

Do you Possess and Exceptional Employee?

As we all know, recruiting for the right type of employee is a long and tedious process. The traditional markers of spotting an exceptional employee focused on experience, skills, and certifications over everything else. Despite these, all being important as passionate and determined indicators in the candidate... it doesn't necessarily capture their personality, culture, and values.

Here are some traits which I find paramount in identifying a truly Exceptional Employee.

1. They are Completionists.

Whether it's staying late, coming in early, or going above and beyond their job description, exceptional employees work hard to get a project done and done right. They wear many hats and will implement themselves where they can see their input being valuable. These employees thrive in a collaborative atmosphere, they desire to give their all to a company that truly looks after them.

2. They Raise Matters before they Fester.

Nobody likes conflict, but when it arises, exceptional employees know how to deal with it. They don't ignore the problem and let it fester; instead, they deal with it head-on and communicate effectively to get it resolved. Employees like this are rare but are a great asset. They allow the company to understand them better to help them become happier in their role. Most employees expect Employers to be mind readers and address their issues for them, without prompt. They quickly become dissatisfied and end up leaving.

Make sure your employees are comfortable approaching their managers and encourage them to raise matters. Do not complain about the time it takes to discuss – this is off-putting and promotes a closed-off culture.

3. They Focus on what's Important.

With so many things on the go, it's easy to get distracted throughout the day with things that pop up unexpectedly. Despite these distractions, exceptional employees focus on what's important and what needs to get done as a priority, even if this means their plan has to change multiple times in a day. They're willing to stay late or bring work home – as they never submit work that is not to their high standards. They are proud people when it comes to their work and become frustrated if something isn't done to their usual standard. They are their own worst critics.

4. They Neutralise Toxicity.

It is inevitable that the company will come across people who are difficult to deal with. Instead of letting these toxic people affect the whole culture of an organisation, exceptional employees will weigh up all considerations, seek advice from colleagues before making any impactful decision in dealing with them. They can feel strong emotions and can express them explicitly to those who they can confide in. However, it will not negatively impact their decision-making process as weighing up the consequences of their actions is a standard in their decision-making process. They are willing to

action hard decisions if necessary and will deal with any consequences that come from it, professionally.

5. They are Willing to be Vulnerable.

There is immense courage from showing vulnerability. From time to time, we all have our egotistical moments, but exceptional employees are the first to swallow their pride and admit their wrongdoings. They are also willing to back down in order to maintain team harmony. They are extremely conscientious and empathetic, due to this they are always willing to bite their tongue, keep composure, and show their vulnerabilities to the team in order to not step on any toes. On the contrary, if they are incredibly insistent on a point or decision, then best believe they have good reasons for this as they have already weighed up the consequences and possibilities before coming to their decision. They help team members shine by supporting them with work and their development. Sometimes that means, allowing others to take credit for their ideas and recommendations, all in the pursuit of company growth.



6. Nothing Satisfies them.

Exceptional employees are always looking for ways to be more efficient and improve themselves. They wear many hats, enquire about doing more and where else they can help in the company, even if they are not experts at it. They're passionate, critical and have an open mind when it comes to learning and growth – they will always have a way forward or something new they would like to try. They are not overly spontaneous, everything is measured, planned, and thought through, they are likely to be the people who meticulously combs through a process, and reiterates instructions back to manage expectations and hash out any errors in communication. This can be grating on some employers and managers, as they see this process as a negative attribute. Exceptional employees are meticulous and even over-the-top because they care and know how easily mistakes are made.

7. Are Solutions Oriented.

Exceptional employees despise having problems looming overhead, they proactively think of ways on all levels, how they can help the company. These employees look for new solutions and ways to improve processes. They try and quantify the issue to deal with the risk involved and measure its financial impact on the company. They stay within budget or better yet reduce costs wherever they can. They are always thinking about how to better improve their contribution, the company's product/services and the ways things are done. Imagine them as a constant working machine, producing all sorts of ideas and solutions, both big and small.

8. They are Accountable.

You can count on these employees to get the job done, but when a mistake does happen, they will admit their fault and do what they can to fix the situation. They are incredibly honest, sometimes too honest. They may admit to faults or problems which would have never been noticed or have an impact due to their nature. Be prepared to decipher the problem with them as they will ask questions to better understand how to avoid the mistake in future and learn more effectively. They have integrity and are always willing to fix any mistake they have made, always presenting a problem with a solution in mind. As point 5 says, they aren't afraid to confront their flaws and express their vulnerabilities.

9. They are Brand Ambassadors.

These people embody your brand values and are leaders (even if they don't hold leadership positions). Exceptional employees truly represent who you are as a company and are brand ambassadors even when they're not on the clock. They are truly passionate and invested in the company and will speak about the company as if it was their own. Without prompting, they naturally represent the company in the best light – a great quality an employee can possess to prove their commitment and high standards on delivering. Invest in these employees and provide opportunities for them to show off their capabilities, these people need drive and praise. It also creates a feedback loop to ensure the company is in fact talked about in the right way.

10. They know when to Speak Up.

Sometimes speaking up is difficult to do, a lot of employers dislike it. Whether it's talking about the elephant in the room or challenging a decision; exceptional employees will put their opinion forthright, not to undermine others but to make sure that all things have been considered. Speaking up and remaining professional is a hard skill, exceptional employees do this politely, appropriately, and continually but they will always be others who see this as invasive. They will try and understand the whole scope of the business and all of its possibilities. The fantastic quality of these types of employees is that they know when they need to speak up, not only for the betterment of the company but to all those around them. What may not look like a good idea at first, these employees will always have the future prospect in mind.

There are great employees who do their role well, but they are not disruptive (in a positive way). They follow the group and are agreeable to higher-ups, they don't challenge out of fear or out of knowledge. They tend to get on well with everyone due to their passive nature but are not self-starting. Whereas truly exceptional employees will always have input and will grate on people at times

– but they get everyone thinking in a new proactive way. They raise matters others may have no awareness of without their insight. They also know what they need to keep them happy in their role, which unfortunately means they sometimes have to outrightly ask for what they want instead of waiting for their higher-ups to naturally approach it. The best employees are the ones who let you know plainly and honestly what is what, they are not always the nicest conversations but know that they are always thinking in the best interests of the company which concerns their levels of happiness in the role. They want to remain committed.

11. In Summary

Truly exceptional employees are very hard to identify, let alone possess. Keep them happy by giving them challenging tasks where their talent and potential can be identified with opportunities to excel in. Too often, companies lose exceptional employees because they are not set up to capture the talent before them, their skills haven't had opportunities to be expressed, and are spread thin, meaning that they cannot progress far in each individual project due to the vast amount they have to manage – this is dissatisfying to them. They need to receive feedback to know they are recognised in order to encourage further growth.

To hire exceptional employees, one must develop strategies in their recruitment process to identify exceptional personality traits, values, and culture. This defines the attitude of the individual and will be more accurate and telling of their ability in the role. If your company is looking to grow, you should ensure that you hire exceptional candidates to deliver the growth you desire.

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