**Professionalism**

Understanding professionalism—the skills and attitudes expected of an individual in a professional setting—is critical to preparing yourself for success at work. Three important aspects of professionalism include:

* Communication
* Conflict Resolution
* Work Attitudes

Review the following sections to check your understanding of appropriate communication, conflict resolution, and attitudes for work. Finally, complete the ***Professionalism Self-Assessment*** and ***Checklist*** to check your readiness for the workplace.

**Communication**

Effective communication is a soft skill that demonstrates the ability to actively listen and clearly express one’s thoughts. When people communicate effectively on the job, they are more likely to build positive relationships with co-workers and supervisors.

Activity:

Read the following three scenarios involving an employee communicating with a manager. Determine if the scenario is an example of effective or ineffective communication:

* An employee needs to request a day off for a family vacation.
	+ **Manager**: “One of our workplace policies is to request days off at least two weeks in advance.”
	+ **Employee**: “Well I can’t work next week so I need you to give me those days off.”

In this example, is this employee using effective or ineffective communication? Explain:

* An employee can’t remember how to do a job task, so they need to ask a manager for help.
	+ **Employee**: “I’m not sure I remember how to sort these documents. Do you have time to show me?”
	+ **Manager**: “Absolutely! I appreciate you asking me to make sure you’re doing it correctly.”

In this example, is this employee using effective or ineffective communication? Explain:

* An employee receives a task from a manager at work.
	+ **Manager**: “I really like how organized you are with stocking shelves. After you’re done, it would be helpful if you could also sweep the floors.”
	+ **Employee**: “I was hired to stock shelves. Stocking shelves is the only task I want to do.”

In this example, is this employee using effective or ineffective communication? Explain:

Reflection Questions:

1. What were some similarities between the scenarios when employees used effective communication?
2. What do you think may happen when employees don’t communicate effectively with their supervisors?
3. What are some examples of ways you may use effective communication on the job?

**Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution includes discussion around how conflicts may arise in the workplace and how to navigate conflict resolution professionally. When people can engage in effective conflict resolution, they are more likely to maintain their employment.

Activity:

Read the following three scenarios that involve an employee facing a conflict in the workplace. Determine how to professionally work through the conflict:

* Your co-worker at a restaurant does not help you perform closing duties, like cleaning the tables. How would you respond to this situation in a professional way?

* You are working at a crowded restaurant and a customer is upset that their food order is taking a long time. How would you respond to this situation in a professional way?

* Your boss scheduled you to work on a day that you requested off. How would you respond to this situation in a professional way?

Reflection Questions:

1. What social skills can you use to resolve conflict in the workplace?
2. If a conflict is never resolved, how could relationships with a coworker or customer be impacted?

**Work Attitudes**

As an employee, your attitude at work contributes to your work environment and how you get along with your co-workers and supervisors. A positive attitude can improve morale and increase productivity for all.

Activity:

Read the following scenario. Determine whether the attitude is appropriate or not and how a different response could work better.

* Justin is a stock clerk at a local grocery store. Justin does only what he is told to do, no more and no less.
	+ *Question: Does Justin have a good attitude toward work? Why or why not?*
* One day, one of Justin’s co-workers knocked over a product display. Boxes were scattered all over the floor. At the time, Justin was working close by. He ignored the scattered boxes and left his workstation to tell others what had happened.
	+ *Question: If you were the co-worker who knocked over the display, what would you have said to Justin?*
* Later the same day, Justin was stocking shelves. The item he was stocking belonged in another part of the store. A co-worker trying to help Justin told him he was making a mistake. Justin insisted he was right and started an argument.
	+ *Question: Was it right for Justin to argue with his co-worker? What could Justin have done differently?*
* Before Justin went home that night, he overheard a personal conversation between two coworkers and the supervisor. The next morning, Justin told everyone what he had heard. The entire grocery store was soon talking about what Justin told them.
	+ *Question: Was Justin correct in discussing what he had overheard? Explain.*
* When Justin’s supervisor found out what had happened, she called Justin into her office for a conference.
	+ *Question: What do you think was said to Justin?*

Reflection Questions:

1. If you were one of Justin’s co-workers, what advice would you give him?
2. If you were Justin’s supervisor, what could you do to help him become a better employee?

**Professionalism Self-Assessment**

*Complete the following self-assessment to gauge your attitudes and behaviors at work. Consider: which of these professional behaviors are easy for you? Which need more practice? If helpful, discuss your answers with your FaDSS Specialist.*

1. I get to work on time. If I am going to be late, I call and let my boss know.

Always Sometimes Never

2. I rarely miss work. If I am going to miss work, I let my boss know ahead of time (or I call if I am sick).

Always Sometimes Never

3. I work as hard as I can.

Always Sometimes Never

4. I only use my personal phone at work when I am on breaks and in designated areas.

Always Sometimes Never

5. I do my work as I am told. If I am unable to do something or have questions, I ask my supervisor or co-workers.

Always Sometimes Never

6. I am friendly on the job.

Always Sometimes Never

7. I use appropriate language that is respectful and avoid using profanity.

Always Sometimes Never

8. When people get under my skin at work, I let it go and focus on completing my work so it doesn’t interfere with my job.

Always Sometimes Never

9. When I make a mistake or do something wrong, I take accountability for it instead of making excuses and try my best to fix it or make it right.

Always Sometimes Never

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | In Place | Partially In Place | Not in Place |
| **Getting to work on time***I have a plan to get to work. If I am late or absent, I know how to notify my supervisor.* |  |  |  |
| **Being respectful***I treat others in the same way I would like to be treated. I use positive, appropriate language.* |  |  |  |
| **Being helpful***I offer to help others. I don’t wait to be asked to do something that is part of my job.*  |  |  |  |
| **Dressing like a professional***I have the clothes I need for work; they are clean and in good repair.* |  |  |  |
| **Presenting like a professional***My hair and body are clean and without odor, my hair (including facial hair) is groomed, and my nails are trimmed and clean.* |  |  |  |

**Professionalism Checklist**

*Consider your attitude and approach toward the following areas of professionalism. Which areas are you confident in and prepared for (“In Place”), which areas need a little more work (“Partially in Place”), and which areas need significant support in order for you to be successful at work?*

Reflection Questions:

1. Based on your responses above, what are some things you can do to be more professional in the workplace?
2. What support do you need to be successful?