

Professionalism Shows

Directions Read the information about professionalism. Then read the situations and suggest a way for each employee to be more professional. Write your suggestions on a separate piece of paper.

What Is Professionalism?

Professionalism is hard to define, but employers and customers know it when they see it. Professionalism does *not* mean having a college degree or doing everything perfectly. It *does* mean doing what is right in the workplace. This includes following high standards in relating to others and acting in ways that reflect well on the business.

Professionalism shows when people...

- Are trustworthy; do what they say they will do.
- Behave with courtesy and respect at all times.
- Treat people fairly.
- Act in the best interests of the employer and the customer.
- See the big picture; show interest beyond own assignments.
- Communicate clearly and directly.
- Dress and groom appropriately for the job.
- Use appropriate language and gestures.
- Keep emotions under control.
- Accept direction, correction, and instruction.
- Admit and learn from mistakes; do not shift blame to others.
- Make a sincere effort; go beyond the minimum required; do their best.

Analyzing Professionalism

1. Veronica is waiting tables at a restaurant. She accidentally knocks over a customer's water glass. Water spills onto the table and onto the customer's lap. Veronica shrieks, puts her hands to her face, and runs to the restroom in tears.
2. Aaron has been hired to help at a service station. He assists customers who need help pumping gas or adding oil. One day the manager asks him to help move a heavy display case to a different wall. Aaron says, "I'm a gas station attendant, not a furniture mover."
3. Sharon is a clerk in a drugstore. A customer comes up to the counter while she is talking on the phone with a friend. Sharon takes the item from the customer and rings up the purchase while still talking on the phone to her friend.
4. Phillip finds neckties uncomfortable. Although all the other men in his workplace wear ties, he does not know of any company dress code. Assuming dress is optional, he wears T-shirts or sweatshirts with pictures of rock bands.

(Continued on next page)

Professionalism Shows (Continued)**Activity 14**

5. Marta works in customer service. A customer complains that an appliance is not working properly. Marta says, “You get what you pay for. When you buy cheap, you can not expect it to work very long.”
6. Rick sells electronic equipment for a big electronics store. He qualifies for an employee discount on purchases for personal use only. He passes the discount on to his friends by buying the items they want at the employee price.
7. Melody types correspondence for three partners in a law firm. She types assignments first for the partner she likes best. She takes a long time to start an assignment for the one she likes least.
8. David cleans tables at a fast-food restaurant. As soon as the clock indicates closing time, David leaves, whether or not some tables are still dirty.
9. Heather does not realize Laura is behind her. When Laura speaks, Heather is startled and drops the glass object she is holding, breaking it. Heather turns and shouts, “Look what you made me do!”
10. Jeff hears coworkers mocking their boss. Even though he likes the boss, he joins in the mocking because he wants his coworkers to like him.
11. Yvonne works at the drive-up window of a restaurant. She never smiles at customers. When they smile or say something pleasant to her, she says nothing in return.
12. Antonio works in a large building supply store. He likes to joke around with other employees. When a customer asks for help in finding something, Antonio often continues to talk and laugh loudly with an employee who is nearby.

Workplace Communication

Directions Read the common workplace mistakes below. Then work with a partner to write proper responses to the situations that follow. Write your ideas on separate paper.

Avoid These Common Workplace Mistakes

Misunderstandings and conflicts often arise in the workplace because of poor communication. Good workplace communication is clear, courteous, and honest. Avoid these common mistakes in communication:

- Speaking or writing vaguely so that people cannot understand you.
- Distributing sensitive, controversial, or inappropriate messages to people by email.
- Becoming angry or defensive in response to someone's words or actions.
- Answering a question by talking around a topic without giving a direct answer.
- Giving a long, complicated explanation when the person wanted a short, simple one.
- Failing to provide people with information they need.
- Not listening carefully to directions and explanations.

Proper Responses

1. The boss cannot find a file. You were supposed to file it, but it is still on your desk. *What do you say?*
2. The boss has asked you to email all employees to announce a meeting this afternoon. *What should your email say?*
3. A customer asks what has happened to his or her refund for a returned item; the refund was supposed to be mailed last week. That information is not on your computer. *How do you respond?*
4. A coworker asks whether you can cover her shift. You have a firm family commitment at that time. *What do you say?*
5. You have learned that a project the boss is counting on will not happen on schedule. The boss does not know this and assumes everything is going forward as planned. *What do you do?*

Diversity in the Workplace

Directions When you have a job, you are likely to work with a wide variety of people. Some may be much older than you. Some may be from different cultures or countries. Some may have disabilities. Such differences are known as diversity. Find a peer or adult who is willing to talk with you about diversity in the workplace. Choose someone who is different from you in order to explore contrasting points of view. The questions you ask will depend in part on the person and the ways in which you are different. Read the questions below to help guide your conversation. After the conversation, answer the questions that follow.

Questions to Guide the Conversation

- Do you think customers and coworkers would react differently to you and me in a work setting? If so, in what ways?
- What comments, joke, and actions would we react differently too? How would we each react? Why?
- What do diverse people need to do in order to work well together?

1. What did you learn from the conversation? _____

2. How will understanding this person's viewpoint help you be a better employee someday?

3. What can you do now to strengthen your skills in working with a wide variety of people?

Getting Along with Coworkers

Directions When you have a job, keeping it may depend on your ability to get along with supervisors and coworkers. Getting along with people is similar at home and school, too. Analyze your skills at getting along by placing check marks (✓) in the appropriate columns. Then analyze what the chart says about your skills. What actions could you take to improve?

	When I interact with others, I...	Rarely or Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1	accept differences of opinion calmly.				
2	am friendly and kind.				
3	am sensitive to people's emotions.				
4	am straightforward and honest.				
5	avoid laughing at people.				
6	avoid prejudice and stereotypes.				
7	can laugh at myself.				
8	compliment people on their successes.				
9	enjoy people who are different from me.				
10	like to learn from them.				
11	express my concerns without getting angry.				
12	listen without interrupting.				
13	make eye contact, if appropriate in my culture.				
14	recognize people's right to their opinions.				
15	do not gossip.				
16	respect other religions and cultures.				
17	show a positive, cheerful attitude.				
18	show that I understand even when I disagree.				
19	sympathize when someone makes a mistake.				
20	do my share of work.				
21	take responsibility for my mistakes.				
22	use an appropriate tone of voice.				
23	use good manners.				

Handling Constructive Criticism

Directions Read the information about constructive criticism. Then with a classmate, role-play an interaction between an employee and supervisor. The employee has been careless about something that did not seem important. As a result, the company lost money. The supervisor is giving constructive criticism in the hope that it will not happen again. Switch roles and do another role-play. Then use your experience as the employee to answer the “Role-Play Analysis” questions. Write your responses on separate paper.

What Is Constructive Criticism?

Scheduled performance evaluations are a part of most jobs. At those times and in between, a supervisor may suggest ways to do a better job. This is constructive criticism, which provides opportunities to learn and improve. Unfortunately, it is natural to feel defensive when someone points out a mistake or weakness. A more useful response for employees is described in these steps:

1. Listen to the criticism without getting angry or defensive.
2. Ask questions and summarize to make sure you understand correctly.
3. Make a plan to learn from your mistakes and improve your performance.
4. Act on your plan.

Role-Play Analysis

1. How did you feel when the supervisor criticized your carelessness?
2. What did you say to show whether or not you accepted the feedback and wanted to improve? Did your body language say the same thing as your words?
3. What was the most difficult part of accepting the supervisor’s criticism?
4. Did you check to make sure you understood the criticism? How?
5. What sort of plan for improvement did you form? If you did not reach that stage during the talk with the supervisor, what sort of plan might you form after the conversation?
6. Compare notes with your role-playing partner. How does your opinion of your response compare with the “supervisor’s” opinion? Did he or she feel you responded appropriately to the constructive criticism? Explain.