

Hustle!

(Taking Initiative at Work)

Ready, willing, and able

Benefits of taking initiative

Go for it

**SAMPLE
PAGE**





So What?

Katy and Malcolm started working at the same company at about the same time. Both do their jobs well, but their manager has taken special notice of Katy. When she has down time at work, Katy asks what else she can do to help the team. She assists her coworkers if they've fallen behind or learns a new task from a more experienced team member. When Malcolm is asked to do a task he surfs the Internet for information. He is an employee who doesn't take initiative.

The difference between Katy and Malcolm is that Katy shows initiative. Doing the "bare minimum" to fulfill her job requirements isn't enough for her; she wants to excel. Her initiative is what makes her stand out to her supervisors. Initiative can be a difference-maker in your career as well. Find out more about what initiative is, how it can benefit you, and how you can learn to demonstrate it!

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The Importance of Initiative



Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anyone expects of you.





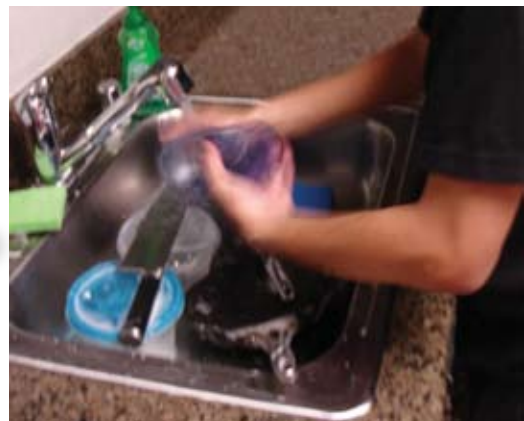
—Henry Ward Beecher

Initiative is the willingness to act without having to be told to do so. People who demonstrate initiative are willing to accept and seek out additional or even unpleasant duties. Acting independently—without influence or direction from anyone else—is a key factor in taking initiative. If you take initiative, you are ready, willing, and able to both think and act on your own. You do not have to be prodded or urged to do so. You have the ability to see what needs to be done without needing someone to point it out to you. And beyond just seeing what needs to be done, you are willing to go ahead and do it without waiting to be asked.

Initiative is a **personal trait** expressed by a consistent pattern of behavior. To be viewed as a person with initiative, you must demonstrate that quality regularly over a period of time. Your willingness to think and act on your own must be shown consistently. It should be reflected in all areas of your life. Have you ever done the dishes without being asked? Have you ever helped a new student find his/her locker just because you noticed s/he needed help? If you take these and similar actions on a regular basis, you have the quality of initiative.

Objectives:

-  Explain the importance of initiative to employees.
-  Describe ways employees can take initiative at work.



Looking for additional things to do when your regular duties have been completed. You can volunteer to assist others who are in need of help, ask your supervisor what other jobs need to be done, or catch up on new developments in the business. Don't immediately jump on the Internet or start chatting with coworkers. Your supervisor wants to see your willingness to go beyond what is asked of you.

Carrying out tasks that must be done, even if they have not been assigned to you. Just be sure to clear it with someone first. For example, you might ask your supervisor if it would be all right for you to update the in-house directory or remove the old announcements from the bulletin board. This can be a great way to build good relationships with your coworkers, as long as you make sure you're not stepping on anyone's toes.

Trying to do more than you are told to do. If you know that there are additional jobs you can complete, carry them out. These might include giving a new employee more help than you were asked to provide or staying late to complete a project. Managers will be thrilled to receive the extra help—and they won't forget where it came from.

Mastering new responsibilities on your own. Once you have been given the basic information about your new responsibilities, practice until you know you are carrying them out correctly. Consider new responsibilities as opportunities to show you are a capable employee.



The Gray Zone

Often, employees want to show their initiative by completing work tasks in a timely manner. Managers are impressed when employees can accomplish their work quickly and move on to the next assignment or project. However, some tasks are time-consuming or difficult to complete. It is tempting to "cut corners" to get the work done faster. However, this can affect the quality of the finished product. What are some ways to take some shortcuts to get a job done so it is possible to show initiative without working quickly?

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When possible, and advisable, trying to learn other jobs within the company. This is not possible in all businesses, but in some situations, it will make you a more valuable employee. This is especially true when it comes to small businesses, where the same employees often have to wear many different “hats.” It can be a great opportunity to show initiative and add to your skill set.

Coping effectively with unexpected situations that arise. If your coworker is off the job temporarily, find out what you can do to help carry out his/her job tasks. If your team gets hit with a new project and a tight deadline, volunteer to stay late a few nights to get the job done. This small effort can pay off with big results.

Seeking to further your education and training to prepare yourself for promotion and advancement. Determine the direction you would like your career to take. Take whatever classes will help you to achieve your goals. If you're unsure and feel like you need some direction, take the initiative to talk to your manager or a more experienced coworker and ask him/her to advise or mentor you.

Summary

It is possible to become overeager when demonstrating initiative on the job. Sound judgment is essential. There are many acceptable ways to show initiative on the job.



1. Why is it important to be careful about taking initiative at work?
2. List at least five ways to demonstrate initiative at work.

Make It Pay!

Throughout the next week, pay attention to the opportunities you have to show initiative—at home, at school, and at work. Write them down in your notebook. At the end of the week, review your list. Where did you have the most opportunities? What did you do to take advantage of them? What did you learn from these experiences that you can use in the future?

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