

work ethic

a set of values centered on the importance of doing work and reflected especially in a desire or determination to work hard

Does your work ethic need a little help?

We've all been there. That feeling of really, really not wanting to go into the office of a morning. It cripples productivity, raises stress levels and makes us unhappy.

Why do we feel this way? Unless it stems from deeper issues, the feeling of not wanting to go to work is often the result of a poor work ethic. If you've experienced it yourself recently, that doesn't make you a bad person or employee. A poor work ethic usually arrives subconsciously and is something you'll have little control over or forewarning of its impending arrival. Thankfully, there are some methods you can employ to improve your work ethic dramatically, and they're not quite as tricky as you might think:

Start with your body – treat it right. A healthy body will help you build a healthy approach to work because the two are intrinsically linked. If you feel lethargic in the morning, the last thing you're going to want to do is to spring out of bed and head to the office. You're far more likely to continually hit the 'snooze' button and curse the fact you even have a job.

Lethargy can be a result of not enough sleep and poor levels of exercise, therefore if the feeling just described is something you're all too familiar with, it's time to go on something of a permanent health kick. And that doesn't mean ditching all the treats that make you happy – just the process of regularly exercising and eating more healthily. Walk when you'd normally take the car and swap those regular naughty treats for fruit and glasses of water – you'll be surprised how much more up for it you'll feel each morning.

Measure your ethic against others. If you're forever cursing your colleague's ability to practically skip into work ready for the day ahead, why not measure your own performance against theirs? Clearly, something is different. It might be their mindset, attitude towards their role or lifestyle, but if you can be brave enough to measure your performance against others, you'll quickly suss out where you need to improve.

This can extend far beyond work colleagues, too. If your partner appears to be having the time of their life at work, yet you can barely muster the strength to log onto your computer for the first time each morning, ask them how they're doing it. You never know – you might just learn a thing or two.

Set your own standard of excellence. We all need something to aim towards in life, and nowhere is this more relevant than at work. If you can set your own standards for what constitutes a great day in the office, you'll reach your goals quicker and be far more inspired to do so. In tip two, we described the benefits of measuring your working ethic against that of colleagues and members of your family, but you need to be careful not to follow their own standards of excellence if they don't match your own. You're the author of your career, therefore set yourself goals and a standard of work that will help you reach them that you know you're capable of.

Be dependable. If you promise to complete a task or project – do so. Get it done on time (or before, if possible), and if you feel things are slipping, be honest with those for whom you promised completion date. Being dependable at work will earn you respect and increase your levels of satisfaction. If people know they can rely on you to get the job done, you'll be rewarded with their gratitude. There are few things that can push you on to achieve more than a heartfelt "thank you".

Start your day strong and get to work on time. *Do you regularly arrive to work a minute or two late?* If so, your work ethic clearly needs some fine tuning. Many people mistake late arrivals for laziness or a lack of desire, but that isn't always the case. Chances are, you want to get to work on time, but something is preventing you from doing so. It might be a collection of the issues described above, or something more closely related to job satisfaction, but whatever it is, you need to identify the root cause and work on a solution. A great day at work starts with a strong start to the day itself.

A black coffee, a thirty-minute blast on the exercise bike and some push-ups might do it for you, or you might be the sort of person who benefits from a morning of getting the mundane stuff (email, to-do list management, etc) out of the way. Whatever method you choose to get your day off to the best possible start – stick to it, because you'll find late arrivals soon become a thing of the past.

Unless you're particularly spritely in the morning, it's unlikely that you'll literally jump out of bed and head to work full of an endless supply of energy, but if you follow our tips above, you'll greatly increase your ability to foster a healthy approach to work. Whenever you feel uninspired by your role, but you know it's something more superficial than job dissatisfaction, check that you're doing all you can to improve your work ethic.

As you can see, it really isn't that difficult at all.



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