# JOB SECURITY



By Don Phin, Esq.

First edition, 2013 Second edition, 2014 Third edition, 2014 Copyright © 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 by Don Phin, ESQ. don@donphin.com www.donphin.com

Library of Congress Control Number: Phin, Donald A. Job Security Includes index and on-line access to forms, checklists and agreements.

ISBN 978-0-9897734-0-9 Printed in the United States of America

# JOB SECURITY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Why Should You Read This Book?	3
What Job Security is Not	6
What Job Security Is	8
Responsibility TO versus Responsibility FOR	9
Playing "Above the Line"1	0
1. Be Trustworthy1	6
2. Be Productive 2	21
3. Have a Plan2	8
4. Keep Learning	6
5. Know Your Company3	9
6. Look for the Opportunities4	7
7. Be a Team Player 5	51
8. Speak Up, the Right Way5	7
9. Don't Cause Drama6	2
10. Dress for Success6	7
Knowing When to Fold Them7	3
Conclusion7	7
Appendix7	8

### INTRODUCTION

Why Should You Read This Book? The simple answer is this: It will help you be more secure in your job. Given today's crazy economy, creating job security is more important than ever.

Now for the more complicated answer. In 1954, Abraham Maslow wrote a famous white paper on the Hierarchy of Needs. He taught that you and I have five basic needs that relate to work: survival (getting paid today), security (getting paid tomorrow), belonging (working on a team), ego gratification (career growth), and finally becoming self-actualized in our work (knowing we can make a difference). By following the advice and guidance shared in this book, you will be able to satisfy most, if not all, of these needs. You will move out of survival mode, create job security, feel like part of a team, grow in your career, feel better about yourself and become "self-actualized" in the process. And it doesn't have to cost you a penny.

Why should you listen to my insights on how to be a great employee? That's easy—I know what I'm talking about! At 27 years of age I began my career as an employment litigation attorney. I thought I could help make this a better world by helping poor victimized employees overthrow their dastardly villainous bosses. Unfortunately, it wasn't until I approached 40 that I came to realize just how ridiculous this story was. I was willing to work 70-hour weeks trying to prove an employee was right and their boss was wrong. Perhaps even ill-willed and malicious too! When my clients eventually received a settlement (sometimes many years after filing the underlying lawsuit) roughly twothirds of them blew through that money in three years or less. Oftentimes those settlements where in the hundreds of thousands of dollars!

What I experienced in litigating employment lawsuits was the extreme of management/employee failure. I came to realize that most litigious employees would rather spend their time proving up that they are "right" and blaming someone else for their circumstances... than finding work in the right environment. As the saying goes, "if the only thing you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If protecting your rights is your main goal in life, you are guaranteed to find yourself offended in short order.

Given this realization, I quit my litigation practice cold turkey after having most of Maslow's needs met by it—except for that of self-actualization. Fact is, I wasn't making the difference I thought I would. I finally got it that nobody wins a lawsuit—neither employee nor employer. Just like nobody wins a divorce. So I quit playing a lose/lose game. I now advise employees to get over it, fix it, or move on.

In my former position as President of HR That Works, I personally handled over 3,000 "hotline" calls from employers concerned about employee behavior. I have heard every possible story under the sun—and then some. I have also given workshops to thousands of CEOs on better managing their workforce. In these workshops, they have shared with me their employee expectations. Lastly, I ran a forum for high-end HR executives for five years and they too shared their expectations.

For the last 15 years I have helped companies and people just like you rise above this ridiculous, destructive workplace story. I even wrote a book about it: *Victims, Villains and Heroes: Managing Emotions in the Workplace.* In that book, my co-author, Loy Young, and I talk about how employees have been cast in the victim role, employers in the villain one, and everyone finds themselves looking for the hero. "Who's going to save me now?" When people ask me, "Whose side are you on?" My answer is always the same. I'm on the side of what makes sense. We need to replace this victim, villain, hero story with a much more powerful one. To me, that's the sweet spot where *both* employer and employee can be heroes in the workplace story.

### What Job Security is Not

Many people have a misunderstanding about what job security is. I can tell you this: it's not union membership. Ask the employees of American, Delta, and United if it's job security. Or those at Chrysler, Ford, and GM. While unions may provide for good compensation and benefit packages, they can also make an employer less competitive in the global marketplace, thereby destroying job security of its younger workers and future membership.

Job security can't be created by the government. There is no job bills package that can guarantee you job security for any length of time. Sure it may provide a one-year stimulus, but where does one go from there? Even public sector employees are starting to understand that working for the government doesn't constitute job security. In fact, those over-promised pensions and other retirement benefits all but guarantee the lack of job security for those that come behind today's senior employees.

Job security isn't about length of employment either. With things changing as rapidly as they are, chances are the longer you've been in a job, the less secure you are! I remember a *Fortune* magazine cover years ago indicating that longevity may actually work against you, rather than for you. Employers are much more concerned about *what you can do for me now*. Just because you've done the same job over and over again for a considerable amount of time does not equate to job security.

Today's employment laws don't guarantee job security. I've seen many an employee play the age, race, disability, or sex discrimination card resulting in short-term gain and long-term difficulty. I don't know of anybody who is highly successful in their career regardless of their age, race, sex, disability status, and any other protected category, that gained true job security because of their protected status. It's a card I've seen many employees pull out and their attorneys willing to make a buck off of and, in my experience, it's a trap!

Some think the answer is to look for a new boss. Again, there are circumstances where that makes sense. Unfortunately, you often realize you've just traded an old drama for a new one.

Today's story about job security was "gifted" to us from the 50s and 60s when the United States was the only manufacturer on the world stage. There was so much cash flowing into the country that we were able to make all sorts of promises, both at work and at home. There would be job security, endless benefits, and you'll be taken care of in your retirement years.

Today's demographics can no longer support this fantasy. It is a story that is long gone, never to return.

### What Job Security Is

Some people have decided the answer to job security is to work for themselves. For the rare few, that turns out to be exactly what they need to do. Others try to escape the employee role only to find they are further backwards financially, professionally and emotionally having done so. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, over 50% of small businesses fail in the first year and 95% fail within the first five years. Even if you do survive, many entrepreneurs end up working longer hours for *less* pay. But hey, at least they are their own boss.

So while working for yourself is always an option, it remains a very risky one, and not part of the conversation in this book.

Most people prefer being an employee and for good reason. To begin with, you don't have the financial risks, worry, or headaches associated with business ownership. You may also need to work in a company to fulfill your dreams (i.e., being a commercial airline pilot or working on large scale building projects). Chances are you enjoy working with others on a team and like the steady paycheck and benefits package that comes with employment. There are many other excellent reasons as well.

Unlike any other book I know, the goal of this book is to help you discover the opportunity for job security that lies directly in front of you. In the job you are at today.

#### Responsibility *TO* versus Responsibility *FOR*

When I give workshops to business owners and managers across the country, I help them understand the distinction between being responsible *to* employees and being responsible *for* employees. Being responsible *to* you is allowing you an opportunity to succeed because there's clarity about the requirements of the job and how to be successful given those requirements. It is then your responsibility to live up to the opportunity.

Employers don't want to get caught in the story of being *responsible for* other adults. At best, this creates a co-dependency. Much of the thinking that generated the *responsibility for* mentality came out of the controlbased management philosophies of years gone by. The bottom line was pretty much this: Do what we tell you to do, don't think for yourself, we've figured it all out at the top, we'll grade you on a scale from 1-5 annually, and if you survive that process until you're 65, we'll give you a pension you can actuarially live off of until you're 67. As already mentioned, those days are gone, whether we would prefer them or not.

The Catch-22 today is the employee a boss can control, is the employee they *don't want*! That's because the employee is going to expect the boss or company to take care of them. It's like playing a parent/child game. Here's the newsflash: *Business owners and bosses are not your parents*. They are not responsible *for* you, they are only responsible *to* you. That means putting you into a position where you're capable of success. It's your responsibility from there.

### Playing "Above the Line"

It's very tempting to "fall below the line" and blame or justify any lack of job security. It's amazing how in my seventeen years of litigation neither the employer nor the employee wanted to take responsibility for their failed relationship. Not much different than what you would find in divorce court. Fact is, both parties are responsible in a relationship. When you play "above the line," you spend your time and energy looking for your responsibility in a situation as opposed to focusing on what somebody else should have done.

Some of you will be given this book by your boss. They want you to be a great employee. They want to provide great employees with job security—because it helps grow the business. Consider it a gift for your future success.

One of the executives who reviewed an earlier draft of this book encouraged me to spell this fact out further:

Sir,

I was laid off from a job because of the poor economy and I must admit that at least initially, I fell below the line into the "blame game" of looking for external reasons why I lost my job. Fortunately, I looked inward at what skills, education, and career goals I had at that time and found them wanting in several areas. Many people find external reasons why they lost a job. The trap here is personal accountability. We are each responsible for our families, our finances, and yes even for our own careers. The key here is to objectively look at these professional failures and shortcomings, and deciding to do something about them. We can decide to either continue on the same path or we can decide to do something to overcome these obstacles.

I would respectfully suggest that sharing this book is the sign of a truly great boss. If my boss took not only the time to look at ways to grow my character and skills professionally but also made the time and effort of sharing a book to help me to grow, I would be profoundly affected. How many bosses have we worked for that only took the time to point out our flaws and never took the time to help us grow to become a better more productive member of the company?

Many managers and business owners want their employees to succeed. In some rare cases, they will make an investment of time and effort in the employees who may not be performing at their fullest potential. After all, when the employee succeeds so does the manager or business owner. When these key decision makers make the investment of time and effort to evaluate and research where improvements can be made it should be received for what it is – a gift. They see in you the potential for much more and are willing to help you achieve success.

Warm Regards, Dave

### The Ten Steps to Job Security

Here are the subject matters we're going to discuss in this book. I wish I could sum it all up in just three factors, but it's more complicated than that. Job Security is a multi-faceted challenge. Reducing it to these ten was hard enough!

- Be Trustworthy Trust is the single most important factor in any relationship. The one you have with yourself (Can I really trust myself to do this?), the one you have with your coworkers (Can I really trust them to work with me?), and the one you have with your boss (Can I really trust him or her to have my best interests in mind?). We will talk about what makes you trustworthy and how that plays into job security.
- 2. Be Productive The idea of an easy road to success is a lie. There's no job security in easy. How would you define your work ethic? Are you willing to work hard? You may have all the talent in the world, but do you put your nose to the grindstone? Being productive does not mean you have to exhaust yourself. Being productive the right way invigorates you. The best way to motivate yourself is with a job well done.
- **3.** Have a Plan –As Mary Kay once said, "Most people plan their vacations better than their careers." This is so true. I'm going to challenge you with a five-minute exercise to see just how clear you really are about your "career plan."
- **4. Keep Learning** Only a handful of employees make a concerted effort to educate

themselves once they've graduated from school. Many simply do the same job at the same level year after year. How sad. Given tight budgets and time constraints, many employers have backed off their training initiatives which further reduces continuing education. Remember this to earn more, you must learn more...and, in the end, doing so is your responsibility.

- **5. Know Your Company** Know the owners, executives, administrative staff, clients, customers, products, and services. Make sure you understand the vision, mission, values, and goals for the company. Know how the company makes a profit and how you directly contribute to that.
- 6. Look for the Opportunities Bosses love when an employee thinks for himself or herself. "Whoa, that was amazing—you thought for yourself!" Don't wait for the company to ask you for suggestions, volunteer them. I'll give you an Employee Suggestion Form that will assist you in doing so. I will also share other ideas how you can find opportunities, including a Creativity Checklist.
- 7. Be a Team Player There is no going it alone. Even if you did work for yourself. We have to think in terms of *cooperation*, *collaboration*, *and teamwork*. I will share a technique that you and your fellow employees can use to instantly understand how to best support each other. I will also give you a sample set of Team Rules you should consider tweaking for your work team.

- 8. Speak Up, the Right Way I remember reading a survey in the Wall Street Journal that said roughly half of employees would not speak up in light of *illegal, immoral, or unethical conduct!* This is a fear driven response. Fear of the judgment and consequences that will follow speaking up, including the loss of job security. Therefore, roughly half the workforce sits in what I call a "Culture of Silence." This has devastating consequences to the company's culture, risk management exposure, and profitability. As well as to your career. I will share with you techniques for how to speak up in a way that you will have no regret associated with doing so afterwards.
- **9. Don't Cause Drama** As we wrote in *Victims, Villains and Heroes,* every day we walk on to an emotional stage. When anything unfair occurs, the age-old plot of Goodness Triumphs over Evil begins. Of course, for every victim there must be a villain. Bottom line is neither you, co-workers nor the company benefit from this destructive drama. I'll give you techniques to stay off stage and avoid this most dangerous trap.
- 10. Dress for Success Lastly, people will project a story on you, and you'll have one about yourself too, simply based on the way you dress. The point is to dress like you want success. I'm not expecting you to be a fashionista—but I wouldn't suggest you dress like a slob or somebody stuck in the 80's either. As a simple example, I realized that when I was a trial attorney I had to dress in a way the jury

expected me to—not the way I wanted to. I had to tone down my New York City fashion show. Dress more conservatively. Did I really like that? Not really. But I liked the results it helped generate in the courtroom!

Along the way I'll share comments on each of these subjects from owners and managers. I am very thankful to for their willingness to contribute to this book. You'll see a commonality in their insights.

If you take these 10 very powerful factors to heart and DO something about them you are guaranteed job security, career success, self-satisfaction, and much, much more!

A legal note: there are many aspects to job security from a legal standpoint. For the most part, unless you are in a union or have and executive contract, chances are your employment is "at-will," meaning you can quit or be fired at any time. Just cause or prior notice are generally not required. If you do what I discuss in this book, chances are you'll never have to worry about the legality of a termination.

## 1. BE TRUSTWORTHY

"Trust is the single most important factor in any relationship, including the one you have with yourself." What are the most important aspects about being a trustworthy employee? When I asked survey participants to share about this factor, a number of common themes emerged:

> Words like accountability, responsibility, honesty, integrity, and

**confidentiality** were used repeatedly. Stop to consider how you would describe yourself in each of these areas:

- Accountability (you understand your job)
- **Responsibility** (the buck stops here)

- Honesty (willing to do the "right thing") \_\_\_\_\_
- **Integrity** (doing what you say you'll do)
- **Confidentiality** (keeping private what should be)
- Another common theme was to *admit your mistakes*. Employers hate when they have to find out for themselves that you messed up. Realize this—**most employers know employees make mistakes**—heck, they've made mistakes

themselves. They want you to a) disclose the mistake, b) understand why the mistake was made, c) make attempts to remedy it, d) mitigate any damage and e) know what you have to do to make sure that mistake isn't made a second time.

- A third theme is to be *trustworthy when nobody* 3. is watching. It is very difficult for managers to micromanage you when they're running 75mph. Most have zero desire to micromanage employees and would rather let them know what needs to get done and have them figure out how to do it. They also want you working when nobody's watching. That means you don't use extra time—if there is such a thing—to check on your Fantasy Football league, your Facebook page, or text your girlfriends. It means you figure out how else you can get things done. This, of course, includes the fact you would never steal or pilfer from the company. And it's not just about swiping office supplies. It includes stealing a company's time, misusing confidential information, and more.
- 4. The fourth theme is to *be on time*. Can you be trusted to be where you are supposed to be, when you are supposed to be there? There is no job security in tardiness or absenteeism. And, no excuses that will work.

### Here are some wonderful insights from owners, managers and HR executives:

- "You know you are trustworthy when you are the first one called in an emergency."
- "Any relationship requires trust. It is mutual and there are constant win-win-win scenarios.
- "You do what you say you'll do... trust is earned."
- "Don't be afraid to make mistakes and absolutely don't be afraid to admit to your mistakes and failures."
- "Taking ownership of responsibility, letting me know when there are concerns. Being able to report on a situation or discuss it without defensiveness. If something is wrong I want to know."
- "Understanding the Core Values of our company allows them to have flexibility to fix problems. Since they are acting on our Core Values I have trust that decisions they make are consistent with what is important to me. I want them to take chances within the confines of our Core Values and know that if they have not violated those I will back them and if there was a mistake we can learn from the mistake."
- "Following through and/or doing the right thing even if no one will know or is watching."
- "A trustworthy employee is somebody that is not only honest but also does not rob you of time. Somebody that does not 'play when the cat's away.' Also important to come to you when they make a mistake so it can be corrected and not try to cover it up. Step up to your mistakes no matter how bad they are so you can be instructed on how to not make them again."

- "Asking for help when it's needed."
- "To me it means treating the business like you are actually an owner as opposed to just some kind of hired help."
- "A trustworthy employee is someone who won't steal assets from the business, who works well on their own, and speaks highly of our company and employees."

### Here's what I can do to be more trustworthy:

1	 		
2	 	 	
3			

## 2. BE PRODUCTIVE

"The customer is the most important part of the production line." -Dr. Edward Deming For years I did workshops for restaurant managers and employees. One thing I stressed was to never walk around empty handed. If you have to walk from one side of the floor to the other, you should always bring something with you. I am very observant of restaurant employees who run around looking busy but are in fact unproductive. There is no difference when it comes to your job.

There is a major distinction between being busy and being productive. I've met plenty of people who are great at business and terrible at doness. Does it take you more than 40 hours to get your job done? Why is that? Do you think in terms of doing things *faster*, *better*, *cheaper*, *differently or not at all*? What would it take for you to become 10%-20% more productive within the next three months?

Here's a quick story about being productive. After getting "uninvited" to my first two colleges (party on!), my uncle convinced me to work on a tuna boat out of San Diego. Actually, it didn't take much convincing as it sounded like a fun adventure. It ended up being some very hard and dangerous "man's work." One of the nastiest jobs on the tuna boat was cleaning all the fish sludge out of the bilges and swabbing down empty gas tanks so they could be stocked with fish. There was some pretty hardcore work to be done on those boats that would make Mike Rowe proud. I worked my @\$\$ off on that boat. I did it with a vigor that the captain hadn't experienced before in any of his rookie crewman. As a result, when we pulled into the Panama Canal roughly a year later, I was the crewman out of 22 selected to represent the crew and have a drink in the captain's quarters (a maritime tradition). Not one of the other crewman complained I wasn't deserving of the recognition. I knew being a fisherman wouldn't be a lifetime occupation and my captain knew that about me too. He knew I planned on going back to college and encouraged me to do so.

My point is this: be productive where you are today, no matter what you are doing. It builds your character in the process.

### Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "Get things done. Don't just 'be busy'. Make a plan and work that plan, in spite of interruptions and changes that occur at the last minute."
- "Don't waste company time. However, I think busy and productive are sometimes two different things. Anyone can 'look busy.' Are you accomplishing anything? The productive employee is also the one who is not afraid to stop and take a step back sometimes, too. They evaluate processes and look for ways to improve, thus increasing productivity."
- "Every supervisor likes a hard worker. Someone who can show initiative and has motivation. It's very discouraging to have employees who wait to be told what to do."
- "Being busy and being productive are two different things. I have had employees in the past that made looking busy and art form only to find out that their productivity was zero. You have to make sure that you are productive and doing things that help the company."
- "The first thing I asked my team when I started at my job was that before they performed any task, ask themselves, "Why am I doing this?" If the answer is, "Because that's the way we've always done it," then we need to carefully look at that. Be on the lookout for an easier and

smarter way to do things... not as a way to procrastinate from the actual performance of the job, but if you can really think of a better way, by all means, let's try it out!"

- "A job is never done. There is ALWAYS something to do."
- "The more work you produce the better you will feel about yourself and help the company move forward in the market place. Employees who do not produce are a drain on the company and increase work for other employees."
- "Being busy is much less important than being productive. You can be busy chasing your tail."
- "One still needs to be a great employee even if the job you hold is not in your career path. Sometimes careers take a major turn."
- "An unbusy, unproductive employee many times will find themselves unemployed! You are hired to perform a function for the business and if you can't fulfill that function you shouldn't be there."
- "Keep the home life and the work life separate. Also companies should have a handle on personal cell phone use. Calls from friends and home should be emergency calls."
- "I just celebrated a milestone birthday (50) and can remember earlier in my career where I would become negative because I didn't fully grasp the 'big picture.' Sometimes, to be a great employee, we need to have faith and confidence that the role we play is important, although it may seem as the role is insignificant, stay focused and positive."

#### Are you crystal clear about performance expectations?

Here's the secret formula:

Write down the three most important things you do every day. Then make sure to ask your boss if it matches his/her list of the three most important things.

Once you get the top three squared away, then determine benchmarks for performance. You want to be so clear about those benchmark expectations that you don't have to ask if you are doing a good job - because you will already know! Benchmarks usually come in terms of quality and quantity.

So for example, perhaps you are employed as a customer service representative at an insurance agency. Here's an idea of the top three along with some benchmarks.

1. Task: Coordinate with carriers on claims made.

Benchmarks

- Manage at least 20 claims per month.
- An average of three carrier contacts monthly on open claims.
- All activities tracked in software program.
- 2. Task: Effective use of case management software.

Benchmarks

- All activities entered on all cases.
- All "abnormalities" promptly reported to Risk Management.
- Stay within Activity time specs.

3. Task: Cross-sell insurance.

Benchmarks

- Identify all clients without full coverage.
- Contact at least 20 per month to "round out" coverage.
- Help generate \$5,000 per month in new coverage.

... and so on. Take a look at www.onetonline.org. It's free and you'll learn a lot about your job!

When you create benchmarks, think of the following:

- Speed
- Quantity
- Quality
- Satisfaction
- Documentation
- Results
- Profitability

#### Now it's your turn:

1. Task: \_\_\_\_\_

Benchmarks:

2.	Task:
	Benchmarks:
2	The alley
5.	Task:
	Panahmarka
	Benchmarks:

# 3. HAVE A PLAN

"Most people plan their vacation better than their careers." -Mary Kay Without a plan you go nowhere. And that's nowhere you want to be.

I can tell you that those employees who have the clearest goals are also the most successful. Continually clarifying your goals will help you in your career. Unfortunately, most employees don't consider their career goals (less than half of them do) and, as a result, have minimal career success.

What does it mean to have career goals? First of all, it means that you have an end in mind. I'm not expecting if you're 20 years old to know where you want to be at 65. That's nonsense. The question is this: Where would you like to be in three to five years from now? Whether you are a hairdresser, plumber, policeman, secretary, broker, lawyer, doctor, or account manager. What does that life look like? Spend time in that future place. Think about where you'll be living, what car you'll be driving, what clothes you'll be wearing, who you'll be working with, what you'll be doing, who you'll be doing it for, when you'll be leaving from work, how you feel about yourself at the end of the day, and what type of money you'll be making doing it. Don't just give it fleeting thought. Spend time thinking about it. Turn off the TV, lock the door, turn off the cell phone, get a paper and pen, and really think about it. For one full hour — dream up your own reality show.

Here's a test I've put many through over the years: If I asked you what direction you plan on your career going in the next three to five years, could you tell me about it for *at least five minutes*? If not, you fail the test! It means that you've just given it quick thought to your career and not considered thought. As a result, you run out of things to say within one or two minutes. "Yeah, I really want to be a good account manager. Umm, I don't know, I guess I, uh, I'll be making a little bit more money, uh, I don't know." Many people have responded to this test in that fashion. What chance do you think these people have for career success? My answer: slim and next to none. Like I said, spend an hour thinking it through in detail and you'll get your five minutes.

Once you have your career goals figured out, understand how they relate to the goals of the company. Where are they the same and where might they be different? One thing mentioned by everyone (all our owners and managers) is this: *Even if you have a different career goal, do the very best job you can today.* 

When I graduated college I got a job in an electrical motor shop selling and repairing GE motors. I learned as much as I could about the job, knowing I'd only be working there for ten months if I got accepted into law school. I got accepted and was a great employee for ten months. When I gave notice the boss thanked me for my effort.

Guess what? Employers know the reality that great employees may outgrow their business. If they don't, then they are blind to it. Most employees stay at their companies for an average of four years. Employee retention in the fast food industry is less than one year. In manufacturing it is close to seven years. Some jobs are more secure than others by their very nature and have more retention.

Great employees plan on doing their best in the job they are at today. They have a pride of workmanship that can't be dampened by any boss. *It's who they are!* 

Give yourself a challenge. Make a "go for it" career plan. Set hard goals; harder than your boss has in mind for you. Then invite your boss to challenge you even further.

### Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "If you have clear goals you have a much greater chance of achieving them. Clear goals help you to make decisions when opportunities arise. Are they in alignment with your goals, or not?"
- "I'm not sure having career goals that well defined is the best way to approach growth. I believe it can sometimes blind you to other opportunities that can pop up out of nowhere. If you follow your interests you are more likely to be happy in your work. Enjoyment contributes to engagement, which leads to productivity....
- "Clear career goals are a broad subject and can be quite daunting. Developing clear goals may be easier if we break them up somewhat and focus on short, intermediate and long term When I transitioned from the military, goals. I thought I had clear career goals. When the economy flattened and I was laid off for nearly two years, I had to rethink them in these terms. 1) What short term goals can I meet to make me more marketable in the work force? 2) Where do I see myself in 2, 3 or 5 years? 3) Ultimately, what career would I like to do for the rest of my life? There were quite a few answers and the responses have been refined many times since the original answers and will likely be refined further as time passes. We shouldn't be afraid to refine our goals as our lives change."
- "A story: I met a young man (Jay) several years ago through a client. Jay needed some mentoring and skills development. After an

initial getting to know each other ensued, I asked him what his goals/dreams were. He asked, "What do you mean?" After I gave some examples, he became very quiet and said he was never taught to think that way. Both his parents worked in positions that did not generate much income. He worked after school and had no interest in an education because he did not know what it would do for him. He and his parents received their pay on Friday and spent it by the weekend for the things they needed. They were a humble family with no pretense and hope. It took some time for Jay to understand that dreaming and turning it in to an achievable vision can come true and it was ok to do that. With some mentoring, coaching, and education, Jay eventually became an EVP of that company. The company recently sold and Jay came out of it very well."

- "Writing them down in a journal and communicating them to folks that are closest to you. Verbalizing goals are powerful."
- "When you have realistic goals, you can use them as a road map for your future. ...[y]our goals need to be flexible in order to take advantage of opportunities you may not have planned for."
- "My perspective is that career goals work well for some and not very well for others. I think overall in my experience, general goals work best and to be flexible as to how those goals are met. Setting too specific a goal or time line can sometimes lead to inflexibility and anxiety if the goals aren't met. Overall I'm very happy to have met my general goals and enjoyed the flexibility

and surprising opportunities that have presented along the way."

- "I think there is some actuarial evidence that a large percentage of men who retire will die within two years of their retirement if they aren't achieving goals set before they retired."
- "My goals offer me a path to reach our company goals and my own personal income goals. Without them, this job is like a dog chasing its tail."
- "We always insist that our people have a plan to improve themselves looking at their careers through goal setting. I personally meet with each of the folks that report to me quarterly and go over their company goals, their competencies and career goals. I believe having goals and tracking them are highly important aspects of truly rounding a person and connecting them to what they are doing and how they are performing on the team."
- "Without career goals, where is the challenge? You have to have the challenge to keep pushing you through your career. Learning is the best part!"

#### A plan for my career:

1. What I want to be doing three to five years from now: 2. How will my present job duties have to change on the way to achieving these goals? \_\_\_\_\_ 3. How will I acquire the additional skills and knowledge necessary to achieve these goals? 4. What are some obstacles and blockages that can get in the way? \_\_\_\_\_

5.	Who can I talk to that can mentor me on this journey?
6.	Now set some realistic goals for the next 90 days:

Note: this is just a the beginning. Planning is an ongoing process that requires flexibility and continued improvement.

## 4. KEEP LEARNING

"Education alone can conduct us to that enjoyment which is, at once, best in quality and infinite in quantity." *-Horace Mann*  Two themes emerge in response to this question:

- A willingness to learn.
- A willingness to accept constructive criticism.

How many books have you read in the last year related to your job or industry? Do you read industry magazines or blogsites? Have you asked what you need to learn to be great at your job? If you are not sure what you should be learning, then ask. Remember, *in order to earn more, you must learn more,* in any job.

As mentioned in the last chapter, your career plan must include continuing education. Job security today requires being a lifetime learner. Read books and blogsites. Attend seminars and conferences. Learn about your industry and customers. Become an expert. So what if it takes you three years or more to do it? Fact is, it takes at least three years to be really good at most anything. Put time on your side.

You can get a great education at little or no expense. There are plenty of free libraries you can visit, podcasts and videos you can download and low-cost classes you can attend.

When has your work been criticized? How did you react to it? What did you learn from the criticism? How did you change your behavior? If you have not been criticized by a boss or co-worker, how would you criticize yourself? You know where you can do better. Are you making an effort to learn more in those areas?

I encourage you to invite and seek out criticism. Giving it to you is a sign that people care about you.

## Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

• "Any employee who 'will not' try to improve themselves isn't interested in improving anything else either... namely the company they work for ... "

- "I am 52 years old and am attending college to increase my potential. I will be the first to tell you that it is not easy and many times, I'd rather be doing something MUCH easier but it has paid huge dividends already in the way I view business, coworkers, and clients in general. Trust me when I say, if I can go back to school at 52, anyone can. After more than 25 years since setting foot in a classroom, the learning curve has been nearly vertical but anyone who wants to do this certainly can."
- "Understands that self improvement is mostly their responsibility-I am there to support those efforts. Not drive them."

#### Here's what I can do to keep learning:

1	 	 	
2	 		
3	 		

# 5. KNOW YOUR COMPANY

"How should I know the company vision? I'm treated like a mushroom!" -Employee response to a company survey The quote comes from an employee survey I conducted years ago and it has stuck with me since. I wonder what effort this employee made to seek out this valuable information?

What follows is a series of questions from a survey I encourage companies to distribute to employees. How would you answer these questions? Many times, the answers to every one of them can be easily found on the company's website.

1. When did the business begin and who were the founders?

2. What are the company's vision, mission, values and strategic objectives? \_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Who is currently on the executive team?

	CEO	,
	President	,
	COO	_,
	CFO	,
	VP of HR	
	VP of Sales	,
	VP of Marketing,	
Ot	hers	

4. How many total employees do we have? \_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where are our offices, stores, etc. located? \_\_\_\_\_\_
6. What are our best selling products and/or

services?

 Who are our most profitable customers or clients?

- 8. What are our annual sales?\_\_\_\_\_
- What is your best estimate as to the company's return on investment? (ROI for every dollar we spend we bring in how much? If the answer is \$1.10, the ROI is 10%)
- 10. What business challenge is the company facing?

11.	Who are our top competitors? How are we different
	from them?
12.	What are the three most important things the
	company does every day?
	1
	2
	2
	3

Do yourself a big favor. Stop and spend the time it takes to fill this out. Another good idea is to setup a Google alert for you and your company.

## Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "Know the culture and history so you know how to interact with others and promote the company."
- "The better you understand the company's operations, the better you will do your job because you know how your position affects the rest of the operation."
- "This is common sense. There should be an automatic interest in all aspects of the organization to better understand how you fit in, why your work is important, how you can contribute better, see different ways your career can progress, help others better, et cetera. There should also be interest in learning about the organization's place in its world of suppliers, markets, competitors, challenges..."
- "Knowing the company is a bit of a misnomer. In fact, what I thought I knew about the company has changed many times as both the company and I have matured over time. The best advice I can give here is to keep abreast of the changes that happen in the company from goals and focus to leadership. As time goes by knowledge and the intricacies of the company and their business will mature and expand based on the level of responsibility of the employee. While it's nice for everyone to know everything about the company, it's not always possible, especially for new employees who might be better served with learning their roles and tasks in the company first."

- "Knowing the company helps establish a unified front for the success of the company. Being true to yourself that you want to work for a company that you have a connection in goals and values. This helps establish that open trusting relationship."
- "I believe this falls into the top 3 list of political suicide. I have learned the hard way that knowing the culture... specifically of the leadership team or partners, is HUGE in regards to the suggesting, presenting, or even discussing policy, programs, or processes."
- "Knowing most everything about a company makes you feel like part of the team. You have the desire to meet the goals of the company knowing what is at stake and how those goals can help the company."
- "Knowing the company allows the employee to understand where they fit in. And understanding where the company is headed allows the employee to be aware of opportunities to help the company."
- "Knowing the company is important so that you know where to put your effort to have the most impact."
- "A great employee will know everything about a company that they're allowed to know. Being able to answer a question about the company when some other employee can't is always impressive."
- "Simple...knowing the products and the mission, helps our brand."
- "The more you know about the company the more credibility and respect you gain."

- "Our greatest achievers are those who make it their business to figure out the company's pain points and conduct their job in a way that it remedies the pain."
- "Again, the more you know the more of an asset you become. Combine that with open mindedness and you can really shine in anything you do. If you know about the company then you can provide better solutions to problems that arise. Hence becoming a company asset!"
- "Knowing the company you work for and represent are very important. What is knowing the company? It is more than just knowing the product line or the service performed, It is "knowing who we are" "knowing how we operate" "knowing what makes us tick" "knowing what excites us and what doesn't" "knowing your role" "knowing your goals" "knowing how others on the team fit and their roles". You can only Be The Best You Can Be if you know the parameters of the team aspect."

## Here's what I can do to know the company better:

1	 	 	
2	 	 	
3	 	 	
4	 	 	
5	 	 	

# 6. LOOK FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work." -Thomas Edison *Every* job has opportunity built into it. Yours included! Unfortunately, once many people get a job, they do that same job, the same way, over and over and over again with little improvement for years. While you may be known as "steady Eddie", you're certainly not building job security. Every company has those employees and it's OK if that's your choice *and* the boss's choice. However, if you want job security and you're looking to be more than just mediocre, look for the opportunity in your job.

At the end of this book is a Creativity Checklist for you to consider. How can you think outside of the box? How can you do your job differently? What trends do you see in your industry that management hasn't tuned into? Perhaps you're savvy in social media and the company is not. That's an example of an incredible opportunity you could help the company with.

A survey respondent said, "You never know when one of your ideas could be the next big break for the company!" Let me give you two examples of speaking up about opportunities. One of Richard Branson's Virgin rank and file employees came up with the idea of Virgin Brides—now a multimillion dollar business. A client of mine, the Palm Beach County Clerk's Office, had an employee who thought it would be a good thing for the Clerk's office to win what's known as the Sterling Award (an equivalent of the Baldridge Award). Through her persistence, she was able to convince top leadership to go for it and in three years' time, they won the award. The process the PBCC had to go through to attain that certification took it from a good to great operation. The opportunity sought out by just one person ended up effecting the lives of thousands of people!

## Here are some wonderful insights from owners, managers and HR executives:

- "Look for ways to improve without making dramatic changes. Look for cost savings. Make suggestions for improvement. Be helpful."
- "You have to be pro-active and open to change."
- "Be observant and open minded. Try to think outside your comfort zone, which can be very difficult."
- "Those who look for opportunities, volunteer, ask for extra work, etc. are always the ones who receive the promotions or special treatment when possible."
- "Know opportunities are everywhere. Know which are real and a good fit for your company so time, energy and resources are not wasted."
- "The best opportunity you can find is something that is that is performed by a position above you and see how you can help that person. It is taken into consideration if the time comes when that position becomes available and you are familiar with it."
- "In looking for opportunities I think the most important aspect is truly understanding what business you are in."
- "Think outside of the box. We are a spa manufacturer that is using our technology to build SUP-Stand Up Paddle Boards. That keeps the employees busy and us making money."
- "You have to have your eyes wide open and head on a swivel. Opportunities are where you least expect them and they don't usually come right up to you with a big neon sign."

- "Opportunities come with many faces on them, career changes, life changes, political changes etc, etc. The "big deal" is seeing them and acting on them."
- "Looking for opportunities means to me that an employee is looking for ways to advance themselves or looking for ways to improve company procedures or processes."

At the end of this book is an Employee Suggestion Form. First review the Creativity Checklist and then use it!

## Here are some great company opportunities:

1	 	 	 
2	 	 	 
3			

## 7. BE A TEAM PLAYER



Let me begin with a few personal stories about playing team. A number of years ago, I decided to join a pickup basketball league for guys over 40. At the time, I had just turned 49 and hadn't played full court basketball in probably 20 years. I was in shape and could run the floor and proceeded to get tested by the guys immediately. On the third play, I got an elbow to my jaw that knocked me to the floor (it caused a large purple welt and hurt for days). Ten minutes later I was blindsided and knocked over by somebody running down the floor. Later on I was tripped driving to the basket. Not once did I complain. I knew I was being tested. This was something I learned growing up in the Bronx. When you're new to a team, you can *expect to be tested*. That's because they want to know if they can *trust you*. They want to make sure you're not a whiner or complainer. By the third night, the guys started talking to me, passing the ball, and asking me when I was going to take a few more shots. Eventually I became "one of the guys." Part of the team. *But I had to pay my dues first*. And so will you.

A few years later I did a workshop for a group of CEOs at a resort in the Bahamas. Later that day, a bus full of college students came in and occupied the resort for Spring Break. After the workshop, I went down to the beach and saw a bunch of them playing volleyball. Having played competitive volleyball since I was 16, I asked if I could join in. They looked me up and down considering my age and let me join the game. While many of them were in great shape, none of them had ever played competitive volleyball. I could have dominated play, but it was not my goal to show off how good I was. Instead, I decided to make everyone else on my team that much better. The only time I pushed a bit harder was when my team was behind and as we caught up, I backed off. Soon enough they realized that if I wanted to, I could dominate the games but I chose not to and decided to play team. As a result, I was invited to play the rest of that afternoon! We played for hours and had a blast. I know it would have been

a much different outcome had I gone in there and "showed off." I doubt I would have been invited to stay or that the games would have been as fun.

When you're the top dog and perhaps have the greatest skill set, *your job is to make everybody else around you that much better*. Set your ego aside, humble yourself, and play team.

The common factors discussed in responding to the questions about being a team player:

- There is no "I" in team Perhaps a worn-out metaphor, but you get the point. Being a team player means that *you put the team first*.
- See what you can do to *make the team that much better*. How can it be a team accomplishment as opposed to an individual one?
- *Everybody* on the team counts; from CEO to receptionist.

I remember Super Bowl XXXVI where the upstart New England Patriots led by their new quarterback, Tom Brady, came to play the mighty St. Louis Rams, the Greatest Show On Turf. They were 14 point underdogs. When the teams were introduced, the Rams players came out one at a time, Marshal Faulk, Kurt Warner, and so on. However, when it came to New England, they chose to come out altogether, as a team. Something the league and network TV did not want them to do. They had to pay a fine as a result. But Bill Belichick, a Hall of Fame coach in the making, stressed the importance of team first. The Patriots won that game in a huge upset. See how you can help a struggling team member. There is a fine line between helping someone and doing their job for them. If they are simply too lazy or not willing to work hard, then they should be off the team and not enabled by their teammates. It is appropriate to let management know that an employee is dragging the team down. Make sure you start off with speaking to that employee directly first before turning to management.

There is a powerful exercise you can go through with your team to learn how to support each other. It is similar to the productivity exercise discussed earlier. Step 1 is to identify for other team members what you consider to be the three most important things you do every day. Step 2 is to let them know how they can help you do those things better. Step 3 is to write it down. Then repeat for every team member. It's a simple exercise... and it works!

#### Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "A great employee will never have to bring attention to him/herself. A great employee sees him/herself as a representative of the organization at all times, knowing that he/she might be the only contact people will ever have with that organization."
- "Be open to different ideas and willing to compromise. Put the goal you are all trying to accomplish ahead of your own personal gratification."
- "Communication is key to having a successful team environment."

- "You have to be a team, if not there is no company."
- "A very wise person once told me that we are only as good as other people allow us to be. To be honest, at the time I really didn't get the message. It wasn't until many years later that I finally understood. I was put in charge of a group of folks to move people and equipment halfway across the globe. I knew I sure couldn't do myself and I HAD to count on many other people doing their jobs at the right time and the right place for this to all come together. What I learned is that communication and willingness to share the spotlight are critical key elements to any team. We have to trust in our team members, be willing to openly and honestly communicate with them often and most importantly, share the recognition of the results "
- "Help others look good at meetings or presentations."
- "It's not about 'me'... it's about the higher goal. A team clearly understands that the most important task at hand is working toward the higher goal."
- "Working together on a common goal and to make the company a better place to work. Wanting the company and other employees to be successful. Knowing what your strengths are and the strengths of other employees in order to get the job done."
- "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Each person has a talent and each individual talent can accomplish more when they are combined."

## Here's what I can do to be an even better team player:

1	 	 	
2	 	 	
3	 		

# 8. SPEAK UP, THE RIGHT WAY

"The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis." -Dante Alighieri Many employees wallow in what I call the "Culture of Silence." I would see it in my litigation cases where employees saw wrongdoing but chose to stay silent about it. I remember reading a Wall Street Journal article that said that only half of all employees would speak up in light of illegal, unethical, or immoral conduct. How sad. Remember this: You live in America and *it's called a job, not jail*. If you truly have a fear of speaking up about inappropriate conduct going on in the environment, then why are you working at the company in the first place?

It's the rare business owner who wants anyone to act illegally, unethically, or immorally. There is no future in that conduct or job security for you. Just ask the folks at Enron. Unfortunately, business owners are often the last to know the truth about what is going on in their organizations—simply because people have this fear of speaking up.

Know this—the worst that can happen to you is you will lose your job. That's it! But you'll keep your soul in the process. I've not seen anybody physically harmed once for speaking up. That only happens in the movies. What are some of the rules for speaking up?

- Engage in constructive dialogue, not destructive criticism. Think twice about speaking up if you don't have a solution. If you feel that a boss is overly critical of your performance, you can speak up by saying something like, "I hear your criticism and will do \_\_\_\_\_\_ to address it. I hope that sounds like a good plan. I also look forward to earning your praise." That's much better than reacting by saying, "All you ever do is criticize me."
- 2. Speak up about illegal, immoral, or unethical conduct. Not just to co-workers, but to someone in management as well. If need be,

tell the owner. Remember, most people at your company are good people and need your help!

3. Speak up at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner. For example, if your boss just came in from a road trip and has 20 million things sitting on his or her desk—that is probably not the time to start the conversation about getting a raise. Better to wait until they settle in and then ask a question like, "I'd like to have a conversation with you about my compensation; can we schedule a time to do that some time next week?"

### Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "There are many instances of employees 'assuming' we were aware of a situation when we had no idea. They should feel 'safe' about providing information about their work environment or fellow employees."
- "This is a touchy one. You don't want to be seen as a complainer. I think it's fine to speak up if you have an issue you feel needs to be addressed. However, I recommend that before you speak up, you also have a few possible solutions to bring to the table. Otherwise, you're just complaining!"
- "Venting and emotional outbursts tend to quickly sever the lines of communications and once the damage is done, it may be nearly impossible to re-establish them in a constructive way. How we word an issue or concern is just as important as the point we're trying to get across."

- "Employees need to know how to professionally communicate their ideas, suggestions or concerns and know that their feedback is heard and appreciated. It is the silent employees I am most concerned about, that do not give any ideas, or suggestions. Little time bombs waiting to explode or leave."
- "Employers cannot read people's minds. If employees do not speak up we are not aware of situations that may be going on, ways we can improve, and ways we can better help our employees to be more productive."
- "Any time there is a problem, tell me right away. I don't want to hear about it the next day or from another employee or the customer. Anything can be fixed, but we can't fix it if we don't know there is a problem."
- "PLEASE don't be the person who walks around "identifying" all the problems with all the processes and all the people who aren't performing to your idea of perfection!!!"
- "Good employees NEVER keep their mouth shut! And a good employer NEVER ridicules those that speak up!
- "Do NOT grumble, mutter under your breath &/or complain all the time. Be part of the solution."
- "Raising concerns is like everything else—choose your battles. You may think that speaking up all the time shows your commitment, but it can easily just make you look the constant whiner. Next thing you know, every time you start to talk, people roll their eyes and will probably miss when you actually do have something worth speaking up about."

- "We want employees to have input in the procedures and process. It's important to speak up if you feel a particular process can be streamlined. Everyone can benefit from one person's suggestions. Perhaps your idea may not be implemented exactly as you wanted, but more than likely a form of that idea can be created and instituted. We want our staff to feel that they can speak up without fear of retribution."
- "Speaking up just to be heard is a waste of time."

1. What should I be speaking up about?_	

2	What	is	а	possible	solution?	
<u>.</u> .	vviiut	10	u	possible	solution.	

3. Who should I approach first?	

## 9. DON'T CAUSE DRAMA

"Save the drama for your mama!" As mentioned, the third book I wrote was co-authored with Loy Young and entitled *Victims, Villains and Heroes: Managing Emotions in the Workplace.* It has to do with the drama of our everyday work lives. The drama I saw at its extreme while litigating employment law cases for seventeen years. On the workplace stage, there is only one of three roles we can play: victim, villain, or hero. Of course, throughout literature and history, the employee has been cast in the victim role. At least that's the story. In every TV show, book, or dinner table conversation, the boss is cast in a villain role. At least that's that story. Of course, every owner, boss or employee I've met thinks they are playing the hero role. See the problem?

Where do you play victim? What feels "unfair" to you? How do you deal with what feels unfair to you? To what degree do you act that out in the workplace, whether the source of the problem is at home or at work? Remember this: *how we deal with what feels unfair to us helps define our personal culture*.

Having spent most of my career representing "victims," I can tell you this—playing victim does not help you in your life or career! It certainly does not create job security. If you can still walk and talk, asking a lawyer to "save you" is perhaps one of the worst things you could do to yourself. That's why I quit "helping" workplace victims. Instead of playing victim games, and blaming or justifying conduct, spend your energy focusing on finding your responsibility in the equation. Very simply, if you know you've been 100% responsible, then you don't have to step on stage with anyone, and if the current gig is not the right one for you, move on. I have seen far too many employees and their lawyers (that lawyer used to be me) fall into the trap of thinking you have to fight over being "right" as opposed to spending that same energy looking to work in the right environment. I've never seen anyone succeed in life taking the former route and I've seen anyone who succeeds in life taking the latter one.

Get over your need to throw a pity party, stamp your feet, and tell everybody else you know about your problem. Go do something about changing your story!

## Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "Ya gotta leave the 'drama' on the coat rack when you arrive and pick it up when you leave.... drama is for the entertainment business NOT company business."
- "Don't take things too personally when misunderstandings happen at work. Try for a more objective view when addressing problems."
- "Negative comments, drama, etc. multiplies a lot faster than positive energy in an organization. Negativity tends to suck the energy out of a company and the people very quickly. Needs to be nipped in the bud as soon as it happens."
- "Simply put, leave your emotional baggage at home."
- "Gossip hurts, it tears up relationships, destroys teams and everyone involved is less productive."
- "When you have drama, the focus is always on the drama, not the mission of the company, remove drama, and gain a greater degree of production."
- "Drama at work is the least desirable situation. Someone constantly playing the victim or muttering under their breath that if everyone else would do their job I would need to work so hard, is annoying and distracting."

- "Who has time for made up drama? Life and death happens every day in real life. If that is what one requires, please find a job in those fields or enjoy them on the Maury show. Setting the work environment to low tolerance for the drama is key. When drama mama's drop in they should be nipped in the "bud" ASAP."
- "If I wanted to watch children all day I would have stayed home with mine. We're all adults, aren't we? It's very draining to watch drama in the workplace."
- "No one likes drama queens!"
- "Stay out of the gossip mills and office politics. These things can only thrive when people are willing to fan the flames. Believe me, your boss knows who contributes to the drama, and those people do not get a lot of respect -- from anyone."
- "Keep your personal life as separate from your professional life as possible, and if you occasionally socialize with coworkers outside of work, keep your behavior in the social setting in check."
- "Drama is the most destructive thing in any work place. It can turn into a cancer and spread like wildfire. One needs to get to the source and do whatever possible to stop it."
- "Drama, drama, drama! Who has time for that at work?"

Here's	what I	can	do	to	not	cause	drama:
--------	--------	-----	----	----	-----	-------	--------

3. Here's what I can do to not play a victim game:

# 10. DRESS FOR SUCCESS

"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society." -Mark Twain This subject produced as many different responses from owners and managers as anything else discussed in this book. Most owners and managers are of the mindset that you want to dress to impress. Many others, perhaps themselves less interested in dress, don't care how people dress as long as they



Quick: who would you rather pay \$100,000 to work at your company?

are not disrespectful and get their jobs done. And of course, there's a vast measure of employers who sit in between. In a 2011 Manta survey, "sloppy grooming habits" rankled bosses' more than any other personal habit.

A Careerbuilder.com survey said that the following factors impact on you getting a raise or promotion:

- Piercings
- Bad Breath
- Visible tattoo
- Wrinkled clothes
- Messy hair
- Casual dress
- Too much perfume or cologne
- Too much make-up
- Chewed finger nails

The best advice is this: Decide what you want from your career. Most business owners, managers, clients, and fellow workers will be more impressed with you if you dress for success. Even in a "casual" work environment. Even if they won't admit it affects them - it does. One thing I've noticed is in the most casual work environments, the person who is dressed the best, also tends to be the most successful. The person who takes the casual work environment as an invitation to dress poorly, is usually one of the least successful and... the one with the least amount of job security.

If you're not sure the best way to dress for the part, don't hesitate to ask. Say something like "I understand we have a casual dress code, but how do you like to see me dressed? Who sets the best example for me to follow? What advice would you give me about the way I should dress to be most successful in this business?"

## Here are some wonderful insights from owners and managers:

- "When you dress the part you FEEL the part... enough said."
- "I think how you dress says a lot about you. Are you professional? Do you care about the picture of yourself that you present to others?"
- "Know what is appropriate for the situation. Understand the relationship(s). When I first moved to Florida, I continued to dress as I did at work in Ohio. I had a customer in Florida who was very blunt. He said, "If you ever come back in here dressed like that, don't. I will never buy anything from you again." Others felt the same way but never said anything. Once I changed business increased. The lesson: Know your audience."

- "First impressions! That is the first thing people see, before you open your mouth. If you are dressed professionally, your demeanor and confidence will be reflected in the way you carry yourself and the words you speak."
- "Having been in the U.S. Military for more than 21 years, my fashion sense is somewhat dated and possibly a bit jaded. With that said, I have tested the theory about dressing the part. I can tell you from firsthand experience that when I wear a sport coat and tie, people will always treat you differently than they do when you wear a polo shirt and jeans."
- "Always dress half up. You can never feel bad if you are half up from the person you are with. Dress does not just include attire. Your appearance, grooming, vehicle, materials your brand."
- "Dress your style not someone else's. You will be more comfortable and perform better."
- "How a person dresses, often determines how that person acts."
- "Need to be neat and clean but "professional attire" is evolving. I'd rather have a highly productive employee that "dresses down" than dead weight that "dresses up."
- "Simply put 'dress for success.' Always dress for the position you want not for the one you have."
- "You don't dress for the job you have; you dress for the job you want."

- "To me, this seems obvious, but I've had employees underdress too often. I've even had a college student come to an interview in pajamas. My business is creative, laid-back and casual, but that was ridiculous. I like the advice that people should dress for the job they want."
- "Just because there's a minimum dress code doesn't mean you have to dress the minimum. I have a friend who works at a large financial institution, and they allow shorts during the summer months if you're not meeting with a client. Many employees there do it, but it's doing nothing for their career. Management notices who continues to dress the part (or higher). Dressing down at work is, in my book, a classic example of "just because you CAN do something doesn't mean you SHOULD."
- "Dressing the part is not as important as what you contribute."
- "I have never felt that a formal dress is needed for all positions. I feel as long as you are dressed appropriately without being a slob, you are fine."

As you can see opinions differ. My questions to you is this: are you willing to take the risk your boss *really* doesn't care about your dress, no matter what they say?

#### Here's what I can do to dress for success:

1	 	 	 
2	 		
3			

# KNOWING WHEN TO FOLD THEM

Quitting law school was the most difficult decision of my life. But I felt this great relief that this is my life and I can do what I want with it. -Carly Fiorina Zappos has received much press for its strategy of offering new employees \$3,000 to quit employment after their initial weeks of training. Approximately 30 out of 2,000 trainees who were made that offer accepted it. The belief system of CEO Tony Hsieh is that if they value the \$3,000 more than the opportunity of working for the company, he doesn't want them on board. He realizes in order to be a great company that his employees have to come to work fully engaged.

It is hard for us to quit anything; whether it's a bad habit like smoking, a bad relationship, or a bad job. This is true whether you're a 35-year old minor league baseball player, full time mom, corporate attorney, or just plain you.

Yes, there are bad bosses. And there are bad employees too. Along with bad lawyers, doctors, beauticians and garbage men. The beauty of taking 100% responsibility for your job security is you don't have to worry about the bad boss. Or bad co-workers. Or anyone else. You can grow your career beyond those limitations. If you can't communicate your way to a solution where you are, perhaps you can work in another department or, if you have to, for another company. No boss has the right to block you from growing in your career. Very few bosses I know would ever want to do such a thing because it's not in their best interest. It's in their best interest for you to be happy, productive and grow in your career.

As discussed through the book, the first thing to consider is the opportunity that sits right in front of you at your company. How can you use the strategies discussed to turn what might be an OK or even terrible job into a great one? How can you make sure that any negative aspects of your work experience are not of your own making? Here are a few hints as to when it might be time to move on:

- You're receiving a lot of criticism from your owner, manager, co-workers, customers, or vendors and you are already trying as hard as you *want to*. (Note: I didn't say as hard as you can.) There's a question I ask business owners: "Is there anyone working for you today that if they quit you would be relieved as opposed to upset?" Most of them give me that painful acknowledgment that those employees exist. I encourage them to let them go. Let me ask the flip side of the question to you: "If you were fired today would you be relieved or upset?" If your answer is "relieved" then fold them. You'll do yourself and the company a big favor.
- 2. You're interested in advancement but don't have the skills necessary to go to the next level. Chances are you'll have to go to night school or quit working for a while to get the necessary education. Some companies will help you go back to school. Those who don't will lose you.
- 3. You can do the job really well, but it's not what you want to do. This is the place I found myself at as a 40-year old employment law attorney. I was very good at it, but I lost the desire for it. If this is you, then be honest about it. Honest to yourself and your employer and move on gracefully.

If you do what's suggested in this book and still can't find the passion, don't wallow in your current situation, get on with it. Read the book *What Color is My Parachute* by Richard Boles, the best book of its kind and on its millionth edition. It'll help you clarify where you go next in life.

Listen to me when I say this: As a business owner, I want people I can trust as much as I want anything else. If an employee came to me and said, "Look, I'd really like to do something else in life" and gave me a good heads-up, I would work with them to transition them out of the company so they could train their replacement. This gives us both time to get things done right. If you have an owner whose reaction will be to fly off the handle, then perhaps that owner will get what they deserve—your silent departure. But if you've got a good boss, treat them the way you'd want your parent, brother or sister to be treated if they were running the business.

Remember this: There are times when quitting is a good thing. What I don't want you to do is quit too soon as there may be an opportunity where you are today if you simply shifted how you view things and the actions you take. Odds are, if you quit the job with the wrong attitude, you'll not only have difficulty finding new employment but you'll probably end up in a company where you feel the same way within only a few months. As I emphasize throughout this book, career success is about personal choices, it's not about "them."

## CONCLUSION

I hope this book helps you obtain job security, grow in your career, and feel good about yourself and helps you to make a difference. Here's to your success!

- 1. Be Trustworthy
- 2. Be Productive
- 3. Have a Plan
- 4. Keep Learning
- 5. Know Your Company
- 6. Look for the Opportunities
- 7. Be a Team Player
- 8. Speak Up, the Right Way
- 9. Don't Cause Drama
- **10. Dress for Success**

### APPENDIX

Creativity Checklist	.79
Employee Suggestion Form	.84
Team Rules	.86
Employees Monthly Checklist	.88
Why You're Not Getting that Promotion or Raise	90
Thank you	.92
About Don Phin:	.93

## CREATIVITY CHECKLIST

"The hallmark of creative people is their mental flexibility... Sometimes they are open and probing, at others they're playful and off-the-wall. At still other times, they're critical and faultfinding. And finally they're doggedly persistent in striving to reach their goals. From this I've concluded that the creative process consists of our adopting four main roles, each which embodies a different type of thinking... These roles are: Explorer, Artist, Judge and Warrior."

- Roger Von Oech

All of us are creative. Ever dodge an auto accident? Catch a falling glass? That was a creative moment! If we want our careers and businesses to succeed we have to be creative there too. Consider what follows as a way to spur your creativity:

□ Information is everywhere. Where can we find new information or analyze old information differently? You can get a statistic for everything. As taught in the book *Freakonomics*, you have to be looking in the right places. For example, law enforcement will applaud the fact that there has been a reduction in the homicide rate in most major cities. What they fail to mention is that much of this reduction is due

to improved medical care of the injured. Because there are more emergency vehicles and people using better equipment, more people are surviving serious gun wounds, etc. The more telling statistic would be the attempted homicide rate. Something that may be more difficult to capture, but more relevant to crime prevention. What data is being overlooked in your business?

- How do you judge the value of your idea? Ultimately, the value of any idea in the business world to make money or deliver more value. The Employee Suggestion Form which follows provides a number of variables to consider including labor, equipment, and cost of other resources, as well as the potential bottom line benefit to the company.
- ☐ How can you give your idea a sense of urgency? How can you make this idea come to fruition in half the time? What partner can you use to accelerate the idea? All of us are familiar with products and ideas that have exploded on the scene because of a "viral" internet campaign. Perhaps you can work with a partner who already has access to customers, clients, or markets.
- How can you shake up a routine? Perhaps instead of reading your email throughout the day, you only do so at 10 and 3. How can you change your work environment? Perhaps you rearrange the furniture or equipment in your office. Perhaps you get some work done at the library where there are no distractions. One printing company that used HR That Works had all the employees work with a paint contractor to spruce up the entire office. You'd be amazed by the impact it had on the workforce, clients, and profitability as well.

- □ How could you do things faster, better, cheaper or completely different?
- □ How do other industries do it? How do they do it in other countries?
- How will it be done in 15 years from now? (Check out the world future society www.wfs.org.)
- □ As they say in Six Sigma, what's the "fifth why?" Ask why? why? why? why?...and why?
- Get outside your head. What would your kid, favorite comedian, business guru, or wacky uncle say about it?
- □ What's the big picture? What is the possible lateral or precessional effect? (i.e., the railroads created a demand for shovels and jeans.)
- □ What "off the wall" idea might actually work? How can you test it without causing any harm? (Like sending out a crazy ad to a small mailing list.)
- Where can you go to a creative place to spark ideas? Hold your next meeting in a kindergarten class or museum. There are many other creative environments available.
- What diverse teams can you create to spark ideas? (Marketing and HR can work together to build the employee brand.)
- □ How can we experience it at a deeper, more intense level? (i.e., adding aromatherapy, video or music to an entry or waiting area.)
- □ How can we make it lighter and more fun? (i.e., turning the act of making cold calls into a game.)

How can it look, feel, smell, sound, or taste different? (Starbucks tapped into everyone of these!!)
How would nature do it? How does physics, chemistry, or biology apply? (Think of all the medical breakthroughs generated this way.)
Ask yourself "what if" or "why not?" (i.e., what if cars all got 100 miles per gallon?)
What if there were no rules? Or completely new ones? (i.e., what if there was a way we could both win?)
What cool name could you give your idea? (i.e., Super Gigantic Sales Game.)
Pick a few magazines like Popular Mechanics, Fast Company, Inc., Scientific American, The Futurist, etc. Do the articles spark any ideas?
Not all ideas are good ones. What could go wrong here? What's the worst case scenario?
What does your intuition tell you? Have you allowed silence to work its magic?
Does the idea have stand-alone value to it? Should you make a separate business out of it?
What theory or hypothesis is behind your idea? What if it's proved wrong? What if you used a different one?
There are no bad ideas. The only loss is the failure to implement the good ones.
What creative ideas appear in your dreams? How can you "plant the seed" to dream about a problem from work?

- The worse thing that can happen is if your idea is laughed at. Be prepared for this and learn from it. Remember, it is the last laugh that counts!
- Try wearing crazy hats, clown noses, Groucho glasses, and other fun props during a brainstorming meeting. Check out the Oriental Trading Company.
- □ How will you market your idea? To whom? What internal press release could be issued about your idea? What headline would you use? (Joan comes up with a crazy customer idea that doubled sales!)
- □ Small ideas are just as good as big ones. Often they are quickly implemented, have a bottom line impact, and come with less risk.
- □ Are you truly receptive to others' creativity? What good idea have you listened to lately?
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes. What would you try if you knew it couldn't fail?
- Lastly, consider monthly suggestion/creativity meetings where each employee is required to bring a suggestion. Reward every suggestion with a few bucks, lottery ticket or raffle ticket to make if fun.

These are some ideas that can help you along. Excellent books on creativity include *Orbiting the Giant Hairball* by Gordon MacKenzie and *A Whack Upside the Head* or *Kick in the Seat of the Pants* by Roger Von Oech and *I-Power* by Boardroom Classics.

## EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION FORM

Employee Name:	
Date:	
Position/Title:	
Dept:	

Fill out as much of this form as possible. We understand you may not be able to fill out every line. Please do your best. We appreciate your suggestion! (Use extra paper where necessary)

Give your suggestion a name: \_\_\_\_\_

**IDEA:** Please state the nature of your suggestion, why it excites you, including how it improves your job, the job of others, value to the customers, saves time, makes money or saves money.

**RESOURCES:** Please explain what resources are needed to support your suggestion:

Labor Needed:	

Materials Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Cash Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Resources Needed (Please specify):
Total Estimated Cost:
<b>BENEFITS:</b> Please explain the anticipated benefits to you and/or the company:
Labor Saved:
Materials Saved:
Equipment Saved:
Money Saved:
Revenue Generated:
Other Benefits (Please specify):
Total Estimated Financial Benefit:
<b>PLANNING:</b> Please outline the steps needed and the individuals/departments that must be involved to accomplish your suggestion:
1
2
3
4
Total Estimated Time to Completion:
Employee Signature:
Date:

### TEAM RULES

There is no substitute for a company playing "team". It has been said that team stands for Together Each Achieves More. Commitment to playing "team" is an important ingredient of our mutual success.

- 1. No one is more responsible for your performance than you are.
- 2. To be a valuable team member you must possess strong skills and a trustworthy character.
- 3. Use honest, direct and caring communication.
- 4. Focus on empowerment, not control.
- 5. Focus on cooperation, not competition.
- 6. Seek and expect active participation by all team members.
- Differences and disagreements are expected during the decision-making process, but 100% support of decisions is required once they are made.
- 8. Be very clear about the company's direction. Know our vision, mission, values and goals.
- 9. Be an active listener. Do not interrupt. First seek to understand and then to be understood.

- 10. The best time to discuss your personal life is on personal time.
- 11. Don't talk behind people's backs.
- 12. Saying "no" is OK. Just make sure you're saying it for the right reason.
- 13. If a team rule is broken, deal with it immediately.
- 14. All members of this team have responsibility for enforcing the rules.
- 15. Honor your commitments and follow the Platinum Rule (do onto others what *they* would like to have done to them).

(Note: this is simply an example. Make one that works for your team and then turn it into a big poster you display proudly!)

## EMPLOYEE MONTHLY CHECKLIST

Being an employee is about getting better all the time. Use this checklist to "check your head" about the effort you're putting forth:

- □ Have you given some positive feedback to every one of your co-workers over the last month?
- Have you read a business book or listened to an audio program over the last month? What have you done with the information that you've learned? Remember, knowledge without application is a waste of your precious time.
- □ Are you crystal clear about the direction of your department or team? Is there a plan you can read?
- □ What have you done to improve your skill sets over the last month? Have you undergone training, cross-training, assessments, etc?
- Have you attended a monthly meeting where you have gone over team or department results? Do you understand how you contribute to these results and the overall bottom line?
- □ Are you on a written game plan? We suggest 90day game plans with weekly to get done lists.
- Do you have monthly meetings with employees that depend on you and, conversely, that you depend on? Are you clear about how you can support them and, conversely, how they can do a better job supporting you?

- Have you reviewed the financials for your company or department? What have you done to contribute to the bottom line in the last month? How can you help the company add revenue or reduce costs?
- Did you actively engage in providing suggestions? Remember, we suggest monthly one-hour suggestion meetings where every suggestion is rewarded with a dollar, raffle ticket, lottery ticket, etc. See the Sample Employee Suggestion Form and work with your team to tweak it for their use.
- □ Have you networked with your vendors, industry peers, or other strategic partners over the last month? How did you or the company benefit from this networking?
- □ Are you clear about your career path? Have you discussed it with your manager?
- □ Have you taken care of yourself? Have you eaten properly and exercised at least three days a week?
- □ Have you spent time focusing on the good in your job and dealt with whatever feels "unfair" to you in a way that you can be proud of?
- Have you communicated to your manager or human resources anything you feel to be "unfair" whether it is harassing, discriminatory, unethical, or simply unkind? Remember, the company can't do anything about a problem they don't know about. Also remember it is your legal obligation to speak up about improper conduct.
- Lastly, have you asked for help when you needed it? Either from ownership, peers, a "mastermind" group, or other resource?

## WHY YOU'RE NOT GETTING THAT PROMOTION OR RAISE

- You don't sell yourself. Are people aware of your accomplishments or are you assuming they are? Can you quantify the bottom line impact of the work you do?
- 2. Others are taking credit for your work because they are willing to speak up.
- 3. You don't schmoose enough. This doesn't mean you have to kiss butt. It also doesn't mean you should be aloof.
- 4. You're a pushover. Nobody really needs a "Yes man or woman." Show some moxie. Express an opinion. Take a stand.
- 5. You don't go the extra mile. Most people give up far too easily. At everything. Don't be that person. Be persistent, pugnacious. If you want it, continue to go after it until you get it—whenever that is.
- 6. Maybe you really don't want it. Maybe you're not motivated. Maybe you're comfortable right where you are. Maybe you moving up the ranks is someone else's idea. Just make sure you're not saying that you don't want it because you have a fear of your ability to accomplish it. Remember, you never know where your edge is until you go beyond it.

- 7. You don't act the part. Drive a decent car. Shine the shoes. Use the right vocabulary. Take an important client or prospect to lunch.
- 8. You don't support the team around you. Moving up the ranks becomes ever more about leadership ability. This is why solo fliers, such as salesman, usually make poor managers.
- 9. You're hanging out with the wrong crew. Has anyone from this bunch ever gotten the big promotion? Sure, they're easy to get along with and they would never challenge you, but will they help you grow? Will they push you? Are you more worried about being liked than about moving up in your career?
- 10. They don't think you would ever leave to work elsewhere. Perhaps subtly, but nevertheless, let them know that's not the case. Bottom line is they have to think they have to promote you in order to keep you. Upwards or outwards, it's their choice. Make sure you let them know it.
- 11. You don't know the boss on a personal level. Sure you can whip out data faster than anyone else. But do you know his favorite golf course? Do you know the name of her three children? Again, we're not talking about brown-nosing; we're talking about the fact that people trust people they have relationships with. Just how deep does your relationship with the boss go?
- 12. There's really no place to get promoted to. If that's the case, how do you gain more responsibility or pay and what if you create a new title to be promoted to?

### THANK YOU

I wish to personally thank those owners, managers and HR executives who contributed their wisdom and guidance to this book. In no specific order they are:

David Shields Jerry Mitchell Gary Eskin Robert Poli Howie Soucek Bonnie Floro Bill Mitchell Pam DeFazio Dave Krones Dean D'Camera Renae Eidenshink Christopher A. Rea Sam Slav Teri Hontas Marilyn Sanchez J. Sapp Scott Bryan Mariann Gerwig Richard Behlmann Julie Oldburv Debbie Varney

Linda Painter Darren Farrington Les Breedlove Sharon Gawthrop Dolores Ordas, SPHR Sue Clark John Simpson Steve Beetch **Richard Bernier** Tonya Mulrooney Charlotte Jensen David Brown Molly Henry Helen Cortez Jack Burke Tamara Storch Dennis Jones Jav Mack Jessica Davy Debbie Dunlap Ann Gleockner, PHR

## ABOUT DON PHIN:

Long story short... Don grew up in the Bronx, and was fortunate enough to attend the Bronx HS of Science. At 19 he jumped at the opportunity to work on a tuna boat out of San Diego. He liked the sea, sunshine, volleyball, surfing and California



girls, so he stayed. Don now lives and works in beautiful Coronado, California and is happily married with three sons and four grandkids.

Don has been a California employment practices attorney since 1983. He litigated employment and business cases for 17 years and quit once he figured out that nobody wins a lawsuit.

Since leaving litigation, he has written numerous books and presented more than 500 times to executives nation-wide.

Don was the founder and President of HR That Works, used by 3,500 companies and acquired by ThinkHR in January of 2014. He worked there for two years as a V.P., and he's on his own once again.

Now in his "wisdom sharing years," Don loves coaching executives and investigates challenging workplace problems. He continues to inspire with his speaking and training.

#### **Contact info:**

(619) 852-4580 cell www.donphin.com don@donphin.com www.linkedin.com/in/donphin