



**PIERCE  
WASHINGTON**

# **ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING**

*Rob Watters—Pierce Washington Partner*





**Pierce Washington partner Rob Watters draws on his own experiences and observations to share insights into what makes employees valuable to an organization—and what you can do to set yourself apart.**

What makes an employee valuable to an organization? While there are hundreds of things you can do to showcase your professional skills and set yourself apart, at the end of the day, your success hinges on one thing—your attitude.

Ambitious individuals who want to increase their visibility in the workplace and differentiate themselves from others need an attitude that makes them stand out in all the right ways.

Whether you're just beginning your career or you're ready for the next step, these tips from Rob Watters, a partner at Pierce Washington, will help you develop the attitude needed for professional success.

### **Be open to—and seek out—new opportunities.**

There will likely be times where you'll be asked to take on a new task or project that's outside of your comfort zone. The beginning of your career is the best time to learn, try different things, and be open to new tasks or assignments.



***“When presented with an opportunity to take on something that is new or outside your current comfort zone, the answer should absolutely be ‘yes.’”***

“It's only by having new experiences and taking on things you may not be comfortable with that you learn more about yourself,” says Rob. “Accepting new challenges help you identify career interests, highlight your strengths, and also highlight areas for development.”

It was an opportunity to step up and take on a new challenge that paved the way for Rob in his own career. He recalls his first role out of college as a Marketing Associate for a small company. The marketing department consisted of just him and a Marketing Director; when she left the company just a month later, he had the opportunity to step into her role and lead the marketing department.

Although daunting at first, this unexpected experience allowed Rob to take on additional responsibilities and learn by doing. It also provided the opportunity to interact with and learn more about other areas of the business that he may not otherwise have gotten exposure to.

As you become more comfortable with your organization and your role, keep a growth mindset by seeking out new opportunities to learn and try new things.



## Adopt a team-oriented focus.

It's tempting to go into a new role with the attitude "What's in this for me?" In his 13 years at Price WaterhouseCoopers, Rob has seen this as well: "Some people get hung up on titles and the scope of their responsibilities. The people who I have seen excel have a willingness to be part of a team, jump in and do whatever it is that helps the company advance, even if it's outside of their comfort zone or their role."

That doesn't mean you shouldn't seek to progress within your organization; there's a difference between wanting to grow and advance versus worrying about your title. Focusing more on being part of and creating a collaborative environment helps everyone—yourself included.

Taking initiative, being a problem-solver, and supporting your teammates as you work towards a common goal is also something that senior leadership will take note of. Ultimately, as you help the company and team, you end up helping yourself.



## Find a mentor.

Not everyone has the confidence to embrace challenges or volunteer to dive in and solve a problem. One of the best ways to build your confidence and grow in your career is to find a mentor. Mentors play a valuable role in career development, offering their knowledge, support, and providing constructive feedback to those who want to further advance their career.

"A mentor is very helpful because they can help you navigate new opportunities and bolster your own confidence," Rob says.

They also provide a wealth of knowledge and experience you can tap into, and many are eager to share their experiences and advice with those seeking to develop their own skillset and leadership qualities.

Many companies don't offer formal mentorship programs, but this shouldn't dissuade you. So how do you find a mentor? Look for someone inside of your organization, so they can relate to and provide guidance on the situations you face. Once you have found someone you relate to and have built trust with, you can seek their advice when confronted with situations you may not feel confident with.





## View your mistakes through a new lens.

It's a given that you'll make mistakes—both large and small—in your career. But what matters far more than the mistake is the way you handle it and what you learn from it.

Rather than seeing mistakes as an embarrassment or failure, step back and view them analytically. Ask yourself what went wrong, what you can do differently next time, and how you can avoid similar situations in the future. Putting your assessment into action will help you in your professional development.

At the same time, you shouldn't be afraid to make a mistake, particularly when you're working to solve a problem or trying something new. At Pierce Washington, Rob gives the example of different approaches team members make to handling challenging situations: "There are some people who run into an obstacle, throw up their hands, and say 'This isn't working; who can help me?' And then there are the people who dig in and try to solve the problem themselves. Those who try to work through things and are not afraid of getting stuck or making a mistake will progress and learn more than those who allow a fear of failure to hold them back."

## Contribute to a positive environment.

You've probably heard the saying, "Attitude is contagious," and that goes for both positive and negative attitudes. Engaging in negativity and office gossip or drama can quickly become a sinkhole, consuming your time and energy and causing you to focus on things that won't help you, your team members, or your organization progress.

An effective voice of leadership is positive and supportive. You can contribute to a positive environment within your organization by not participating in negative or critical conversations, leading by example and modeling more encouraging behavior, and proactively seek ways to improve a situation rather than complain about it.



## Develop your own leadership attributes.

The importance of great leaders in a company can't be understated, and organizations that promote from within tend to have better rates of retention and employee satisfaction.

Finding your leadership voice and developing people management skills is an important way to set yourself apart and further your career. "Effectively climbing a ladder involves learning how to successfully manage and lead a team," Rob explains. "The people who tend to move up within an organization are those who support their people and create a clear path for them to become successful."

Leadership skills you can hone at any stage of your career include flexibility and a willingness to adapt with a situation, providing support to others to help them become successful, and nurturing good working relationships with team members.

## Advocate for yourself and others.

While flexibility and a willingness to take on additional projects as needed will help you advance your career, it's also important to learn how to advocate respectfully for yourself and those around you. Be clear about what you think you need and what you think your coworkers need to be successful, and then offer suggestions or solutions to move forward.

For example, as a new employee at a small company, you may notice a lack of onboarding practices or training that would be helpful to you and other new team members. "As an employee, it's a fair thing to expect to be able to communicate needs," Rob says, "and it's important that the organization takes action on those suggestions."

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## Final Thoughts: Attitude is the Key to Success

Ultimately, setting yourself up for success and becoming valuable within your organization requires a positive attitude that showcases a willingness to learn, contribute, and work as a team.

"The people who stand out to a leadership team are those who understand the importance of working well as part of a team and convey a willingness to do what it takes to move the company in the right direction," says Rob. "It's this type of attitude that will not only help your organization and team succeed, but ultimately help you advance in your own career."

