

## RELIABILITY

### What is reliability?

**Reliability (similar to dependability) refers to the consistent demonstration of the ability to be counted on to do what you say you will do – when you say you will do it.**

### Why is it important to be reliable?

Being reliable means you can be depended upon in a given situation. People can have absolute confidence that you will come through for them in any situation or circumstance that you might encounter. Being reliable is a way of demonstrating that you value the commitments you make to others. People who are reliable ensure that when they make a promise, they take every action to be sure they keep that promise. It is a tangible way to demonstrate respect for others as a result of the actions you take either with them or for them.

Reliability can be considered to be a measure of performance. People judge how you perform based on how reliable you are perceived to be. It is a measurement that occurs by observation rather than something that has a quantifiable value therefore making it a more intangible assessment measure.

Unreliability can lead to a loss of business and also to a loss of personal credibility that will adversely impact your professional reputation. Most people have a lot going on in their lives. Knowing they have people supporting them who are reliable and dependable helps to release pressure and reduces the need for micromanagement. If I engage a tradesperson to perform a task for me, such as a plumber to fix a blocked drain, I want to know I can rely on them to turn up when they say they will and to perform their task as agreed. If they need to come back, or arrange for parts, I like to be confident that I can rely on them to organise this in a fashion that best suits my needs (the consumer) at the time. If this is the case, I would be more likely to refer them to my friends or colleagues should they need a plumber, than if they demonstrated erratic and unreliable behaviour.

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

In contemporary society, our daily lives are hectic – so much so that social commentators have coined the term '*time famine*' to describe the current conditions under which we live. Often we can become so busy that it is easy to forget our commitments, not follow up quickly on enquiries and forget to send out information that was requested. Further, because we have become so used to others not meeting their commitments, it is easy to lower our own standards and slip into poor habits of running behind schedule, not completing jobs to our highest abilities, and letting others pick up the slack.

Some people lack **organisational skills and systems** to ensure they capture every opportunity to respond. They have good intentions, but no structure to fulfilling those intentions.

Others make **assumptions**. In the example of the plumber he could be very busy with a number of jobs on the go at any one time. The plumber may assume I know that and so not take the time to explain to me why a certain commitment or deadline has not been met. This often happens in

business where a third party's input is needed before a service provider can get back to a client with a quote, report or to complete a particular activity. Rather than following up with the client to explain the delay, and to reassure them they have not been forgotten, the service provider will assume that the client will know they are busy at the moment and know that they will get back to the client when they can. The net result of this behaviour is that the supplier creates an experience of poor service provision for the client, which is both unnecessary, and bad for business.

### Characteristics of a reliable person

- Can be relied upon to follow up and follow through
- Finish what they start and communicate if things are not going as foreseen or planned
- Are clear in what they commit to and are capable of
- Less likely to make promises they cannot keep
- Understand the value of integrity and professionalism as commodities and act with these values in place

### Evaluate your own reliability and dependability

- After reading this document write down your own definition of reliability. What was your definition of reliability before reading this document? What has changed and what brought about that change in interpretation and definition?
- Think about someone you would assess as reliable. How would you describe them? What attributes and qualities do they have that you believe makes them reliable? What do you think they could add in order to be more reliable?
- Think about the person you have identified as reliable. Review the qualities you outlined them having. Which of these attributes do you have? How would you rate your reliability competency vs. the person you have identified as reliable? You could use the following ratings system.

1	=	No difference
3	=	Moderate difference
5	=	Significant difference

With the differences you have identified what would it take for you to move up one more point eg: from a 4 to a 3. What would you need to do? What resources or assistance would you need to make that possible? If you were at a 1 there is no difference what might you be able to do to help maintain your current standards ie: What might you need to do more of?

What might you need to do less of?

- Consider your own level of reliability and answer the following questions:
  - What is the positive impact if I stay the same?
  - What is the negative impact if I stay the same?
  - What is the positive impact if I change?

- What is the negative impact if I change?

### Improve your reliability

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 know you can rely on others. Notice the specific behaviours they do that create you to experience them as reliable. Allow these insight to provide behavioural guidance, added motivation and inspiration for you to commit to becoming exceptional in your own level of reliability.
- Notice how it makes you feel when you know you cannot rely on others. Notice the specific behaviours they do that create you to experience them as unreliable. What impact does this have on the actions you are likely to take? How does it make you feel?
- How do you know you have been reliable? What indicators do you look for that this is the case?
- Consider the benefits of keeping a log or some other appropriate method to track your success in keeping to your personally defined reliability standard. Remember to celebrate your successes no matter how small they might be.
- When committing to others to get back to them with further information, products or services, make it a habit to always ask when they would like you to respond back to them. Then, make a reminder note in your schedule to ensure you at least meet their expectations, if not exceed them, thus acting with reliability.
- When circumstances come between you and your commitments, ensure that you make contact with the other party as quickly as possible and be honest about the reasons for you tardiness. Be genuine and ask for understanding.
- Watch out for the three slip up areas identified earlier in this document:
  - Beware of allowing 'time famine' thinking to affect your reliability – if you are experiencing time famine then it may be that you need to revisit the volume of commitments you make.
  - Beware of making assumptions about the expectations and needs of others – check in with the people in question to confirm their needs and expectations.
  - Take the time and energy to set up systems and processes that help you track and stick to your commitments

### Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of reliability, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. 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.

- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Stephen R. Covey
- The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit from Effectiveness to Greatness – Stephen R. Covey

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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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