

Is It Better to Stand Out at Work, or to Hide?

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Mar 05, 2015

So, you've got a job. You can breathe a sigh of relief. And, for some workers, just having a job is enough. You're hearing all that great news about the uptick in the economic projections, employment is up, and the job market in general looks more hopeful. But, here's the thing: Just because you have a job doesn't mean you shouldn't be consciously making an effort to improve yourself and your position. The question is, how to do that without sticking your neck out and courting disaster.



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It's easier to hide. It's even more expedient to keep your head down and just do the minimum, and in some job environments, you may feel that it's your only option. (Yes, some bosses do encourage the whole: "Shut up and do your job" mentality.) However, in most work environments, particularly where the business is actively working toward growth, your contribution is essential and appreciated.

Most bosses rely on the fact that their workers are going to live up to their resume and job-interview hype. When they hire, they are making an investment, anticipating that the employee will fulfill the job functions and requirements at least as well as stated. That means they theoretically need workers who'll stand out -- in a good way. So, here are a few tips for differentiating yourself from a sea of fellow employees. These are great ways to make your mark, and even start enjoying your job in a whole new way.

1. Do your job well.

It's always possible to improve upon your productivity and functionality within a company. Simply doing your job well is not always the only thing that will make you stand out, but it is the first step. And, probably one of the most common reasons to hide in the crowd of employees is because the job isn't being done well (and the employee may be hoping to go unnoticed).

Lisa Quast says it succinctly in *Forbes*: "Do an absolutely excellent job with every task, every day."

2. Volunteer.

Instead of cringing when the boss is talking about a new project, you can stand out by speaking up, and even volunteering to make it happen. It's not always easy to speak



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up, particularly when you're working hard to get your job done, and you don't have time to spare; but you can also demonstrate leadership and collaborative work skills by specifically requesting that fellow employees be allowed to work on the project with you. Of course, not all projects can be completed in a collaborative manner, but working with co-workers can be more fun, as you draw on the best that each of you has to offer to achieve the best possible outcome.

3. Learn.

Again, you've probably wanted to continue to learn, but it's not always easy to find the time in your busy work schedule. Like volunteering, education takes time, but the potential return on investment for the company (and for you) is almost incalculable. Also, there are so many more opportunities for picking up skills and knowledge via the internet and co-workers than there ever was before, in a way that's accessible 24/7. First make a list of skills and knowledge you want to develop. Talk to co-workers who know things you don't, and ask them how they developed their knowledge. Watch a YouTube video about how to improve your productivity. Or, try out the trial subscription for [Lynda.com](#) to learn about options for improving your skills. The possibilities are endless. You just need to make it a priority, and actively pursue your learning goals.

4. Innovate.

Those fantastic new ideas that have been percolating in your brain won't ever come to light if you don't actually tell anyone about them. Don't be afraid to suggest ideas. It's possible that they won't go anywhere, but you may also find that just the process of throwing an idea out there can inspire discussion, and encourage others to contribute ideas as well.

So, if you're still considering hiding, think about this: You will never know what you're missing if you stay in your shell at work. It's not always an easy thing to draw attention to yourself, and speak up in meetings to offer idea and suggestions, but unless your co-workers and boss have suddenly learned how to read your mind, it's the only way they will ever know the valuable ideas and innovations that are just brewing beneath the surface.

Take a chance.

Tell Us What You Think

How do you stand out at work -- or do you prefer to fly under the radar? We want to hear from you! Leave a comment or join the discussion on [Twitter](#).

