

Professional Behavior

WITH THE RISE OF technology and occupational specialization in the 19th century, the word “profession” took on new meaning. By 1900, recognized professions included dentistry, librarians, nursing, optometry, pharmacy, teaching, veterinary medicine, and social work. The employees receive payment for their services and are called professionals. Utilizing skills, good judgment, and polite behavior, professionals perform with professionalism.



Objectives:



1. Distinguish between professional and professionalism.
2. Practice confident and polite mannerisms.
3. Dress to promote a positive and professional image.

Key Terms:



profession
professional
professionalism

The Difference Between Professional and Professionalism

To be successful in any profession, you should focus on being a professional in addition to excelling in the area of professionalism.

PROFESSIONAL

A **professional** is a person who engages in a learned profession to earn a livelihood. (In sports, the term professional can distinguish between amateur players and professional players)

who are paid.) A professional behaves in a businesslike manner in the workplace. Meanwhile, a **profession** is a vocation or career that requires academic training to gain specialized knowledge for various occupations (e.g., law, medicine, and engineering). A body of qualified people engaged in an occupation is considered a profession.

As a professional, you must fulfill the responsibilities of your position and deliver high-quality services or products. Perform at a level of competence that inspires others to think of you as a role model. Remember a professional is a team player who takes pride in his or her performance, has self-confidence, and acts ethically. In addition, a professional follows company policies and procedures, exhibits good judgment, has polite behavior, and generally exhibits a businesslike manner.



FIGURE 1. Professional workers are cooperating with each other in a businesslike manner.

Education and Training

To improve skills and knowledge about your profession, you will need to attend continuing education and training sessions. These events will help you stay current with standards and technologies, maximize your abilities and opportunities, and improve your job performance.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism is a practice exhibited through character, spirit, and methods on the job. Professionalism means being a positive leader to coworkers, working well with other people, and avoiding negativity. As part of professionalism, you know your job responsibilities and limitations. Also, you utilize time and task management skills effectively, always finding a way to be productive. In addition, you communicate effectively and appropriately.

Qualities

Professionalism is a combination of qualities that help you stand out in a competitive job environment. You will need to arrive at work and appointments on time. Also, you will need to take responsibility for your own behavior. Working up to your potential will help you enjoy your job and help you perform it well.



ON THE JOB...

CAREER CONNECTION: Professional Presentations

A professional must be able to communicate his or her thoughts and ideas effectively. Your presentation must have a purpose that is understood and remembered by your audience. You can present your information in an informative, instructional, persuasive, or decision-making format.

- An informative presentation should be brief and to the point. Be clear about your facts, which are presented chronologically, as cause and effect, or in a logical order where you list items according to importance.
- An instructional presentation will give specific directions or orders. You will explain why the information or skill is important, perhaps demonstrating with step-by-step instructions.
- A persuasive presentation offers a solution to a controversy, dispute, or problem. Present sufficient logic, evidence, and emotion to sway listeners to your viewpoint.
- In a decision-making presentation, you will present ideas, suggestions, and arguments strong enough to motivate your audience to carry out your requests. You must explain what and how to do this, as well as the problems that will occur if they do not enact your directions.

Variations

Professionalism will be different in different professions. For example, in a customer service position, a professional speaks clearly and politely to customers. In an office, a manager works productively with others and strives for high standards. Meanwhile, a teacher motivates students to learn and achieve to exhibit professionalism.

Confident Professional Mannerisms

Professional employees behave appropriately at work. For instance, mannerisms can convey a confident image. Appropriate mannerisms reflect common courtesy. For example, colleagues should be greeted with a firm handshake. Also, maintain eye contact to exhibit sincerity, and use formal names to show respect. Gum chewing, however, is inappropriate at work.

Professional mannerisms in a conversation or meeting require you to sit up



FIGURE 2. A firm handshake shows confidence and good faith.

and exercise good posture. Women should cross their ankles, not their legs. Typically, you should place your hands in your lap. Also, smile and make eye contact while speaking. Complete sentences in formal English should be used. In addition, cell phone ringers should be off, and notes should be taken as needed.

If offered food or drink, use proper table manners—the etiquette used while eating, including the proper use of utensils.

Professional Dress

Professional dress should promote a positive image. To dress for success, shirttails should be tucked in. Clothing should be clean and pressed. Your attire should be conservative in style. Clothes should fit appropriately; baggy clothes are not professional. Bright colors, bright patterns, and faded clothing should be avoided.

For a professional look, men should wear clean, black dress shoes. Women should wear low pumps. A minimal amount of jewelry can be worn, and tattoos should be covered. Hairstyles should be conservative and easy to manage. Fingernails should be neatly trimmed, and women should use conservative nail polish colors.



FIGURE 3. A team of engineers is dressed for success.

Summary:



A professional is a person who engages in a learned profession to earn a livelihood. A profession is a vocation or career that requires academic training to gain specialized knowledge. Professionalism is a combination of qualities that help you stand out in a competitive job environment. It is exhibited through character, spirit, and methods on the job.

Professional employees behave appropriately. Mannerisms can convey a confident image. Appropriate mannerisms reflect common courtesy. Also, professional dress promotes a positive image. A professional who expresses his or her ideas with clarity and confidence in meetings and public speaking events shows professionalism.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is a profession?
2. Describe five qualities of a professional person.
3. How is professionalism displayed on the job?
4. How do your mannerisms show professionalism?
5. What different images are conveyed through dress?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



In a competitive economy, workers must stand out in their appearance as well as in their qualifications. An employer's first impression of you is largely influenced by how you dress. Assemble professional outfits in your wardrobe. Consider how garments fit. Are your choices conservative, yet fashionable? Too many interviewees do not realize the importance of the first impression they make in a job interview. Complement your qualifications with a professional appearance. You may want to conduct some online research on the topic, with examples on YouTube and other popular sources.

Web Links:



Workplace Professionalism

<http://hosting.caes.uga.edu/2008csrees/pdfs/S54-Workplace%20Professionalism.pdf>

Professionalism

<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/professionalism.htm>

Workplace Etiquette

<http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2008/aug/25work.htm>

Dress Code

http://www.hrhero.com/whitepapers/index.cgi?pc=wpdcp&code=R651&utm_source=Google&utm_medium=PPC&utm_campaign=Brand