

Business

THE HOUR

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Are you the Weakest Link? Take these steps to stay in the game

By Annette Richmond

Although it's no longer part of our local programming, you probably remember *The Weakest Link*. Hosted by a witty, redheaded, Brit, the game show was quite entertaining. For the more discerning, it also provided some lessons for the workplace.

On *The Weakest Link*, contestants were placed in the in the tricky situation of working together for mutual gain while competing for the grand prize. Sound familiar? Think about your office. You and your colleagues are working together, often in teams. At the same time, you're competing for raises and recognition. When the boss moves on only one person gets the promotion.

Are you showcasing your talents? Or are you sabotaging your career? Take these four steps to stay in the game:

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1. Adjust Your Attitude – Are you cheerful, friendly and optimistic? Or is your coffee mug emblazoned with *Take this Job and Shove It* in big red letters? Everyone has bad days. But, if you're consistently grumpy and pessimistic you're hurting more than yourself. Like a dark cloud, a bad attitude can put a damper on the entire office. If you really hate your job or your boss that much, leave.
2. Be prepared – As you already know, meetings can be a great way to share ideas and information. But, when they're

unorganized meetings can become a big waste of time. The best way to avoid this pitfall is to be prepared. Spend some time organizing your thoughts before the weekly staff meeting. Bring notes or an outline to help you stay focused. If you're facilitating the meeting, send everyone an agenda. This will give everyone the opportunity to get ready.

3. Collaborate – The ability to collaborate, to be an effective member of the team is a great asset in any position. But, working together means more than just getting along. It means respecting the suggestions and ideas of others, supporting team objectives and giving credit where credit is due. Sometimes it means going along with what's best for the group instead of

pushing for what's best for you.

4. Pitch In – Extra work has a way of magically appearing in every workplace. Sometimes it takes the form of reorganizing the antiquated filing system. Other times it means taking on additional tasks while a co-worker is on maternity leave. Whatever your situation, you can view added responsibilities as burdens or opportunities.

Before you make up your mind, consider what taking on that extra project can do for your career. Will you be learning and using new skills? Can this be turned into an opportunity to showcase your talents? Smart people think of ways to use added responsibilities to their advantage.

Someone once told me that a business is like a baseball team. He went on to say that employees have a lot in common with the players. Some players can play well in any position. Others can't perform no matter where you put them. Which group do you fall into? In today's uncertain economy, maybe it's time to start thinking about just how valuable you are.

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