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# PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

*Jackie Fuller  
Boise, Idaho*

*"The talent of success is  
nothing more than doing what  
you can do well and doing  
well whatever you do."*

*--Longfellow*

# High Achievers Are Different?

A researcher has identified nine factors that differentiate high achievers from other people.

After interviewing 65 highly successful people, Dr. B. Eugene Griessman, author of *The Achievement Factors*, noted that high achievers:

- discover what they're best at and love doing.
- work hard at developing their competency. But they view their work as fun.
- know how to manage their time, which they see as a limited and valuable resource.
- are persistent. They always find a way to make the important things happen.
- get what they need through work. Their work enables them to gain recognition, earn a living and contribute to society.
- are able to concentrate completely on the task before them without being distracted.
- know how to function properly in most situations. They understand that it's important to be in the right place at the right time and to have mentors and people who discover them.

The final two factors: They are able to perceive opportunities and to seize them even if it means taking risks or creating their own paths.

—*Communication Briefings*

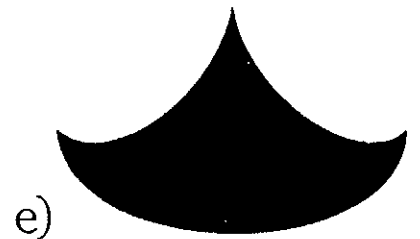
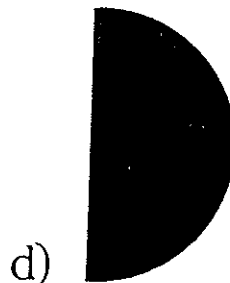
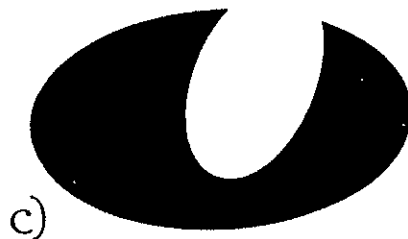
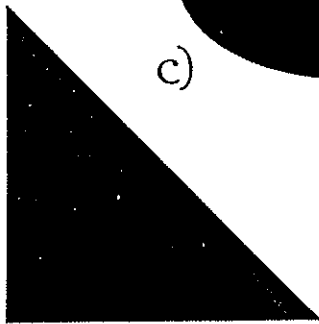
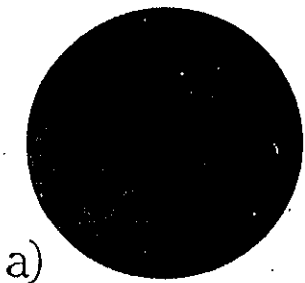
## XVXRY PXRSON IS IMPORTANT

Xvxn though my typxwritxr is an old modxl, it works vxry wxll--xxcxt for onx kxy. You would think that with all thx othxr kxys functioning proprly, onx kxy not working would hardly bx noticxd; but just onx kxy out of whack sxxms to ruin thx wholx xffort.

You may say to yoursxlf--Wxll I'm only onx pxrson. No onx will noticx if I don't do my bxst. But it doxs makx a diffxrxncx bxcausx to bx xffctivx an organization nxxds activx participation by vxry onx to thx bxst of his or hxr ability.

So thx nxxt timx you think you arx not important, rxmxbxr my old typxwritxr. You arx a kxy pxrson.

*Circle the design that you think is different from any of the others:*



# Telephone Etiquette: Being Your Best on the Phone

In these days of shrinking margins, little things can make a big difference—such as how your company treats people. Mary Beth Ingram, president of PHONE PRO (Indianapolis, IN), a trainer of telephone skills, has some suggestions for putting your professional best image forward.

The words people say and the way they say them are their only tools on the phone. The three most dangerous “NOT” words are “CAN’T,” “DON’T,” and “WON’T.” Your motives are not apparent to your telephone partner, so avoiding them is your best bet.

Which would you rather hear: “I *don’t* have any in inventory and the new shipment *won’t* arrive before Monday, so I *can’t* get one to you before next Thursday,” or “The new shipment will be in our store Monday and I can have it at your door Thursday”? The point: Phrase the information positively and tell the caller what CAN happen.

Be cautious using “I” and “me”, lest the caller infer an instruction, such as “If I were you, I’d...”. Try, “Let me recommend...” instead. Also beware of “obligation phrases” such as “What you’ll have to do is...” followed by procedural instructions. Turn it into a special situation with, “We can make special arrangements for you. The best solution would be for you to...” followed by the procedure.

Stay away from endearments such as “Honey,” “Babe,” “Doll,” “Sweetie,” “Guy,” “Buddy,” and “Partner.” Acquire a memory for names and use the person’s name when talking with them. Watch the use of jargon. The caller doesn’t necessarily know your company’s in-house buzzwords.



Photo: Hello Direct, Inc.

Watch grammar. Have you heard, “Was you in the right location?” and momentarily held your breath in astonishment? It always sends negative impressions about a company.

A business killer is the “I’m OK, you’re not” phrases: “Know what I mean?” “You don’t understand, huh?” “In simpler terms...” “You probably don’t know this, but...”. Try blaming the information: “That’s a lot of information. Is there any part you’d like to go over again?” Or blame yourself: “I’m not sure I did a great job explaining all that. Do you have any questions I’ve left hanging?”

The finishing touches are positive phrases such as, “That’s a good question” and “I’m glad you asked that.” Next, clarify issues with “I need your help. Tell me exactly what happened when...”. Don’t forget common courtesy; “Please,” “Thank you,” and “You’re welcome” will distinguish you from your competition. For more information, **Write 522.** ■

## PET PEEVES OF BOSSES

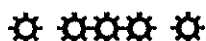
*Here are 25 complaints school administrators make against their secretaries. To how many must you plead guilty?*

1. *Failure to remind boss of business appointments.*
2. *Failure to maintain files in current state.*
3. *Failure to proofread material carefully before it leaves the office.*
4. *Inability to detect spelling and grammatical errors, poor word usage, and poor sentence structure.*
5. *Unwillingness to rewrite letters when corrections are indicated.*
6. *Excessive time away from desks (long rest periods).*
7. *Excessive use of telephone and business hours to tend to personal business.*
8. *Failure to assume responsibilities willingly without having to be told repeatedly what should be done.*
9. *Indifference to criticism--having to be told to correct same error over and over again.*
10. *Know-it-all-attitude.*
11. *Failure to perform assigned duties promptly.*
12. *Consults her boss only when "in trouble" and then supplies him with alibis.*
13. *Lack of good receptionist etiquette (failure to make visitors feel welcome without undue familiarity).*
14. *Excessive visiting during working hours.*
15. *Gossiping about co-workers and superiors.*
16. *Excessive and frequent discussion of personal affairs.*
17. *Allowing emotional reactions to personal affairs to interfere with work.*
18. *Unwillingness to approach changes with open-mindedness--set ideas and methods.*
19. *Poor telephone technique.*
20. *Poor judgment as to when to interrupt the boss with telephone calls or questions.*
21. *Inability to keep matters of trust confidential (talking about confidential matters to personal friends).*
22. *Leaving office without anyone to answer the phone.*
23. *Disloyal to boss and school system.*
24. *Tardiness and absenteeism.*
25. *Inability to maintain good relations with co-workers and the public.*

# Making Your Boss Look Good

a workshop by

**Jackie Fuller, CEOE**  
**Boise, Idaho**



*Recently, bosses across the country were asked what skills they valued most in their secretaries. Their responses:*

*The ability to:*

- ♥ *anticipate the boss's needs.*
- ♥ *keep the work flow moving when the boss is out of the office.*
- ♥ *run the office with little or no supervision.*
- ♥ *be flexible and adjust quickly when priorities change.*
- ♥ *take initiative and share responsibility with the boss for follow up.*
- ♥ *confidently ask for clarification when in doubt.*
- ♥ *understand unique characteristics of the boss.*
- ♥ *be diplomatic at all times and handle visitors graciously.*
- ♥ *consistently be enthusiastic, thorough, and efficient.*
- ♥ *project a pleasing personality in any situation.*

# COMPOSING WITH COMPOSURE

A Workshop by

Jackie Fuller, CEOE  
Boise, Idaho

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Letters, memos, reports should communicate to the reader in a direct and accessible way. Of all the forms of writing, a letter makes the most direct contact with its reader. It's ORGANIZATION MUST BE CLEAR, its SENTENCES SHORT, and its WORDS WELL CHOSEN.

## Organization

1. Beginning (opening) (orientation)  
Introduces the topic and tells the reason for writing.
2. Middle (facts)  
presents ideas one at a time in appropriate order.
3. End (closing)  
Summarizes what has been covered and suggests future action when appropriate. Say something that leaves reader with positive feelings about firm.

## Using the "You" Approach

Try using "you" approach rather than a "we" approach up front, addressing yourself to the reader's needs and interests.

Weak: Dear Parent:

We are about to embark upon another school year and would like to elaborate on some programs our professional staff will be offering. We want to assure you that our programs center on enriching our curriculum to a maximum extent so that the learning experience of each child will be fulfilling.

Better: Dear Parent:

You will be interested to learn of some of the things we're planning for your child this year. We know you're concerned about the basics--reading and writing in particular--and we share this concern with you. So our first project is a skill-building curriculum designed to fit your child's needs.



Use Simple Words

utilize	<u>use</u>	terminate	_____
inquire	_____	assistance	_____
compensate	_____	facilitate	_____

Avoid Redundancies

When we repeat the same word or the same idea, it usually means we don't have much of importance to say.

<u>Don't say</u>	<u>Do say</u>
each and every	<u>each</u>
first and foremost	_____
one and only	_____
close proximity	_____
consensus of opinion	_____

Steer clear of such expressions as

basic fundamentals  
past experience  
future plans  
absolutely necessary  
experienced veteran

Don't use unnecessary verb forms

We weaken our writing by stuffing it with verb and noun combinations that should be styled as verbs:

<u>don't</u>	<u>do</u>
make decisions	<u>decide</u>
take into consideration	<u>consider</u>
make application to	_____
come to conclusions	_____
give assistance to	_____

Weak: There will be an increase in property taxes.

Better: \_\_\_\_\_

Fix these sentences:

1. She never makes an attempt to improve her skills.
2. There are too many mistakes appearing in this catalog.
3. In order to meet the deadline, we worked overtime.

Avoid double negatives

not impossible	<u>possible</u>
not unaware	_____

Use a Word instead of a Phrase

Say as little as possible (try to eliminate phrases when a word will do):

with the exception of	<u>except for</u>
during the course of	_____
due to the fact that	_____
at the present time	_____
subsequent to	_____
Please be advised that my	_____
new address is	_____
In the immediate future	_____
I would like to thank you	_____

Eliminate Archiac and Pompous Words and Phrases

<u>Pompous</u>	<u>Conversational</u>
the above-mentioned letter	<u>this letter</u>
anticipate an increase	<u>expect an increase</u>
we should commence	_____
you have demonstrated	_____
please endeavor to	_____
pursuant to your request	_____

Using the words on the left is not wrong. But the tendency to stuff your writing with them makes you sound formal and stiff.

Avoid Cliches

His suggestion was as old as the hills	His suggestion was not new.
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Exercises using unnecessary words, overworked phrases, and cliches:

Simplify the expression when possible, and clarify the meaning.

1. The meeting will commence at 10 a.m.
2. As per our telephone conversation last Tuesday, March 10, I am sending the aforementioned materials pursuant to your orders.
3. In view of the fact that we're losing financial support, please indicate to your staff that the company will assist them in any way possible.
4. During the course of the evening, checks in the amount of \$100 will be distributed to winners of the sales contest.

Watch Out for Use of Intensives

Don't overuse very, definitely, absolutely, completely, or highly. Never use them with these words: unique, impossible, superb, superior, excellent. You weaken a word when you qualify it.

Words you Can Leave Out

there--unless it's the subject  
it--don't use in impersonal constructions  
that, which and who--leave out when no misunderstanding could result.

Exercise: Remove unnecessary use of there, it, who, that, and which.

1. The report [that] you promised to send hasn't come.
2. There were several good ideas presented at the meeting.
3. It is expected that profits will be higher this year.
4. Simon Green, who is our department's brightest new worker, won't be here much longer.

Watch Out How you Say It!

Be careful in the wording of your sentences.

The following appeared in The Toronto Sun. They were taken from actual insurance forms completed by persons who filed accident reports.

"I was on the way to the doctor with rear-end trouble when my universal joint gave way causing me to have an accident."

"I had been driving my car for 40 years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident."

"My car was legally parked as it backed into another vehicle."

"I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way."

These excerpts are from letters actually received by the Salt Lake County Welfare Offices:

"In accordance with your instructions, I have given birth to twins in the enclosed envelope."

"I want my money as quick as I can get it. I have been in bed with my doctor for two weeks and he doesn't seem to be doing much good. If things do not improve, I will have to get another doctor."

"I am forwarding my marriage certificate and six children. I have seven, but one died, which has been baptized on half a piece of paper."

Don't Confuse Words

ability	power to do something	adverse	hostile, unfavorable
capacity	ability to hold, contain, to absorb	averse	disciplined
already	earlier, previously	advice	(n) information; recommendation
all ready	all of us ready	advise	(v) to recommend; to give counsel
anxious	worried	decent	proper; right
eager	desirous	descent	going down
		dissent	disagreement
appraise	judge	deduce	to infer
apprise	inform	deduct	to subtract
biannual	twice a year	emerge	to rise out of
biennial	every two years	immerse	to plunge into
continual	close or rapid succession	personal	private
continuous	without interruption	personnel	the staff
stationary	fixed or unmoving	veracious	truthful
stationery	paper	voracious	greedy
disinterested	unbiased, not influenced by personal reasons		
uninterested	not interested		

End on a Positive Note

Negative: Again, we're sorry for any inconvenience we may have caused.

Positive: Again, thank you for telling us about this situation.

Negative: You won't be sorry that you chose our firm.

Positive: You'll be glad that you chose our firm.

Final Exercise

Rewrite this paragraph:

In reference to your letter of May 12, please find enclosed herewith a check in the amount of \$72 for your services. In view of the fact that you have not as yet returned our loaner equipment, we would appreciate it if you would do so without further delay. In the event that you cannot do this, please advise us before you leave the country. Inasmuch as you are leaving the country for a period of a year, we will not anticipate hearing from you during the course of that time. However, it is essential that you get into contact with us subsequent to that time.

## **DELEGATING WITH CONFIDENCE: Giving Clear Work Assignments**

by Jackie Fuller, CEOE  
Boise, Idaho

Most office professionals know what it is like to be on the receiving end of poorly stated instructions. Here are some guidelines to help you to give clearly stated work assignments to assure there are no misunderstandings, that the tasks will be done as you expect, and save yourself time you might otherwise have to spend redoing work.

1. **Organize the work.**  
Gives you time to think through how you will give instructions and to have all resources ready for completion of the project.
2. **Clear time for employee.**  
Eliminates fragmented jobs that can cause mistakes and stress on part of employee.
3. **Consider your audience.**  
What does the person already know? Begin instructions at that point.
4. **Explain the whole project.**  
Tell person why work is being done. Understanding the purpose clarifies why it is to be done in a certain way.
5. **Use short, simple words.**  
Makes work assignment clear and understandable.
6. **Make it short.**  
Average attention span is only 30 seconds--the rest is preparation and follow through.
7. **Demonstrate and/or write it out.**  
If long and complicated, give step-to-step instructions and demonstrate how to do. Write out instructions if hard to remember.
8. **Enunciate clearly.**  
Make sure audience hears exactly what you say.
9. **Say what you mean to assure audience can't misinterpret.**  
Give directions that can not be interpreted two ways or misinterpreted on purpose.
10. **Avoid giving instructions through third party.**  
If several people will work on one project, give instructions to entire group. This will prevent instructions from changing as it passes from one person to the next.
11. **Allow person to ask questions.**  
It is important to have person ask questions to alleviate misunderstanding.
12. **Ask person to repeat instructions.**  
Have person confirm understanding of what was said by asking him/her to tell you what the job will entail.
13. **Provide feedback.**  
Give praise if warranted. If something is wrong, tell them so they will learn. Criticize the job, not the person. Be pleasant in your dealings with people.

Remember, delegating well will make the work more pleasant and satisfying for the people whose work you supervise.