

## The Importance of Being Teachable

When professionals look for ways to develop their careers or improve, they often start with skills, certifications, and visible proof that they are valuable in their industry. There's no question that education and training are crucial in career development but there's a different way to think about improvement that isn't an accomplishment. It's an attitude; it's teachability.

### **What Does It Mean To Be Teachable?**

To be teachable is to develop an attitude of learning, observing, listening, and asking when you need help. It's an attitude that recognizes that you're human, that you make mistakes, and that it can be hard to see them from your own perspective.

When you get used to your environment, you start to feel comfortable and settle into routines. Everyone has their favorite chair, favorite cup, and favorite ways to approach their work. But comfort and familiarity can make it difficult to recognize ways to improve ourselves. It's *uncomfortable* to admit that you make mistakes, that you need help, or that you just don't know something, but change and growth won't happen by staying comfortable. By being open and ready to learn, you're ahead of the game and on the path to leadership.

### **What Stops Us From Being Teachable?**

There can be barriers to becoming a teachable employee. Besides embarrassment or not knowing how to ask for help, you may feel that showing you don't know something may come off as a lack of competency or professionalism. Maybe your desire to be taken seriously is stopping you from admitting or showing your weak points. You might be in a competitive environment where your mistakes are scrutinized disproportionately and you feel like you need to bluff your way through, minimizing your flaws as much as possible.

The key thing to remember is that good leaders won't punish you for trying to better yourself. To be a good leader means you must be able to listen before acting and to be accountable for your own actions. Even if you are the only one in your office trying to be teachable, asking for help, or learning how to do things better than before, then you are the only one doing the work to grow. Your example can make a real impact in your workplace.

### **Developing A Teachable Attitude**

When you set your goals, whether you're looking for that promotion, or you want to practice speaking in public, you need to develop a plan to accomplish that goal. You also need to be realistic. If you want to run a marathon, you're not going to be able to achieve that if you can barely run a mile in the weeks leading up to it.

To set achievable goals, start by recognizing your own strengths and weaknesses. What do you know you're good at? What do you specialize in? What are some things that your mentors and

supervisors have said they like about you? Whether you're a great team player or have dynamite people skills, those are your strengths. Acknowledge them and be proud of yourself for those traits! They're unique to you and bring a lot of value to your work.

The next step is to look at your weaknesses. What are areas of your work that frustrate you? What hurdles do you seem to run into time and time again? Don't let these areas of weakness be a stopping point. Everyone has difficulties, everyone is human, but so few people are willing to be honest about their negative behaviors. Growth happens when you are open to change and engage with your weak spots.

If you have a supportive coworker or mentor who can coach you, you can learn a lot about yourself personally and make great strides forward professionally by asking for their advice. It can be hard to acknowledge your negative behaviors but remember, what you avoid or ignore, others can see with perfect clarity. It's to your own benefit to challenge yourself and grow.

### **Consider Other Perspectives.**

At every point in your career, it's important to consider other perspectives because in most cases you're going to be working on a diverse team with diverse opinions. No matter how qualified and experienced you are, others are going to approach the same tasks and problems you face with different ideas and solutions. If you're leading a project and you're constantly disagreeing with one of the team members, it's a good idea to consider why that is. Try to understand the opposing point of view; there may be a valuable insight you should reflect on.

Consider your supervisor's point of view; do they want team members who are full of ego, difficult to work with, and usually putting themselves first or do they want team members who are easy to coach, who accept feedback, and are always learning and trying new things? Who would you prefer to work with?

### **Key Actions To Be A Teachable Employee**

1. Listen and Observe

When someone is doing a task differently than you, watch what they're doing, and ask why they do it that way. There could be a background reason that you don't know about that's important. Maybe they have a completely different perspective that you can use the next time you have to do the same thing. They might also be using outdated information and you can help them learn something new too.

2. Research and Education

It always helps to be open to learning new things. Set aside some time outside of work to learn more about your field. Focus on areas that are weaknesses for you. You might find that something you've done the same way for years has been improved and there's an easier or better way to do it. You can also improve your strengths by putting in the time to learn on your own.

### 3. Practice and Repeat

Try to do things the way that your mentors or coworkers have shared. Try to listen to others, especially when they are telling you something you don't know. Try to practice doing tasks you struggle with on your own and in the workplace.

### **The Benefits Of A Teachable Attitude**

Besides the workplace benefits, there are key benefits that being a teachable person bring to your life. When you are teachable, you want to learn and you are more open to others, whether they are sharing information or their experience or their point of view. When you are teachable, you acknowledge your limitations. You can use them as a springboard to grow and develop your character, and to find new opportunities. Most importantly, by being open to others, accountable to yourself, learning, and growing your skills and knowledge, you are investing in yourself.

Further reading:

<https://www.johnmaxwell.com/blog/how-do-i-maintain-a-teachable-attitude/>

<https://www.right.com/wps/wcm/connect/right-us-en/home/thoughtwire/categories/talent-work/beyond-blind-spots-leadership-development-strategies-for-non-teachable-skills/>

<https://www.brighthub.com/office/career-planning/articles/128259.aspx>

<https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/news/always-remain-teachable>

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