

LOYALTY

What is loyalty?

Loyalty refers to the consistent demonstration of the ability to stick with a project, or supplier, or client, or company and be dedicated to maintaining strong and lasting relationships.

Why is it important to be loyal?

Loyalty is often considered to be an outdated quality or attribute given the portability and transferability of most things in our modern world. Most people, however, like it when other people are loyal to them as it makes them feel valued and cared for so it is very worth examination.

Being loyal means you are a person that demonstrates persistence and dedication to whatever or whoever you are associated with. One way it could be defined is that loyalty is an unswerving allegiance and faithfulness to a person, cause, ideal, customer, institution or product. Another definition could be that it is a willingness to make a conscious personal investment to strengthen a relationship. Hence loyalty underpins the relationships you form within your life be they personal or professional. Loyalty is one of those hidden attributes that gets conveyed and noticed without you realising it.

There are a number of well known types of loyalty such as:

- Friendship
- Parent/child relationships
- Patriotism
- Political party affiliations
- Allegiances to a particular sporting club or social group
- Organisational affinity programs such as frequent flyers

Loyalty often sees you aligned or associated with particular people, entities or causes depending on how well known you are and how you promote the key allegiances you may have formed. One of the obvious ways is to talk about them with people that you encounter.

A key point to note about loyalty is that who and what you align yourself with is a reflection of your values conveying your priorities and what you care about.

Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of loyalty?

One of the key points to be aware of here is that there is a difference between loyalty and longevity and between loyalty and inertia.

Let's say, for example, that you have eaten at a particular restaurant every Friday night for the last 5 years. This could be interpreted as a sign of loyalty. However if you go there simply for convenience and yet you are not happy with the food they serve or the environment, and you complain to anyone who will listen as to how bad it is, then it is more about habit and longevity than loyalty. It

might well be considered as inertia in that even though you are not happy about the situation you are not taking any action to rectify it or find an alternative.

If, however, you have been going to the same restaurant for five years because you love the meals they offer and the general ambiance of the venue, and you are always telling your friends how good it is, that would be a sign of loyalty.

While the concept of loyalty is often considered as positive, who the loyalty is directed towards might be a questionable choice. One of the pitfalls of loyalty is when it's blind loyalty i.e. to something or someone that isn't worthy of loyalty - in which case one isn't making a responsible, adult, informed choice. In other words, loyalty without discernment is not a positive attribute. Hence the character or qualities of the parties or causes one is considering being loyal to need careful consideration when forming loyalty alliances. The outcome of that consideration boils down to being a personal decision based on one's values. A mother's love, devotion and protection of her child is a good example of loyalty and has all the positive attributes associated with healthy loyalty.

Another way we can slip up in the area of loyalty is when we enter the territory of "loyalty for loyalty's sake". For example, is letting go of a vendor being disloyal? If we're not getting the service we negotiated for, then letting go of the provider for that reason would be justified as we are being loyal to your own needs. In this example, loyalty could also mean the dedication to put in reasonable efforts to see if you can make the vendor work, however, only the appropriate amount of effort that "loyalty" would suggest. If the relationship isn't going to work, then loyalty is no longer an issue because if you stuck around, your loyalty would actually be to poor service.

Evaluate your own perspective on loyalty

- How do you perceive loyalty? In order to answer this question take the time to answer the questions listed below.
 - How do you demonstrate loyalty?
 - What factors influence your loyalty and whether you would recommend a product, service or individual to someone else?
 - How important do you consider loyalty to be in your day-to-day life?
Rate this by using a scale of 0 – 10 where 0 = no significance whatsoever and 10 = crucial to my day to day activities?
- What do you consider to be the implications of disloyalty?
 - How do you define disloyalty?
 - What factors help you determine if someone or something is being disloyal?
 - How has disloyalty affected you and what did you do about it?
- Think of someone you know who has exceptional standards of loyalty. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 10, what would you be)?
- Think of someone you know who has acceptable standards of loyalty. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 5, what would you be)?

- Think of the least loyal person you have come across. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 1, what would you be)?

Improve your degree of loyalty

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Notice how it makes you feel when you experience disloyalty. Notice what specific behaviours and actions caused you the experience of disloyalty. Allow these distinctions to provide behavioural guidance and let your insights add motivation and inspiration for you to commit to becoming exceptional in your own level of loyalty.
- Draw on your experiences of both disloyalty and loyalty and use this material to draw up a list of actions and behaviours that, for you, constitute loyalty. Then focus on one of these actions or behaviours at a time and practise it until it feels like a natural part of your repertoire.
- Seek feedback from 2 friends and two colleagues about how they perceive you in relation to loyalty, providing them with a definition, so that the assessment is valid. Honesty is important, so create a very safe environment to seek this feedback and tell them you welcome constructive comments. Ask yourself: are there some people in business that I am more loyal to than others? If so, what is different between those I find loyalty easy with and those with whom I find being loyal is a struggle?
- Document how many recommendations you have made during a week as a demonstration of your loyalty. What caused you to mention the particular organisation or person? How was this recommendation received? What benefit did it provide you by making this recommendation?

Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of loyalty, the following resources may be worth considering. Most of the resources on loyalty specifically relate to customer or employee loyalty as opposed to personal loyalty. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources. The list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships by George P. Fletcher
- The Loyalty Effect by Fred Reichheld
- The First Virtue: Loyalty (an article from Executive Suite Coaching website.) See: <http://www.tiltcoaches.com/us/the-transcendent-leader/50-the-first-virtue-loyalty.html>

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This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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