

The Miami Herald

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2011

The Miami Herald

BUSINESS MONDAY

Building

Strong employee traits can often lead to promotions

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Special to The Miami Herald

Stand-out employees can advance — even in this economy. At some organizations, working your way up the corporate ladder is clear and objective; at others, the track is more opaque. Subjective and objective factors may be given varying weights or be used as thresholds, and the size of the company can dictate whether the advancement track is casual and haphazard, formal, or a hybrid.

In general, though, being promoted implies acceptance into the leadership club based on three things:



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technical skill; good firm citizenship; and productivity, which is code for profitability. Candidates will be competing against equally talented peers for a limited number of opportunities.

Every path to success may be different, but those paths have some common traits. Advancement-track employees distinguish themselves from the start in con-

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sistent ways:

- **They show up.** They're in the office before their bosses arrive, and after they leave. They are easily located and make it easy to give them time-sensitive assignments. They develop a reputation for being present and available as crises and interesting work arrive.

- **They anticipate.** Employees who understand that their bosses work against deadlines will facilitate the process. They don't try to negotiate about deadlines — and they let us know if they need help with the workflow before it becomes a crisis. The rock stars will surprise us by delivering ahead of deadline.

- **They give their best work.** Employees who turn in work that is not ready to be presented to a client causes employers to become their proofreaders. Advancement-track employees often have someone else help them avoid turning in a flawed product.
- **They treat everyone with respect.** Employees who are not professional with peers or staff should realize that their bosses will hear about it and will have to solve any problems. This causes an employer to spend time away from tasks and uses up their goodwill.

- **They exceed expectations.** They take ownership of their work and mis-

takes. They offer solutions when advising employers of problems. They are proactive, creative and take opportunities as they arise.

- **They make their enthusiasm known and have an elevator speech at the ready.** Management needs to know that an employee wants to advance and is willing to work to make it happen. They should be able to interact with managers who aren't their direct bosses.

- **They develop their own franchises.** They spend considerable time and resources developing an expertise and personal connections, whether on their own or within the framework of the company.

Employees who want to advance commit to hard work, long hours, collegiality and professional development. They have an excuse-

free mindset, keep track of their successes and learn from their mistakes. It is a lifestyle choice.

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