



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Being a brand new you

The beginning of the year is an excellent time to reflect on the past and then to make some strategic decisions about how you are going to move your career forward. This process, of course, takes some careful planning. So, let's get started.

Set aside at least 30 minutes for this exercise. Find a comfortable location, grab a pad and pen; then, concentrate on completing the following self-evaluation relative to your current position in the workplace.

First of all, avoid worrying about situations outside of your control. Focus on the areas over which you as an employee do have influence, and answer the following questions "yes" or "no."

Consider your current skills. Are they better, faster, more reliable? Are you doing more in less time? Are you working smarter rather than harder? If not, you need to upgrade — refresh, reinforce and refine.

Next, have you learned any new skills lately, attended seminars to gather relevant career information, or read an article pertinent to your job? Consider mastering a new procedure, learning how to operate a new piece of technology, becoming skilled at new techniques that will enhance your expertise and make your job more effective.

Have you varied the pattern of a routine task in the past six months? Looked for ways to simplify tasks so that you can devote more time to those responsibilities you really enjoy doing? (If there are no duties you enjoy, you are in deep trouble. Perhaps it's time to seek a new job.)

What changes have you made in your environment to motivate yourself? Modifications such as adding a plant, picture, wall hanging or desk ornament can create a completely new dimension to your work surroundings and generate a new atmosphere.

Can your skills in communicating with people be improved? Are you doing your best to give and get cooperation? Establish trust?

Are you in tune with your co-workers and supervisor? Have you taken the time to learn how each generation (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and younger) needs and wants to communicate before giving them feedback?

What about your knowledge of the organization or industry in which you work? Do you better understand how the business operates; how your specific position, department or agency functions and fits into the big picture; and what the latest trends are?

Now review your responses. If you have answered "no" more times than "yes," then you have some work to do.

Why not tap those powerful sources of energy that's lying dormant within you, and develop some goals. Cultivate a plan of action and go for it. Make an effort to try some new ideas and strategies. You may never realize how talented you are and how enjoyable your job can be.

Expect more from yourself. Set high standards. You might be surprised at what and how much you can accomplish. Remember, though,

a key to "being a brand new you" requires a willingness to step outside of your comfort zone and a willingness to step "up to the plate." Know that you will be expected to take chances and express boldness. Keep in mind the adage, "nothing ventured, nothing gained."

Be committed. Commitment gives you new power. For no matter what comes your way, you never turn your eye from the goal. Commitment guarantees victory. It's hard to keep committed people from achieving success. Place stumbling blocks in their way, and they take them for stepping stones. If difficulties are thrust in front of them, they go around, under or through them.

To reach your goals, you need to be totally committed and do what it takes to be successful. When you're striving to attain your goals, develop a self-talk vocabulary, and keep in mind the words of Linda E. Knight:

"Begin each day by focusing on all that is good. You'll be in a position to handle whatever comes along. Take responsibility for your actions; never make excuses for not being the best you can be. If you should slip, be comforted by the thought that we all do at times. Determine your tomorrow by the choices you make today. And, above all, remember, it's all up to you."

Here's to a bountiful 2006!

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