

How to Be the Employee Your Company Can't Live Without

18 Ways to Become Indispensable

GLENN SHEPARD



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Praise for *How to Be the Employee Your Company Can't Live Without*

“Glenn’s messages resonate with my values and those that have made Staples so successful. This book is clear, direct, and right on target . . . a great source of useful career advice. Highly recommended.”

Ronald L. Sargent
Chairman and CEO, Staples

“What a resource of practical advice based on facts, not anecdotes! The examples he provides perfectly illustrate what our grandparents have taught us. This book is a must read for all the different generations entering the workforce today.”

Samuel E. Beall, III
Chairman and CEO, Ruby Tuesday

“Thank you for clearly focusing on the fact that hard work does pay off.”

Jack J. Pelton
Chairman, President, and CEO,
Cessna Aircraft Company

“Glenn presents the world’s future entrepreneurs a clearly defined roadmap on building a better mousetrap!”

Jim McCann
CEO, 1-800-FLOWERS.COM®

“Anyone can succeed in America with an education and hard work. Glenn reminds us that the best employees are happy, honest, hard-working people.”

Steve Odland
Chairman and CEO, Office Depot

“There are hundreds of books on how companies can create value for customers, but Glenn Shepard has given us a much-needed book on how employees can create value for their employers! He has written a clear, engaging, and compelling book on what it takes to create demand for yourself in the marketplace. Learn how to go from being ‘overhead’ and an expense to a company, to being an absolute necessity.”

Joe Calloway
Author of *Indispensable—How to Become the Company That Your Customers Can’t Live Without*
Nashville, Tennessee
www.JoeCalloway.com

“The most uplifting message of this book—and one that I stress with my employees—is that anyone can become indispensable to their company.”

David Riklan
President, Self Improvement Online, Inc.
Marlboro, New Jersey
www.SelfGrowth.com

“This book should be in the top drawer of every employee’s desk.”

Matt Bacak, President
Frontier Power Marketing, LLC
Atlanta, Georgia
www.PowerfulPromoter.com

“The wisdom contained in this book can propel your career to new heights. Apply Glenn Shepard’s techniques and be prepared to enjoy a phenomenally rewarding, exciting and positive work and career experience.”

Peggy McColl
Author of *The 8 Proven Secrets to Smart Success*
Ottawa, Canada
www.Destinies.com

“Glenn has cleverly encapsulated the problem with our country’s declining work ethic—and crafted the solution! Bravo Glenn!”

T. J. Marrs, President, The Creative Real Estate Source
Portland, Oregon
www.tjmarrs.com

“This book is like music to a manager’s ears and should be integrated as part of the policy manual for every company. I wish I had written this one myself!”

Mike Stewart, President
SoundPages, Inc.
Atlanta, Georgia
www.TheInternetAudioGuy.com
www.TheInternetVideoGuy.com

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For all the hard-working people, white collar or blue, who
bring pride, honor and dignity to a job well done.

Preface

This book equips you with the tools you need to succeed in getting a raise or promotion. It also offers something far more valuable, and it's something most books on how to get ahead in your career lack—how to stay there once you have arrived. This book provides the one thing you really need to know, which is how to be indispensable to your employer. It shows you how to get to where you want to be and how to stay there once you have arrived. Most of the principles contained within these pages are nothing more than common sense that society seems to have forgotten over the past few generations. They apply regardless of whether you're a custodian, surgeon, CEO, factory worker, or anything else.

My favorite book on leadership is *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* by John C. Maxwell.¹ The principles in this book are also irrefutable regardless of your spiritual beliefs, political convictions, gender, or age.

You've already taken the first step toward becoming indispensable if you purchased this book for yourself. You are making an effort to increase your value to your company. This is more effort than average individuals will exert and it is why they will remain average. If your manager gave you this book, this may be the greatest career opportunity you'll ever have. He or she is handing you your future on a silver platter and all you have to do is take it. If a family member or friend gave this to you, he or she obviously wants you to succeed. I hope you'll show your appreciation for the concern for your success by taking advantage of the incredible career-changing power contained within these pages.

To do this, you'll need to understand who wrote this book. Who is Glenn Shepard and why should you take career advice from me? I'm not the pat-people-on-the-back and make-them-feel-good-about-themselves kind of author who typically writes books on this subject. I come to the field of career coaching from a unique perspective. You could say that I play both sides of the fence. I am the man who some consider to be the Grim Reaper of Employment. Through management seminars and in my last book, *How to Manage Problem Employees*,² I teach managers not to put off the decision to terminate troublemakers and poor performers who exhibit no desire to improve. Your boss may have even attended one of my seminars or read my previous books.

So why should you take career advice from someone who teaches managers how to fire employees? You should take it because I'm the most qualified person to give it. You need to understand exactly what your company wants from you in order to get what you want from your company. Professional football players and coaches study films and videos of their opponents to learn how to win. Military strategists study their enemies to learn how to win. Attorneys have an old saying, "If you can't beat 'em, hire 'em!" You've hired me to help you learn what you need to know to win at your job and in your career.

There's usually only one most valuable player (MVP) in sports. Mention "Superbowl MVP" to a football fan and listen as he or she rattles off the names of great warriors such as Terry Bradshaw, Joe Montana, or Troy Aikman. The same happens in business. In *Good to Great*,³ Jim Collins explained how companies such as Walgreen's slaughtered their competition and came to dominate their industry.

Becoming indispensable to your employer is different in three ways:

1. You don't have to compete with anyone other than yourself.
2. You don't have to achieve greatness.
3. There's no limit to how many indispensable employees a company can have.

My research for this book came from three primary sources: First, I spent countless hours talking to the managers who've attended my seminars. Second, I sent surveys to over 7,000 companies, nonprofit agencies, and government institutions, asking what makes an employee indispensable. Their responses are included throughout the book. Third, I interviewed individuals in various jobs. Some of them have sought career coaching from me while I encountered others as a customer. I found 18 qualities to be critical in order for an employee to be indispensable.

Congratulations on taking the first step toward what could easily be the biggest and best move of your career. Now take the second step by reading this book cover to cover. And here's a million dollar tip to help you get the absolute greatest results: Don't read this book in one sitting and don't read it on the weekend. Get up 30 minutes earlier than normal for the next 18 workdays of your life and read one chapter per day while you're still fresh. Then think about what you read on the way to work and implement it that day. Now, let's get to work on making you indispensable to your employer!

Acknowledgments

The most difficult part of writing a book is writing the acknowledgments. It's the last part an author writes and also the most emotional. It symbolizes the end of a project that has consumed every waking minute of every day, and even some sleeping minutes, for months. It also means the onset of a kind of postpartum separation anxiety, and it's at this point that authors are reminded of how many people contributed in so many ways. I thank the following people for helping to make this book happen. Some played large parts while others made minor contributions. Some were actively involved each step of the way, while I've never even met others. Yet, even those I've never met played such a significant part in shaping my thinking and keeping me motivated that it would be a sin not to include them. Words cannot express my gratitude to you all.

First, a very special thanks to my own highly valued employees who remain nameless at their own request. They live and breathe everything I teach in this book and make being the boss a pleasure.

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Another very special thanks to my executive editor Matthew Holt at Wiley, who first suggested this project. To Kate Lindsay, senior editorial assistant at Wiley, for keeping things flowing between Hoboken and Nashville; to Kevin Holm, senior production editor at Wiley, for doing the toughest job of all; to Nancy Land and Pam Blackmon of Publications Development Company of Texas for making me look smarter than I really am.

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To Paul Harvey in Chicago for being my personal role model for work. I can only hope that in another 40 years, I'll have half the energy, enthusiasm, and wit Mr. Harvey has today. To Rick Warren in California for his inspiration; to Robin Flynn in Ohio for her story; to T. D. Jakes in Dallas for his inspiration; to Tonya Hurston in Georgia for her story; to Thomas H. Wright of the North Carolina Office of State Personnel for his time and input; and to Tom Stanley and William Danko for revealing the truth about working hard and becoming successful in *The Millionaire Next Door*.

Finally, I must thank all the people who responded to my surveys and attend my seminars. I regret that I couldn't include every response in the book, and I hope this book reflects how much I appreciate all your feedback.

CHAPTER 1

First , Understand Why You Need to Be Indispensable

The victory of success will be half won when you learn the secret of putting out more than is expected in all that you do. Make yourself so valuable in your work that eventually you will become indispensable.

Og Mandino

The first step toward becoming indispensable is to understand what the word *indispensable* means and why it is so important to your career. One definition of indispensable is “absolutely necessary.” This is not the definition used in this book. I constantly remind managers that everyone is expendable, including themselves. No one individual employee is absolutely necessary for a company to survive. It would not be much of a company if that were the case. A real company must be able to survive even after losing key employees at the highest level. Most people hardly notice when even the most charismatic leaders and talented managers leave their posts. Rudy Giuliani was so adored by the residents of New York City that they tried to change the law so that he could remain mayor for a third

term. Even though Mayor Giuliani's successor did not have Giuliani's charisma, the lives of most New York City residents went on as usual after Giuliani's departure. The same thing happened when Jack Welch retired from General Electric (GE). He is a living legend among managers. People who hear him speak at conferences and conventions treat him like a rock star. Yet life went on as usual for most GE customers and employees after his retirement in 2001.

Another definition of indispensable is "essential," which means something is of the highest importance for achieving a specific goal. This is the definition we used in this book. The purpose of this book is to help you become of the highest importance in your company's achievement of excellence. Your company won't value employees regardless of their caliber if it is content being mediocre. A company needs employees of the highest caliber if it wishes to excel.

Contrary to reports, there's no shortage of labor in the United States today. There are over 225 million people currently in the workforce and over 7 million who are looking for a job. I've never met an employer who advertised a job opening in the newspaper and got no response. The quantity of job applicants isn't the problem; it's the quality. I meet over 10,000 managers every year who are frustrated to the point of hopelessness with the declining quality of the labor pool. There's little doubt that our work ethic is deteriorating. This outlook may be bleak for employers but it presents an incredible opportunity for you. The demand for good employees goes up as the supply goes down. This places you in control of your own destiny.

I want the company to succeed. To do that, we need to get the best people. And if the best people are outside Ford,