

How to Develop a Strong Work Ethic



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Right Attitude

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) the number one challenge for new employees is ATTITUDE. Here are some key attitudes that employers are looking for:

1. Humility
2. Readiness to learn
3. Willingness to change
4. Confidence
5. Respect
6. Have an open mind
7. Positive attitude
8. Work ethic



Over invest in your 1st 6 months

First impressions mean everything

- Employers size you up in the first weeks and months...and first impressions are hard to change.
- Who you are and what you are capable of is usually based on what you do over the very first few months.
- So, give everything you have over those first 6 months, you will lay a great foundation upon which to build your success



Over invest in your 1st 6 months (cont.)

Your first project in the new job will probably not be the task you *WANT* to be doing...

HOWEVER

Your first project will probably dictate *WHICH* task you will be doing in the future

- Take what you're given and do it well.
- Nothing is "below" you. Roll up your sleeves and get the job done.



Know the landscape

All companies, non-profits, and government agencies have their own unique company culture and office dynamics

Sit back and observe the culture and office dynamics

- Who talks in meetings?
- How are personnel issues addressed?
- Who is the gossip?
- When do people (especially your boss) usually come into work and go home?

Try to fit in with, or at least navigate carefully within, the company culture.



Earning your “street cred”

- Build and establish a reputation of credibility, competence and reliability and high performance
- You want to be thought of as someone that can be reliable and competent – be the “go-to” to get the job done!
- Take on only what you can handle and feel free to renegotiate deadlines, where necessary and where possible
- Be proactive, take the initiative and feel ultimately accountable for any work you promise to do
- Under promise and over deliver
 - Consistently exceeding people’s expectations will build a reputation for going above and beyond “the call of duty”



What about the work?

- Your job is probably not in your job description, so strive to do more than what is expected
- Anytime you start a task, find out who the end user is
- Deliver a product of a quality to surpass the end user's expectations (even if you're delivering to someone other than the end user).
- Look for "skills" to add to your toolbox. Try to become an expert in something - a software package, analyzing datasets, etc.
- Find out what you do on a day-to-day basis. (Your job).
- Look around: What do your peers who are considered the best do that is different from others?
- Ask your supervisor why you are doing a task so you can evaluate the best places to add value.



Evaluations

You are no longer being graded!!

- Don't expect constant, or even regular, performance feedback
- Ask for feedback, but don't nag.
 - It's customary to have a review in the first 30-60 days
 - After that overall performance feedback every six months to one year is standard
- Please don't ask for evaluation to have your ego stroked.
- Know that performance expectations change with your level of performance.



The “buddy system”

Find a buddy ... and find a mentor

- Your buddy and mentor are NOT the same person
- Both will help you understand the company culture

Your buddy:

- Peer. What are the company dynamics? Who are the players? How do things really work?

Your mentor:

- Supervisor or other senior person. What keeps them in the company? Why have they succeeded? Ask for assistance with your professional development.



Professional Communication (People)

Find out the proper way to address individuals, including customers and clients

Listen more than you talk. Ask questions, as appropriate, but do not criticize

Respect confidentiality: You can talk about issues, projects, the work environment, but refrain from talking about people



Professional Communication (Phone)

- Answer the telephone politely. Identify yourself when you are calling others
- Return phone calls promptly
- Turn off your cell phone or put it on vibrate unless it's an emergency. Let your cell phone calls go to voicemail
- Use your cell phone (calls and text messaging) only during your breaks and lunch



Professional Communication (Email)

- Keep your emails professional. The problem with email is that your tone can be easily misunderstood
- Be concise and to the point. Long emails tend to bring long replies and increase the opportunities for misunderstandings
- Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation (remove the **lol's, omg's**). This is especially important when sending emails from PDAs and smart phones.
 - For informal communication, you can get away with typos and abbreviations, but in business communication, follow the same guidelines for PDAs as you would with regular email.
- Re-read the email before you send it



Professional Communication (Email) cont.

- Don't copy everybody if they don't need to be copied
- Use meaningful titles, short but descriptive of the topic
- Use the Reply All button sparingly
- Avoid Flagging Everything as Important
 - Not all email that you produce or send is important; if you mark a lot of your messages as important, people will start to ignore that flag in your messages. Be selective about it.



Professional Communication (Internet)

According to American Management Association (AMA) and the ePolicy Institute, when it comes to workplace computer use, employers are primarily concerned about inappropriate Web surfing. Studies show that:

- 76% monitor workers' website connections & 65% use software to block connections to inappropriate websites

Internet Tips

- Avoid personal web surfing
- Never use your access to the web to visit inappropriate sites
- Avoid using employer's internet for personal business
- Lay off the Facebook, Twitter and Gmail

