



WORK & CAREER

Perform at Your Best at Any Job

The habits that make people trusted, promoted, and hard to replace, in any role, at any level.

A NOTE FROM OUR TEAM

We've worked alongside a lot of people over the years, and the ones who rose fastest were rarely the most talented. They were the most dependable. They did what they said, owned their mistakes, and kept getting better. None of that requires a title. You can start all of it tomorrow morning.

— The Auto Advocate Team

Every workplace runs on trust. Managers give the best projects, the best schedules, and the best raises to the people they never have to worry about. The good news: trust isn't a personality trait. It's a set of habits you can practice and measure. This guide breaks them into five areas, then gives you a scorecard and a weekly planning page to put them to work.

Reliability

Do what you said, when you said, the way you said.

Ownership

Treat problems in your lane as yours to solve.

Communication

Update people before they have to ask.

Learning

Get a little better at your craft every single week.

Focus

Protect time for your most important work, and finish it.

Start here

Rate yourself on the scorecard (Section 7), then plan your week (Section 10).

1 Be Reliable: The Foundation of Everything

Reliability is boring, and that's why it's rare. It's the person who shows up five minutes early, hits the deadline without a reminder, and whose "I'll handle it" actually means it's handled.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Arrive early and ready, not just on time | ☐ If a date will slip, say so early, not at the deadline |
| ☐ Write every commitment down the moment you make it | ☐ Finish the last 10% (the follow-up, the cleanup) |
| ☐ Only promise dates you can actually hit | ☐ Keep small promises as seriously as big ones |

2 Take Ownership When Things Go Wrong

Mistakes don't define your reputation. How you handle them does. When something breaks on your watch, run this four-step play:

- 1 Own it fast.** "That was my miss." No excuses, no blaming the system or a coworker.
- 2 Fix the immediate problem.** Make the customer, coworker, or project whole first.
- 3 Prevent the repeat.** Find the root cause and change one habit, checklist, or process.
- 4 Close the loop.** Tell your manager what happened, what you fixed, and what changes going forward.

3 Communicate Like a Professional

Most workplace friction comes from silence, not disagreement. A manager who has to chase you for updates starts to wonder what else they'd have to chase. Use this simple status format in emails, texts, and stand-ups:

THE THREE-LINE UPDATE

Done: what's finished since last time.

Next: what you're working on now and when it'll be done.

Blocked: anything you need from someone else, and from whom.

HABITS THAT BUILD TRUST

- Lead with the answer, then give the detail
- Repeat back instructions to confirm you heard them right
- Bring a suggested solution along with every problem
- Answer messages the same day, even if it's "Got it, I'll have this by Thursday"

4 Keep Learning on Purpose

The people who stay valuable are the ones who keep getting better at the work, not just doing more of it. Pick two or three skills that would make the biggest difference in your role and give each a plan.

SKILL I WANT TO BUILD	WHY IT MATTERS IN MY JOB	HOW I'LL LEARN IT	TARGET DATE

5 Protect Your Focus: Time-Blocking & Deep Work

Jumping between email, chat, and real work feels productive, but research summarized by the American Psychological Association shows that switching between tasks carries a measurable time cost, and those small costs add up with every back-and-forth switch. The fix is to give your most important work a protected block on the calendar.

- 1 **Name your one most important task** for tomorrow before you leave today.
- 2 **Block 60 to 90 minutes** for it, ideally when your energy is highest. Treat it like a meeting with your boss.
- 3 **Close the doors.** Silence notifications, close email, and put your phone out of reach.
- 4 **Batch the shallow work.** Answer email and messages in two or three set windows instead of all day.
- 5 **Leave a buffer.** Keep a little open time each day for the urgent things that always show up.

FROM OUR SIDE OF THE DESK

Our team has spent years managing people on the dealership side of the business. The ones we trusted most weren't always the best talkers. They were the ones who confirmed appointments the day before, followed up when they said they would, and told us about a problem before a customer did. Do that consistently, and you become the person everyone wants on their team.

6 How to Handle Feedback (Even When It Stings)

Feedback is free coaching. The way you receive it decides whether people keep giving it to you.

- 1 **Listen all the way through.** Don't interrupt or defend.
- 2 **Say thank you.** Giving feedback is uncomfortable for most people.
- 3 **Ask one clarifying question.** "Can you give me an example?"
- 4 **Decide what you'll change.** Pick one concrete action.
- 5 **Follow up in two weeks.** "I've been working on this. How am I doing?"

WATCH OUT

Defending yourself in the moment teaches people to stop telling you the truth. If the feedback feels unfair, say "Let me think about that," and come back with a calm response after 24 hours. Most of the time, you'll find at least one useful piece in it.

7 Your Monthly Self-Review Scorecard

Rate yourself honestly once a month: 1 = rarely, 5 = consistently. Circle the number, total your score, then pick your lowest item as next month's focus.

HABIT	RATING	HABIT	RATING
I arrive early and ready to work	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I give updates before I'm asked	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
I hit my deadlines without reminders	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I bring solutions with problems	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
I own my mistakes quickly	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I protect time for deep work	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
I finish the last 10% of every task	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I spent time learning this month	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
I receive feedback without defending	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I help teammates without being asked	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
I keep a positive, steady attitude	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I plan my week before it starts	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Total score (out of 60)			

Strongest habit this month _____ Next month's focus _____

8 Know Exactly What "Great" Looks Like

You can't hit a target nobody showed you. Ask your manager these questions in your next one-on-one, write down the answers, and revisit them every quarter.

What does great performance look like in my role? _____

How will my work be measured, and how often? _____

What's the most important thing I should focus on in the next 90 days? _____

How do you prefer to get updates from me (and how often)? _____

What's one thing I could do better starting this week? _____

9 Your Daily Start & Shutdown Routine

Ten minutes at each end of the day keeps your work from running you. Bookend every workday the same way and nothing slips through the cracks.

Start of day (10 minutes)

- ☐ Review today's calendar and deadlines
- ☐ Confirm your one most important task
- ☐ Check your commitments list for anything due
- ☐ Send any updates people are waiting on
- ☐ Start your deep-work block before opening email

End of day (10 minutes)

- ☐ Capture every loose task on your list
- ☐ Reply to anything that needs a same-day answer
- ☐ Pick tomorrow's one most important task
- ☐ Clear your desk and close open tabs
- ☐ Note one win from today

WHY THIS WORKS

Performance isn't one big moment. It's a few small habits repeated every day until people stop wondering whether you'll deliver and start assuming you will. That reputation follows you into every job, every promotion conversation, and every reference call.

10 Weekly Planning Page

Spend 20 minutes before the week starts. Copy this page and use it every week. New habits take time to stick: in a well-known University College London study, it took participants an average of 66 days to make a new behavior automatic, and missing a single day didn't derail the process. Keep showing up.

Week of _____ My one big goal this week _____

TOP 3 OUTCOMES I WILL DELIVER THIS WEEK

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TIME-BLOCK PLAN

DAY	DEEP-WORK BLOCK (TIME + TASK)	KEY MEETINGS / DEADLINES	FOLLOW-UPS I OWE
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			

COMMITMENTS I MADE TO OTHERS

ONE SKILL I'LL PRACTICE THIS WEEK

END-OF-WEEK REVIEW

Wins this week _____ What I'll do differently _____

☐ I hit my top 3 outcomes

☐ I kept every commitment, or renegotiated early

☐ I protected at least three deep-work blocks

☐ I'm planning next week before Monday

BRING THE SAME DISCIPLINE TO YOUR NEXT BIG PURCHASE

You prepare for work. Prepare for the dealership, too.

The habits on these pages, doing your homework, protecting your focus, and asking for clarity, are exactly what wins at a car dealership. With the Buyer Brief, we hand you the research: trade valuation, rebates and incentives, incentivized rates, and offer support, so you walk in prepared instead of hoping for the best.

Buyer Brief \$99

(405) 761-3390 • autoadvocacy.net

THE DEALERSHIP HAS EXPERTS. NOW YOU DO, TOO.

SOURCES

American Psychological Association (APA), Multitasking: Switching costs: apa.org/topics/research/multitasking

University College London (UCL) News, How long does it take to form a habit? (Lally et al.): ucl.ac.uk/news/2009/aug/how-long-does-it-take-form-habit

This guide is an educational personal-development tool, not career, legal, or HR advice. Follow your employer's policies and your manager's direction for your specific role.