

Self Direction

*A session from
the Rx CD System*

Rx

Self Direction:

The internal drive to excel in a chosen career path; a desire to be "better" than you currently are, no matter how good you have already become.

Why is this skill important?

Achieving your personal and professional goals takes courage, integrity, and resiliency. You may have to take difficult or unpopular action to best serve your organization, or you may have to admit to making a serious mistake on an important project. The most successful people make well-considered decisions, do their best to implement what they believe is the best course of action, and handle any negative feedback or difficulties with grace and courage.

I'm sure you know someone who seems absolutely committed to his or her job, always seems enthusiastic about projects he or she is working on, and typically achieves extremely positive results. What is it about that person that sets him or her apart? How is he or she able to make such an impression on other people and achieve so much? Is it really as effortless as it looks?

People who are strongly Self Directed will tend to set personal goals, operate with a passion in their endeavors, be open to change, and have a strong sense of duty to their own ideals and goals. The person you thought of a few minutes ago sets him or herself apart by doing all of those things. You'd be surprised how few people have the interest in being Self Directed.

In fact, a lot of people are poorly Self Directed, and don't really see any problem with it. They may be lacking in a sense of mission and unwilling to do more than is asked of them. They may be averse to change, and they may not work up their full potential. Does this describe you? We hope not. But if it does, there ARE things you can do to get more Self Direction in your life.

If you feel energized and enthusiastic about your job, chances are you are strongly Self Directed. If you feel overwhelmed by work, incapable of meeting deadlines, and/or unable to meet personal and professional commitments satisfactorily, you may need to develop your abilities in Self Direction.

Constant change in today's workplace requires you to be decisive and self-confident. Self Direction DOES take HARD WORK, and you must be able to maintain a positive self image and low stress level as you work toward goals that have importance—both to you personally and to your company or organization. If you aren't actively pursuing the things you care about, and making a concrete difference in your organization, you may very well be left behind!

What are skills associated with Self Direction?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Self Direction:

- Has a clear sense of purpose, both related to his or her career and his or her current job.
- Has clearly defined long-term and short-term goals.
- Is rewarded by beating his or her own personal best—is most competitive with him or herself, not other people.
- Believes passionately in his or her own capabilities to improve and become better at what he or she does.
- Takes responsibility for achievements and failures, and learns from both.

How do you develop your own skills in Self Direction?

- Make long-range and short-range goals, and keep them in mind. You may experience small failures along the way, but if you keep your big picture goal in mind, you will likely find some way to achieve it!
- Give yourself credit through positive "self talk"—don't defeat yourself by being negative about your own ideas or thoughts.
- Move toward your most important goals every day, and relate your daily objectives to your bigger goals.
- Promise yourself that you will achieve goals that you set. Hold yourself accountable.
- Remember that the easiest or most efficient way to do something is not necessarily the most effective way to get things done.
- When you make mistakes, turn them into learning experiences. Once you have fixed the situation to the best of your ability, think over the mistakes you made and figure out how you could have taken better or more effective action.
- Be persistent! Find new ways to accomplish key tasks if you can't get them done in the "usual" way.
- Focus on your results. Make your actions count—don't waste energy on futile or pointless tasks.
- Don't look at problems at work as catastrophes... problems are rarely catastrophic.
- Don't panic! If you over-react about a new difficulty, it is likely you won't maintain the mental flexibility to come up with rational, creative solution to the problem.
- When facing a difficult decision, analyze different alternatives, consult with appropriate individuals within your organization, then take decisive action on whatever decision you make.
- If you make a mistake, admit it. Then work immediately to put the fire out!
- Stand up for what you believe in. If you are asked to do something you believe is unethical, "blow the whistle." Suggest alternative ways of achieving similar goals, if appropriate.

- Don't make excuses for things you haven't done—to others, or to yourself. Just do your best to achieve them as quickly as possible.
- Keep raising the bar. Don't compete with OTHER people, but with your own most recent PERSONAL BEST.
- Be tough on yourself, but don't forget to give yourself a break every now and then. You're a human being, after all.

Self Direction Activities

Activity 1: Your Skills

Begin to think constructively about yourself and how you fit in your organization. Realize that you have a unique set of skills that you contribute in the workplace. Make a list of what you see as your primary strengths. For example, "I get along well with other people," "People say I am organized," "I am comfortable talking in front of groups," or "I am a good accountant."

Next to each of your strengths, write down at least one way you can take advantage of that skill and use it more in your daily tasks. Feel confident about the items you list, and don't be afraid to practice using your skills.

I'm good at...

How can I use that skill today?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Activity 2: Removing Obstacles

Write down any goals you feel frustrated in reaching. Then, for each goal, write down what is preventing you from making progress. For each obstacle, try to think of at least two alternative methods of moving past the obstacle or overcoming it through decisive action.

Goal #1: _____

Obstacle #1: _____

Obstacle #2: _____

Ways Around Obstacle #1: _____

Ways Around Obstacle #2: _____

Goal #2: _____

Obstacle #1: _____

Obstacle #2: _____

Ways Around Obstacle #1: _____

Ways Around Obstacle #2: _____

Goal #3: _____

Obstacle #1: _____

Obstacle #2: _____

Ways Around Obstacle #1: _____

Ways Around Obstacle #2: _____

Activity 3: Taking Charge

Think about a recent occasion at work that seemed like a crisis, in which you and others were panicked about resolving a difficult issue. How was the situation handled? Who took charge? In retrospect, how could YOU have taken charge of the situation? What could you have done with the skills you have to improve the situation?

Activity 4: Your Own Personal Best

Make a list of six valuable goals you accomplished in the past year.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Now, make a plan to "one up" yourself. For each of the six items you listed above, list another, better, higher goal for the next year!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____