

# Talent versus Determination

## What we can control...and what we can't

BY WALT GRASSL

While having lunch in the company cafeteria, new managers Bob and Mark were discussing their respective hiring strategies for an upcoming job fair being sponsored by their company. The conversation quickly turned into a debate on what type of graduate made the best employee. Mark prefers to hire the 4.0 GPA graduates, regardless of how driven they appear or how well they seem to “play with others.” He figures he can instill the drive and teamwork. Bob believes in hiring smart people, not necessarily the smartest, but those who can demonstrate determination and good collaboration skills. He feels that with a minimum 3.0 GPA, they are smart enough to learn, and their drive and teamwork would carry the day. Patricia, a seasoned manager, joined in the discussion and shared her thoughts. Based on her experience, some of the most talented people aren't successful because they simply don't work hard. Conversely, without a minimal amount of talent, hard work may not be enough. The most successful people have talent and work hard. I have to agree with Patricia. Hard working, talented people make the best employees.

As an employee, we must consider what is in our control and what we can influence. We cannot control how much talent we have. But we can control how hard we work and how steadfastly we persevere when times get tough. Here are five character traits that employees should be aware of and that hiring managers should consider.

### Reaction to Praise

Studies show that people who are praised for their intelligence tend to avoid risk when given a choice in their next assignments. They fear that if they are less than perfect in the future, they may not look as smart. However, when people are praised for their hard work, they welcome more challenging assignments.

### Adapting to Change

Success often depends on the ability to change from one process to another. Highly talented people often have a set way of doing things, and they do not like to change what worked for them in the past. While some talented people are able to adapt to change, those with extraordinary talent are not always so flexible.

### Willingness to Learn

Many talented people believe they don't have anything new to learn in their chosen field. What got them there is enough. Yet, those who work hard and show determination are likely to devote time to learning new skills. They might be the most current on



new technology or show a willingness to innovate. Employees who get training over and above what's required is critical to an organization that wants to improve and grow.

### Different Expectations

People who are highly talented sometimes believe they are entitled to a certain pay level, promotional opportunities and respect. They can be the workplace equivalent of rockstars and elite athletes. Those who succeed based on hard work tend to have more realistic expectations. They know their work ethic and determination to succeed pays off in terms of promotions, pay increases and earned respect. Unlike their more innately talented co-workers, they tend to avoid resting on their laurels.

### Goal Setting

People who set goals are usually more successful than those who don't. The best goals to set are “stretch” goals, which are attainable and challenging, but realistic. If you set goals that are too easy, you will accomplish them more often but not be as satisfied. Satisfaction comes from pursuing a goal, not from ultimately achieving it.

Determination and perseverance are important traits in the workplace. Employers want employees who are determined to get things done, to make things happen and to constantly look for better ways of doing things. We are more likely to continue in the face of adversity if we think talent is only peripheral to our future success.

When facing difficulties, those with a strong work ethic not only persevere, but also actually improve, whereas those who believe that talent is everything regress. Don't rely on your talents. Develop the practices of hard work, determination and perseverance, and you will be able to maximize your success. 🍀



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