

# Taking Initiative On the Job!

## The Power of Initiative

Your resume and job interviewing skills are what get you in the door, but once you've been hired, there is a powerful way of advancing your career and enhance your earning power over the life of your career. It is taking initiative.

If your boss is at all typical, he or she cares much more about your level of initiative than your education, IQ, or experience. Managers love initiative takers because they make their lives easier, but they're rare in most organizations. As such, those who show initiative tend to stand out among their coworkers and be the first in line for pay raises and promotions.

## What is Initiative?

Taking initiative means anticipating and taking action rather than waiting to be told by your boss what to do. It's being proactive both in recognizing and solving problems.

Initiative takers are constantly on the lookout for ways to improve methods and systems and are willing to think and act creatively in order to reach their goals. They not only propose solutions, they also do the legwork necessary to implementing them.

## The Fear Factor

Many people fail to take initiative out of fear. Initiative taking usually involves taking on things that are outside of your comfort zone. Fear of the unknown, fear of failure, and fear of criticism all can be paralyzing forces that hinder initiative.

Breaking through this barrier can be exceedingly difficult, especially at first. But initiative is a learned habit that gets easier with practice. You can jump start your initiative by asking yourself these three questions throughout the day:

1. **Why?** Why do we do it this way? Why is this not giving us the results we want?
2. **What?** What is average performance among my peers? What would demonstrate "next level" activity?
3. **How?** How can this be done better? How can I prevent this problem from happening again?



## Spotting Opportunities

Sometimes knowing when to take initiative is as important as knowing how. Here are some great opportunities for taking initiative:

- When you see a need going unfilled.
- When you have special knowledge or expertise that makes you uniquely qualified for a task.
- When you are sailing in uncharted waters, and those around you are unsure of how to proceed.
- When a problem requires an immediate solution.

## The Payoff

Initiative takers are seen as leaders who managers and peers seek out for opinions and solutions. Initiative takers naturally expand their own influence and value by being willing to take on new things.

It's true that some organizations discourage initiative by hiring and promoting over-controlling managers who are afraid of being outdone by their employees, but this needn't kill your own initiative.

Initiative taking has a way of creating unforeseeable, positive outcomes. Its very process leads to creative problem solving, continued education, and self improvement. Think of it as part of a lifelong process of self development, and you'll become the master of your own destiny – rendering those who try to discourage it powerless over you.