

Work Ethics

What makes you special to an employer? What will give you an edge in obtaining the job of your dreams? During the quarter we will examine some of the characteristics that employers seek in their workers (DTAE). You may also find that these qualities are those you seek in the people with whom you choose to associate.

Throughout the quarter we will discuss the following topics (DTAE):

- ATTENDANCE
- CHARACTER
- TEAMWORK
- APPEARANCE
- ATTITUDE
- PRODUCTIVITY
- ORGANIZATION
- COMMUNICATION
- COOPERATION
- RESPECT

The topics and information presented are the foundation for the discussions we will have in the classroom. It is important that you read the information before class and be prepared to share your opinions with your classmates and the instructor.

ATTENDANCE: the act of being present (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Understand the Importance of Attendance
- Understand the Importance of Punctuality
- Attend Class on Time
- Leave Class on Time
- Notify Instructor in advance of Planned Absences
- Make Up Assignments Punctually

Discussion

Attendance in class is important for many reasons. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is that there are activities going on in the classroom that will help you master the objectives of the course. Attendance in class also has a more subtle importance. It demonstrates your dedication to the goal of learning the course material and being successful in attaining your goal of completing your degree or diploma. Many of you have responsibilities other than your course work. These include family and full or part time employment. Your

dedication is evident to your instructor and to others as you make the effort to attend class when your other responsibilities demand much of your time.

Class attendance is also important because it is an indicator of the behavior you will demonstrate on the job. Your attendance is important to employers. Employers are in the business of making money. Your absence costs your employer money in lost hours and production. It also affects your co-workers who must cover for you while you are out.

Closely related to attendance is punctuality – arriving on time and leaving on time. In the classroom, students who arrive late miss important information and disrupt the learning process of others as they enter the classroom after learning activities begin. In the work place, tardiness causes lost productivity for your company and dissention among your co-workers as they must cover for you.

CHARACTER: moral force; integrity; a good reputation (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Hire character.
Train skill.

Peter Schultz (as cited in Reader's Digest, 2003, p. 63)

Objectives

- Maintain honest behavior in all situations
- Be trustworthy, dependable, and reliable in meeting all job responsibilities
- Be willing to initiate projects and follow them through to completion
- Demonstrate self-discipline and self-responsibility

Discussion

Character involves the following traits: loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, dependability, reliability, initiative, self-discipline, and self-responsibility, among others. Honesty, trustworthiness, dependability, and reliability are all very closely related. In the classroom, you want to demonstrate these qualities as you use the school's equipment and interact with your instructor and your classmates. As an employee, you may be put in a position to handle money or company property. You may function in a role that is critical to the company's good will with their customers (DTAE). Your employer needs to know you can be trusted.

When you take initiative, you take the first step to see that work gets done (DTAE). In the classroom, you assume responsibility for your own learning and are willing to assist others with their learning. On the job, when you see a task that needs to be done, you do it without being told. Initiative is a reflection of your self-discipline and responsibility.

Character can be summed up by the phrase “do the right thing.” Someone once said you display character when you do the right thing, even when no one else will ever know.

Steven R. Covey in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, says that we should seek to discover the center of our lives. Is it our spouse, family, money, work, people, possessions, friend, enemy, church, or self? Covey believes that if our lives are principle (character) centered, then there will be positive consequences in the other areas of our lives (Covey, 1989).

There can be no friendship without confidence,
and no confidence without integrity.

Samuel Johnson (as cited in Covey, 1989, p. 185)

TEAMWORK: concerted action or effort by the members of a group to achieve some common goal (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Respect the rights of others
- Be a team worker
- Be cooperative
- Be assertive
- Display a customer service attitude
- Seek opportunities for continuous learning
- Demonstrate mannerly behavior
- Respect confidentiality

Discussion

In the classroom, teamwork is evidenced by the way you interact with others and the instructor. On the job, teamwork is demonstrated in your interactions with your supervisor, co-workers, and your customers. Customers may be anyone you serve or who may benefit from the work you do.

People come from different backgrounds and cultures. Learning to respect the differences among us while working together will achieve a better result than if we worked independently. Cooperating with one another, yet expressing our opinions, leads to respect for each other (DTAE).

Steven Covey calls this the win-win situation (Covey, 1989). No one is degraded or defeated, while the final outcome is a result with which everyone can agree. Achieving this result is a direct consequence of understanding the other person’s point of view and needs in a situation yet expressing your own opinions. All of this process is interwoven with the need to behave in a mannerly

and respectful way toward others and to respect the confidentiality of their communications with you.

Continuous learning relates to not only increasing your technical skills, but also increasing your life skills. Covey believes the most important investment we make is the investment in ourselves. Continuing to grow and learn will have positive effects in all areas of our lives (Covey, 1989).

Both your instructor and your supervisor will value you as an individual and as a team member when they know they can count on you to perform, in a respectful and mannerly way, what ever is asked.

As we become independent – proactive, centered in correct principles, value driven and able to organize and execute around the priorities in our life with integrity – we then can choose to become interdependent – capable of building rich, enduring, highly productive relationships with other people (Covey, 1989, p. 187).

APPEARANCE: external or physical aspect (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Understand the importance of appearance in the classroom and work environment
- Display appropriate dress according to chosen career field
- Have a groomed and neat appearance
- Practice good personal hygiene
- Use correct and polite behavior in all settings

Discussion

The way in which you are perceived is often a direct reflection of your appearance. Although the manner in which you are dressed has a great deal to do with your appearance, appearance is much more than how you dress. Appearance is influenced by grooming, hygiene, and behavior (DTAE).

In the classroom as well as in the work place, your dress is determined by your chosen field (DTAE). Those who are working with computers have a different attire than those who work in culinary arts or automotive. Administrators dress differently than the Technical Support staff. Whatever dress is appropriate, you must also be clean and neat. Clothes should not be torn or stained. You should take care to groom yourself, paying particular attention to your personal hygiene.

Even with appropriate dress, grooming, and hygiene, if your manners are inappropriate or nonexistent, your appearance suffers. You should show your respect for the instructor, your classmates, your supervisor, and your co-workers by not interrupting while they are speaking, not monopolizing a conversation,

avoiding arguments, considering other's feelings and concerns when making decisions, and providing assistance when needed (DTAE). "Please" and "Thank you" go a long way. There is an old saying, "Good manners can cover a multitude of shortcomings."

ATTITUDE: state of mind, behavior, or conduct regarding some matter
(Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Demonstrate a Positive Attitude
- Be Self-confident
- Have Realistic Expectation of Self

Discussion

A positive attitude comes from a positive sense of self-worth. How to nurture self-worth is the subject of many books and the goal of most parents and teachers. Many people base their self-worth on what they do, how successful they are in their accomplishments. Self-worth should come from who you are. Who you are will dictate what you do. Confidence is what is built when you lead a principle centered life and you know you have done the right thing in a situation.

In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven R. Covey says there are three central values in life. They are the experiential, or what happens to you, the creative, or what you make happen, and the attitudinal, your response to difficult circumstances. He believes that the attitudinal is most important. What matters most is how you respond to what you experience (Covey, 1989).

A positive attitude that encompasses a sense of self-worth along with a desire to grow and a desire to do your very best will maximize your learning and working potential.

PRODUCTIVITY: the act of creating an increase in products, profits, or quality (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Understand and follow safety practices in classrooms and laboratories
- Keep work area neat and clean
- Follow directions and procedures
- Conserve materials and resources

Discussion

Safety is everyone's job both in the classroom and in the workplace. Your instructor or company has established procedures in order to keep your environment safe. Accidents cause a loss in productivity not only in down time while the accident is documented, investigated, and cleaned up, but also, and most importantly, in the loss of employee health and time. Following safety rules will greatly reduce "lost-time accidents" (DTAE).

Conserving materials leads to more profits for your company. This affects you as an employee because the more successful your company, the more secure your job.

Keeping your work area neat and clean increases productivity by organizing the tools you need to do your job. These tools could be pen, paper, and files or tools of the more conventional sense. In any case, when these tools are organized and easily accessible, productivity and in some cases, safety, are increased.

ORGANIZATION: the act of structuring or putting things in order (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Demonstrate skill in prioritizing
- Demonstrate skill in time management
- Demonstrate skill in managing stress
- Demonstrate flexibility in handling change

Discussion

Meeting your many obligations can become stressful. The ability to prioritize and manage your time are good work habits and good life habits. If you can prioritize your responsibilities and manage your time, you will reduce the amount of stress in your life.

There are many, many types of materials to help you prioritize and organize. Steven Covey recommends that you organize an entire week rather than organize each day individually. Start on Sunday and make a list of what you need and want to accomplish that week. Prioritize that list. Then set your daily priorities by deciding on which day(s) you will work on each task. Next make note of the commitments you have each day, and assign tasks to specific times during each day (Covey, 1989). If you cannot complete a task during the time allotted, you can modify your weekly plan as needed. You can easily create a spreadsheet for this, adapting it to your needs and lifestyle. This will help you remember what you need to do, set aside time to do it, and give you satisfaction in checking off a task when it is done.

Sometimes you just cannot handle everything. In those situations, you may have to commit to doing less or ask for help. Be sure to spend your time wisely and include some time for yourself (DTAE).

COMMUNICATION: the act of transmitting ideas, information, etc., by speech or writing (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Seek first to understand, then be understood (Covey, 1989, p. 237).

Objectives

- Understand the importance of good communication skills
- Understand how nonverbal communication skills affect the overall communications in the classroom and at work
- Use effective listening techniques
- Use proper oral communication skills

Discussion

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are all forms of communication. Speaking and listening are tempered by body language, physical appearance, and vocal tone. To communicate effectively with someone, you must first understand that person. To do this, you must be a good listener. Some good listening skills are: be attentive, make eye contact, ask questions, and summarize for clarity. Listen with the intent to understand (DTAE).

COOPERATION: working together toward a common end (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Display leadership skills
- Practice good conflict-management skills
- Demonstrate problem-solving capabilities
- Maintain good working relationships with supervisors and co-workers
- Follow the chain of command

Discussion

Most people would rather be lead than bossed. Leaders are not controlled by their feelings, are more democratic than dictatorial. They set realistic goals and continually question themselves. They seek to build team loyalty by giving workers recognition for good work. Leaders are competitive, being motivated by the desire to excel (DTAE).

There are a number of conflict management techniques (DTAE). Some are:

- Avoidance – refraining from any action that might force a confrontation such as refusing to take a stand or simply leaving.
- Accommodating – attempting to make peace. Like avoidance, this does not address the source of the conflict.
- Forcing – imposing a solution to conflict. This can be effective, but is only a short- term solution. The source of the original conflict has not been addressed.
- Bargaining – seeking a solution through give and take. Because each side must give up something of value to reach a compromise, the outcome is often not completely satisfactory to either side.
- Problem Solving – focusing on the roots of the conflict. A solution is sought in which neither side feels it has to give up something important to get what it wants. Steven Covey calls this the win-win solution (Covey, 1989).

Problem solving is something we encounter in all areas of life. There are a few steps we can take to organize a solution to a problem or situation (DTAE).

- Identify the problem – what needs to be accomplished?
- Design a solution – what information and materials do I need?
- Examine your resources – what do I know that will help me, what other sources of information do I have?
- Assess your solution – did I accomplish my purpose?

In maintaining good relationships with others, there are four things you should remember (DTAE).

- Everyone is unique therefore we should not treat everyone the same.
- Everyone wants to feel important so respect a person's preferences.
- People have many roles so make allowances and understand that supporting them in their other roles will improve your working relationship with them.
- Needs affect actions so try to understand the cause of a person's actions.

Follow the chain of command. One of the most important things you can do to strengthen your position with your supervisor is to remain loyal. Going over the supervisor's head is dangerous. At times it may be necessary to take a situation to your supervisor's supervisor. If this occurs, let your supervisor know what you are doing and offer to keep your supervisor informed.

RESPECT: regard for and appreciation of worth; honor and esteem (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986)

Objectives

- Deal appropriately with cultural/racial diversity
- Understand harassment and how to diffuse harassment

Discussion

Both in the classroom and in the workplace there should be a standard of non-offensive behavior. There are some important terms of which you should be aware (DTAE):

- Sexist – refers to the attitude of a person to others of the opposite sex
- Sex discrimination – when employment decisions are based on an employee's sex
- Sexual harassment – unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature
- Quid Pro Quo – “this for that” – when an employee's benefits and/or working conditions are based on the acceptance or rejection of unwelcome sexual behavior
- Hostile environment – when unwelcome sexual behavior affects an employee's ability to perform his or her job.

Harassment can take on many forms: physical, verbal, and non-verbal. Remember, conduct that may not be offensive to one person, may be offensive to another. Even if you do not intend to harass, your actions may be perceived as harassment. Respect cultural differences and recognize that cultural diversity exists in the classroom and in the workplace (DTAE).