

independence

freedom from the control, influence, support, or the like, of others

The tri-color flags, patriotic songs on radios, echoes of the national anthem ringing in our ears, barbecues, stars and stripes sweets and specially designed menus, workplaces decorated in red, white and blue envisage how the United States celebrates Independence Day. In this significant time, let us pause and reflect on what independence and freedom at work truly mean, especially in the modern workplaces.

It may seem strange to say independence and initiative are important skills when everyone is talking about teamwork. However, think of it this way: Teams are made up of people that are working together to achieve a common goal. Each team member needs to take the initiative to fulfill their responsibilities.

You need to be able to plan how you are going to fulfill responsibilities that were assigned you as part of a team. Most of the time, this means close communication with other team members, but ultimately, you need to be able to determine:

What needs to be done.
How you are going to do it.
When each task is going to be complete.
What the potential roadblocks are.

Then, you need to be able to follow through and complete your tasks without someone monitoring your every move. That means you should:

Pay attention to details and produce high-quality work in an ethical manner.
Complete your tasks on time.
Take initiative to help others as team priorities shift.
Use problem-solving skills when you hit roadblocks.

Planning & Organizing

Set goals.
Schedule and prioritize tasks.
Allocate resources.
Anticipate obstacles.

Dependability & Reliability

Fulfill obligations.
Be on time.
Pay attention to details.
Comply with policies.

Initiative

Strive to exceed standard work.
Take initiative.
Set challenging goals.
Work independently.

While there is an expectation that we show that we are good team players and possess great collaboration skills, independence is also an important leadership competency. Here are a few ideas for building and displaying more independence at work:

Be confident in your knowledge and abilities – you have experience and you were hired for your job because you have the necessary knowledge and skills. Often managers view those who doubt themselves, ask questions that they should know the answer to, and approach tasks with anxiety as lacking independence. Take time to write down your strengths and knowledge areas, capture examples of how you have demonstrated those competencies, and commit to owning and leveraging them more at work.

Be proactive – devoting time to planning and strategizing allows you to stay ahead of potential obstacles and reduces the time spent reacting to problems. Being proactive also demonstrates your ability to be self-directed, focused, and goal-oriented – all signs of independence.

Go against the grain – independence is seen in both action and thought. Show that you are an independent thinker and be willing to share your view even if it is not the commonly held belief.

Grow your skill set – taking ownership of your own professional and career development shows those above you that you want to be in control of your growth and your future. Seek out opportunities to build your portfolio of new skills, technologies, and industry/market knowledge. Adopting a continuous learning mentality will pay off.

The ability to think on your own and to make sense of things based on your personal observations and experiences rather than going along with what others think and believe shows that you are an independent thinker. And being willing to confidently take on a project, self-manage, and take charge of your growth shows that you can effectively work independently.



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