simply cannot accept roles that require more duties at work. Others like their present roles and do not want to move into management. But everyone needs to continually grow in his/her abilities and knowledge. Growing does not have to be directly associated with wanting a promotion or a different position, but it is associated with a desire to do a great job and to continue to add more value to the company's efforts.

Besides being good for you, as a person, and for you professionally, ongoing growth and development ends up making you better able to do things that can benefit the company. It is also an indication that you care about your work. Those in leadership usually look favorably on people who take the initiative to continue to grow in their abilities and knowledge. Most effective leaders view positively those direct reports who take time and make sacrifices to attend classes or seminars, learn from others, and continue to learn and apply new skills.

With this in mind, ask yourself the question, "What are you doing right now to develop your abilities and knowledge?" This Individual Contributor Profile and Development Program is an example of a learning and growth resource. Be sure to take advantage of this program as a resource for you to grow both personally and professionally. Give your manager feedback as to what you are learning and how you are working on the personalized eLessons that will accompany this Profile Report.

Your profile indicates that

You are able to be patient, and you do not have an immediate need to get results or apply your training. Be sure to set aside the time and attention needed to grow and develop beyond your present abilities or your present job's requirements.

Your personal dedication to do things right can drive you to prepare yourself to be ready for future needs so that you will be dependable in the future. Use this self directing orientation to stimulate yourself to continue to grow in your skills, abilities, and knowledge of things that pertain to your job and being an effective contributor.

You see the value of learning, being prepared for future situations, and understanding how to do things. This is one of the principle sources of motivation for a person to continue to grow and learn. It indicates that you probably have an unending desire to learn and be equipped for future situations. Use this inner drive to continually stir yourself to grow in your abilities, skills, and knowledge. Never stop learning.

You are internally driven to do a good job, be good at what you do, and be seen as being both useful and competent. You have confidence in what you do and care about your own professional reputation. Use these sources of motivation to continually develop your own professional expertise.

Your Improvement List

List three areas where it would be good for you to develop greater skills or understanding.

Commit to yourself that you are going to do specific things to grow in these areas (enroll in specific classes, read specific books, etc.). Be sure to jot down the date that you wish to complete each class.

Class/Reading: _____ Date: _____

Class/Reading: _____ Date: _____

Class/Reading: _____ Date: _____

This concludes the eLesson.

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