

## Chapter One

# The Golden Ticket

Over the course of my career my position was eliminated or restructured six times. Yet with all of the restructures I came through with a new job every time and all but one a promotion. How did I do it? What was my secret? There are several but one I will elaborate here:

I had a Golden Ticket.

What is a Golden Ticket? A Golden Ticket allows freedom in the job. A Golden Ticket gives more opportunities. A Golden Ticket creates a safer haven in restructures and downsizing or at least gives a leg up.

## Receiving a Golden Ticket

Before becoming eligible for a Golden Ticket the basics of the job must be covered: Consistently arrive at work on time and complete the job; get along with others but don't socialize to the point it hurts productivity; be professional. All of these still do not earn a Golden Ticket. So, in a nutshell, the only way to get a Golden Ticket is....

Check off the boss's boxes first.

No matter how trivial the request might seem, no matter if it does not appear to be the right use of time, if there is no idea why the request has been made, and even if it means your list goes unfinished that day, it doesn't matter. Check off the boss's boxes first. Because when their directives have been satisfied trust is built and freedom is given in return.

6

Realistic  
Estimations:  
Unrealistic  
Deadlines

**Caution:** There are times when a request will not allow a critical project to be complete. In these cases, discuss the request with the boss and explain what will happen if their request is completed. Many times they are not aware of everything in process and most times will adjust their request or bring in additional resources. It is important not to question everything. Common sense must determine if the request is unreasonable.

When I was a buyer for flooring I worked with a senior merchant. The senior merchant was much more knowledgeable than I, had much more experience, contacts, you name it. He was an expert in his field. I was new to the position and was learning tremendously as I went along. We both reported to the same boss. There were always some random projects requested of us. They didn't all make sense, but I ensured mine were always completed and turned in on time, if not early. My partner did not. I had no issues with my boss what-so-ever and was able to create all sorts of programs as a result. I was not micromanaged but instead given pretty much free reign, even being new to the position. Interestingly enough, my partner was constantly at odds with our

boss. He did not agree with the direction given, or the project, or the achievables, or the trivial tasks. I did not know who was right, I did not possess enough knowledge at the time to make an informed opinion, but I did know, that once I completed my boss's requests, I was given freedom. I received: a Golden Ticket.

The flip side of a Golden Ticket is frustration on both sides. The boss does not understand why the subordinate will not do what is requested. The subordinate is frustrated because all their hard work goes unnoticed.

Early in his career, my husband was working for a big box retailer. He has always had an eye for how to position product for great sell-through, and would adjust product locations creatively. There was, of course, a list of items to do from his boss and he would get most of them executed with a few taking a little longer to finish while he completed some of his own ideas. Every time, his boss saw nothing of my husband's efforts, but instead honed in on only the items he did not execute. My husband was frustrated. Sales would be moving up in the areas he adjusted, but he received absolutely no credit for his effective entrepreneurialism. One day his boss, out of frustration, said something like: "Damn it, Tipper, why can't you just do what I ask you to do?!" An "Ah Ha" moment occurred. My husband realized his boss could not see past the unaccomplished request. Going forward, my husband checked off his boss's list first, and then moved on to creative merchandising.

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Overnight, he became a hero. Nothing had changed except the order in which the tasks were accomplished. By doing what his boss asked first he received a Golden Ticket.

## Golden Ticket Process

Now as simple as it sounds, there is some fine print:

### **A Sense of Urgency**

- ✓ Complete right away
- ✓ If not feasible, complete prior to the deadline

### **Follow Up / Communication**

- ✓ Follow up prior to being asked for a progress update
- ✓ Always communicate when a task or directive has been completed

### **Outcome / Additional Info**

- ✓ Give the boss the outcome of the project
- ✓ Keep the boss informed of any additional information learned along the way

### **Keep Communication Short and to the Point**

- ✓ Update in outline form or quick bullet points
- ✓ Ideally in email or other trackable format

## Losing a Golden Ticket

A Golden ticket can also be lost. The moment the boss's boxes stop being checked off, the ticket starts being handed back. And pretty soon, it is lost. Then the work begins all over again to earn it back.

What happens when inundated with requests and there is no possible way to complete all in the time allotted? Communicate with the boss. Have the list of tasks, explain how long each will take, and ask for their priorities. Let them make the decision on how to rank the tasks and assign new complete times, or rearrange resources so that all can still be completed. At the same time as bringing problems, have a solution in mind so if they do not have a ready answer, a suggestion is ready.



Be a Solver

## Benefits

When restructures occur, or downsizing, or even promotions are available, the ticket holder comes to the forefront because they are reliable. They have the reputation of getting things done because the boss's requests have been accomplished. They are highly regarded. During succession planning meetings their name rises to the top. They are asked to join teams and gain exposure to more people. They have more opportunities, especially during restructures or when promotions become available. It is not a guarantee,

but having a Golden Ticket definitely creates an advantage.



## The Fine Print Exercise

Let's see if a Golden Ticket was handed out last week. Think back and list every task/project/request from the boss and write it down along with the date requested, and the due date if one was given. Now answer the following questions:

- ✓ Was it completed?
- ✓ Date complete – was it on time? Was it early?
- ✓ Who followed up first?
- ✓ Did you give any anecdotal information?
- ✓ How did you follow up? What was the communication vehicle?
- ✓ Communication length – how long did it take the follow up communication to occur?

Golden Ticket Review			
Week of: _____			
Date Rec'd	Task/Project		
<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>		
Due Date/Time	Complete?	Date/Time	Diff
<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	Y   N	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Follow Up?	Comm Vehicle	Comm length?	Anecdotal info?
Me   Boss	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Notes	<input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>		



## Future Tracking

Now do the same exercise but in real time, starting next week. Fill out the form (or create a note on your smart device or in a notepad) throughout this next week. Write every request down and monitor how quickly each is accomplished. It is amazing how quickly behavior can change when it is monitored.



## Follow Up

Create a follow up mechanism to ensure the boss's requests are accomplished first. If in an office environment use a calendar or a To Do list, or use a smart phone to capture. If electronic devices are not allowed on the job a simple notepad can work well. The important point is to create a process so requests never fall through the cracks.



## Summary

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One of the quickest ways to earn freedom and job security is to check the boss's boxes first, and then complete your own. While doing so, keep these rules in mind to earn a Golden Ticket.

- ✓ Do the job well
- ✓ Have a sense of urgency
- ✓ Be the first to follow up
- ✓ Communicate the outcome and any pertinent additional information
- ✓ Keep communication short and to the point