



TriMetrix®HD Initiative

Initiative

The ability to direct one's energies toward the completion of a goal, without an external catalyst; the ability to initiate actions based on one's own interpretation or understanding of a situation.

Why is this skill important?

Initiative is the ability to take action and marshal one's energies toward the completion of a task. It is the power, ability, or instinct to begin or follow through with a plan or task. It is directly linked to the strength of your own mental picture of yourself. Initiative requires that you believe strongly in your own capabilities and the results you can deliver.

People with strong Initiative feel comfortable enough with their abilities to act on their own decisions without consulting others. They will adapt to dynamic situations and move around unforeseen obstacles without waiting for supervisory instruction.

In contrast, people with poorly developed skills in Initiative are not comfortable enough with their own abilities to take independent action—instead, they will wait for direct supervision from a manager or team leader.

A good Initiator has a great self-image and is not afraid to take decisive action, even in uncertain situations. While it is normal to feel uncomfortable when you have a lack of direction from managers, you can't let that stop you from making positive strides toward achieving personal and corporate goals. Ambiguous direction can provide an opportunity for you to apply your most creative solution to the problem at hand.

To be able to develop your most creative solution, you have to be confident enough in your skill set and natural abilities to make the best use of them. People with the most Initiative challenge themselves every day to extend the reach of their intellect, abilities, and behaviors. They approach each new problem or situation as an opportunity to use their skills in a positive, forward-moving direction. If they don't have the knowledge they need, they quickly get it or partner with other people to fill in their knowledge gaps.

You can see that not only is self-confidence important to Initiative, but so is developing extensive professional networks. You may be confident enough to ask for assistance from other people, but if you don't have anyone suitable to ask, it's no use! Initiating and maintaining professional relationships with people both within and outside your organization is essential!

If you want to be challenged to be your absolute best, you have to take the Initiative.

What are skills associated with being Initiative?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Initiative:

- Has realistic expectations of himself or herself.
- Has realistic expectations of others and can relate to others comfortably.
- Looks at the best possibilities and sees the potential in uncertain or difficult situations.
- Is proactive in all situations, seeking to add value and steer projects in positive directions consistent with organizational goals.
- Is confident in his or her ability to be productive and take charge.
- Is in control of the levels of stress—positive and negative—in his or her life.
- Takes responsibility for his or her actions.
- Takes advantage of extensive professional networks to make things happen.

How do you develop your own skills in Initiative?

- Develop realistic, positive expectations of yourself—don't expect yourself to fail, but don't expect yourself to do so well that you don't take appropriate steps to ensure success.
- Get rid of your unrealistic expectations of others—don't be irrationally afraid that they will relate to you badly, confront you, or otherwise give you difficulty.
- Avoid the self-fulfilling prophecies of doom and failure. Look at the best possibilities instead of the worst ones; the worst possibility very infrequently occurs!
- Don't overreact to the responses of others—if you are too concerned about what others think, you may not take any proactive steps to achieve your mission.
- If you are in an uncertain situation, don't be afraid to ask for better or clearer direction from relevant individuals.
- If better direction is not available, change your expectations—define success and mastery of the situation in your own terms.
- Try to take charge of uncertain situations by defining the appropriate tasks as you see them—ask others for confirmation that you understand the relevant issues.
- Define and communicate clear expectations and deadlines for any project that you initiate or take on from someone else.
- Don't worry too much about the outcome of situations—if you are too worried about an outcome before you even begin a project, you may not do enough at the input level to affect the situation positively.
- Try not to put unnecessary time pressure on yourself. Set a realistic timetable for events, if at all possible, and delegate reasonable tasks to yourself and to others.
- Keep stress in perspective—in uncertain situations, everyone experiences butterflies in the stomach!

- Practice stress-reduction—get enough sleep, exercise regularly, and engage in relaxation techniques.
- Don't procrastinate!
- Take responsibility for your actions, regardless of outcome.
- Build your self-confidence through daily positive self-affirmations, such as "I am a proactive self-starter."
- Be prepared, practiced, and committed to any project you are working on. Even if it is a last-minute assignment or a difficult challenge.
- Develop effective networks, both inside and outside of your organization.
- Keep the individual you are talking to, the goal you are working toward, or the task at hand foremost in your mind. Don't focus on your own needs and insecurities—you will only bring yourself down.
- Practice your skills and develop new ones continually. The more you know and can do, the better prepared you will feel for taking initiative in any situation that presents itself.

Initiative

Activities

Activity 1: Acknowledging Your Strengths

A major component of taking Initiative is believing in your own abilities. Seeing your own strengths, and taking advantage of them is essential to professional success. This activity will help you define those strengths and use them to your advantage. First, make a list of ten things that you can do well, or skills that you have.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

Daily positive self-affirmations can pay off handsomely, especially during times of pressure. An affirmation is a first-person, positive statement that you make about yourself. Affirmations affect your subconscious mind, which will, in turn, rule your conscious activity.

Using the ten skills or strengths you listed above, come up with ten self-affirmations. Once you have written them, post them somewhere that you will see them every day (in your planner, on your desk, etc.), And once EACH DAY, repeat them to yourself.

Examples:

"I am a proactive self-starter."

"I generate enthusiasm in others."

"I am great at project planning."

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

Activity 2: Slipping through the Cracks

Think of a recent situation in your workplace in which you let a project slip through the cracks because you were uncertain of how to proceed. Or think of a recent group project that someone else really seemed to take the initiative to organize. Try to answer the following questions:

1. Why did I let that project slip between the cracks? What action could I have taken to "rescue" it? Who could have helped me?

2. How did the project organizer get the project moving and keep it on track? Whom did he ask for assistance or direction?

Activity 3: Taking Charge

Think of a current project or issue that seems to be stagnating from a lack of direction. Is there a committee that has never met to plan the company holiday party? Is there a proposal due to a client, but no one has started the proposal process? Try to establish the following action list for yourself:

1. Who are the key players in the project decision-making process?

2. When can I hold a kick-off meeting to discuss making progress toward the goal?

3. How can I keep those people involved actively in pursuing the goal?

4. What resources can I offer to the project?

5. What resources do I think others need to contribute?

Once you have investigated the issue thoroughly, it will probably become clear what your role can be in pushing the project or problem to resolution. When you have defined roles and responsibilities among project team members, be explicit about expected products and deadlines. Make sure you follow up not only by completing the task or tasks you have assigned to you, but also by calling follow-up meetings and asking other people for updates on their progress.

Activity 4: Networks

You may be an extroverted person who thinks you know everyone in your organization, but chances are, you have not taken advantage of all of the resources at your disposal. Take a few moments to think about the following questions:

1. On recent projects, who did you have to work with?
2. Do you have good relationships with those people?
3. If not, what can you do to improve them?
4. Whose expertise COULD you have used, but didn't? Why?
5. What can you do to establish a professional relationship with one new person in each department you are involved with?

Over the next several weeks, work to address the ideas you have developed in answering the above questions. Make appointments with key individuals, set up business lunches, take steps to remedy uncomfortable relationships, etc.

Make a list below of action steps you will take, and give yourself deadlines for accomplishing them.

Action Item:

Deadline

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

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