

Work Ethic Values

Work ethic may mean something different to everyone so for this writing let me set a basic understanding of what I believe a high work ethic to be. High work ethic is how you do your job - simple as that. Being self directed, taking pride in the work you perform, doing what needs to be done without complaining, taking the initiative to do more without being asked, having a positive attitude, being loyal to the company you work for and the people you work with, and always looking out for the company's best interest in the decisions you make on its behalf.

So ask yourself these questions to rate your own work ethic. Do you finish everything you start, or do you leave a few things undone? Do you finish projects on or before they are due, or are you often late? Is your work complete the first time, or are you asked to fix errors and redo things over and over? Do you stick to the task at hand until it is done, or do you focus more on the clock and head out the door at 5pm? Do you make decisions throughout the day that focus on the company's success or only your own?

I don't believe anyone is born with a great work ethic; however, I am convinced that a great work ethic is learned. In my case I was fortunate to be raised in a home that practiced and taught the importance of hard work and a high work ethic. I didn't understand or appreciate it as a child, but now, as an adult in the workforce, I observe and work with people of all different work ethic values.

I had an assistant who believed she was a good worker and detail oriented. Detail orientation is a must for administrative assistants by the way. The problem is that many interviewees tell you in the interview process that they do focus on details and are very organized, but in my experience that seems to be a matter of perception and many have turned out not to have these skills in spite of the reference checks and

interview process. When I gave her assignments they were rarely done correctly or to completion. I actually ended up doing most of her assignments myself because it took less time than having her do it over, and I didn't want to worry about submitting a less than professional project. Although I had to re-do her work in the short term to ensure the work was done correctly, I did not tolerate it for long. She was given chances to improve, but chose not to.

In another example an employee was disappointed because she was not promoted to the position that I was hired to fill. She had been working for the company for several years and felt she deserved the promotion. She argued she had the ability and the work ethic to fill a managerial position and lead the department, yet she spent nearly half her time smoking cigarettes and complaining to other employees. This does not go unnoticed by peers, bosses or subordinates. So even though her perception of her own work ethic was high, those around her had an opposing view. She too did not last long in the organization. You can see from these two examples, I prefer to surround myself with employees who share high work ethic values otherwise they will not work for me very long. These are just a couple of innumerable examples I have encountered over the years of people who consider themselves good hard workers, yet I do not believe will have the work ethic it takes to climb the corporate ladder very high.

In contrast, I've also had the privilege of working with people that share the same values I do. About seven years ago I hired a gentleman in my department that was a shy, reserved individual in the interview process. Although he didn't have polished interviewing skills, he did have the experience on his resume I was looking for, so I decided to give him a chance. He has been a very loyal and committed employee, not only to me as his boss, but to the three companies we have worked together at. Throughout those years, I have seen him grow from a purchasing agent to a manager overseeing his own employees. His work ethic speaks for itself in how he does his job. Depending on what he has going on, he will come in early or stay late, he's focused on doing what's best for the company and his customers, has a positive

attitude, rarely complains about how things are but instead sees the upside in situations.

I also had the best assistant any boss could ask for. She was detailed, organized and was always thinking ahead instead of waiting for me to follow up with her. Her husband was a physician and moved his practice to another state and since then, her shoes have been very hard to fill. Kimberly described herself as “anal” in the interview process for lack of a better word, when asked about her attention to detail and organization. I knew at that time, if she described herself correctly, she would be the assistant I was looking for. She had high work ethic values that resonated in all she did.

I’m not a sociologist or a psychologist, but I believe that while work ethic is not genetic or hereditary, it can be inherited. By that I mean, whatever your family’s work ethic has been over the generations, you are likely to be raised with the same or similar work ethic. There are exceptions like when your parents, for whatever reason, reject the family work ethic and start their own tradition, but for the most part, many will inherit the work ethic of their parents. However, don’t take that to mean you are doomed to mimic your parents if in fact they do not possess the same values you want. I am fortunate that my parents were hard workers. They were entrepreneurial and owned several businesses while I was growing up. Whatever the business, I was assigned duties and was expected to carry them out with little or no compensation. I didn’t give it a lot of thought, not that I didn’t protest from time to time; it was simply part of being a member of the family.

I have also met people over the years that have lived in situations who had parents that were alcoholics, drug addicts or simply very lazy and did not have high work values, but yet they grew up to be very successful in their careers with high work ethic despite the poor examples they grew up with. Learning good work ethic in our lives through chores and discipline as children is easier than those who had to seek other role models or learn on their own in their adult years. I have a lot of respect for those who had to break through some barriers and learn the harder way.

So, understanding that work ethic is not genetic and may possibly be inherited; how do you get that magic quality? Luckily, it can be self-taught and developed. However, it will take dedication and total commitment, but then every rung on your pink ladder will take effort. Only you can know or imagine the potential rewards.