

## Keep Your Job: The Secrets Of Agile Employees

Change is one of life's constants. We can always count on it showing up — usually when we least expect it. In most workplaces change is greeted with a lot of suspicion and trepidation -- how is my work going to be disrupted this time? Yet, how we deal with change is a pretty good indicator of how well we'll survive it. Some people simply can't handle change. They lose their emotional balance and stress themselves out and everyone else in the process. Others seem to be able to roll comfortably with the punches, often coming out better than before. These people are known as Agile Employees and they show up at every level of business. Agile professionals don't view change as an adversary; they see change as an opportunity for something better. Instead of fighting change, they have learned how to master its momentum.

### Insight into Agile Employees

Agile employees know that by continually focusing on how they can positively impact their own situation they stand a much better chance of remaining employed when an economic downturn (read: Change) could require a workforce reduction. So, what's their secret?

### Establishing Crystal Clear Expectations

Job titles can be a bit murky, so understanding the roles and responsibilities of a position are paramount in the mind of an agile employee. Job performance expectations often change when leadership changes. For example, Sara, a long-time employee bootstrapped her way up the corporate ladder by providing extraordinary customer service for some of the company's key clients. Clients trusted her and accounts flourished under Sara's attention. She was eventually promoted to Senior Vice President of Client Development. However, everyone knew that Sara's expertise was in account management, not in business development. She had no experience in sales or strategic planning. When the company hired a new president he was shocked at Sara's lack of a clearly defined business development plan. He soon let her go citing her inability to do her job. *Since Sara hadn't fully understood what the new leadership expected, she paid the ultimate price by losing her job.*

### Maintaining Appropriate Credentials

Bootstrapping one's way up the corporate ladder is admirable and not a very easy way to get to higher levels of management. But scrappy agile employees understand that the hard work they used to get ahead in their company should also be applied to obtaining the proper credentials to support their higher status. This may mean earning the degree that was put off years ago; engaging their professional community through speaking engagements or volunteer efforts; or gaining professional recognition through specialized skills, industry experience and publicly recognized expertise. *Without external credentials, a hard working, highly paid but under-degreed employee could be targeted for the next round of layoffs.*

### You Gotta Have Friends

No one is an island. While it is true that some people might work that way, truly agile employees understand that they need friends in high, low and outside places. This doesn't mean pandering for friendships to curry favors. This means getting out of the office or cubicle and getting to know other people who work in the same place. It also means creating relationships outside of work, whether that is with clients, peers in other companies, industry or trade associations or vendors. By exposing themselves to a variety of relationships, agile employees also create a supportive network of people they can turn to for advice and information on new opportunities. In turn, they provide their contacts with the same support. *Friendships go a long way in keeping a career moving forward and on the right track during change.*

So how can you assess whether you're an agile employee or one who's become stuck in a rut? Here are a few questions you can use to determine just that:

- Have you underpinned your current position with the appropriate credentials?
- Do you understand how your position impacts the bottom line?
- Do you fully understand the expectations of your role?
- Have you developed a broad base of allies both inside and outside your company?
- Are there skills you could acquire to make you more valuable?
- How might adopting these strategies change your attitude about work and life, in general?

*It's never too late to become an agile employee!*

### About the Author

Pat Faber-Garey, Worklife Agility Coach, brings two decades of workforce transition management to bear in helping business leaders take advantage of change. A published author, her 2006 book GREAT JOBS FOR GRADUATES: 90 Days to the Career of a Lifetime, is used as a university textbook. She is a regular speaker and industry source on workforce management and human resource development topics. [Extreme Agility, LLC](#)

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