Professionalism in the Workplace

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What Are Some Basic Ways You Can Display Professionalism?

- **Dress for the job**
  - Before your first day on a job inquire about the typical dress code for the office
  - Observe what others are wearing
  - Be aware of the details (hair, jewelry, cologne/perfume, etc.)
  - Watch this video on dressing for success: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0DFwGy8wUg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0DFwGy8wUg)

- **Prepare to do the best job you can**

- **Communicate with respect**
  - Listen carefully and take constructive criticism well
  - Respect other’s privacy

- **Accept responsibility**
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What Are Some Basic Ways You Can Display Professionalism?

- Keep your personal problems...personal!
  - Focus on your job

- Finish your tasks
  - If working on a large, time-consuming, task break it down into smaller tasks to show that progress is being made
  - Here are some tips for staying on task, and prioritized, at work:
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF-GShM6Adk&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PL21FF6DF71C49F64A

- Turn off your cell phone
  - Use your break time to text or check personal messages
  - Keep your voice down while talking (be it a personal or business call)
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What Can Students do to Practice Professionalism?

- Turning in work on time
- Interacting politely with professors and students
- Paying attention in class
- Not missing class, and coming to class on time
- Not making excuses, and taking responsibility for poor work
- Not doing as little as possible to get a decent grade
- Not complaining that the work is too hard or too much
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Common Mistakes New Employees Make in the First Month:

- Misunderstanding the corporate culture
- Not asking enough questions
- Lacking integrity
- Not following the rules
  - Learn office rules and policies, culture, and dress code
- Lacking attention to detail
- Making job-related errors
- Communicating poorly
  - Treat everyone with respect
- Misinterpreting the job description
- Poor interaction with co-workers
  - Get to know your co-workers, but avoid excessive chattiness
- Trying to change things too fast
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Some Other Unprofessional Qualities Include:

- Sloppy appearance or dress
- An over concern about advancement/promotions
- Poor work ethic
- Sense of entitlement
- Overall bad attitude
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Review of Recent Research

- In a recent study conducted by the University of Michigan it was found:
  - Employees who had more personal items in their workspace (i.e. pictures of friends and family, etc.) were seen as less professional than those without those items.
  - Job candidates were viewed more negatively when they attempted to discuss an employer’s personal life (described in the study as referring to the boss’ family picture or other items in his/her office).
  - Conclusions drawn from the study were:
    - During the interview stage for a job it’s important to focus on the job itself, not to attempt to befriend the employer.
    - New employees who want to appear professional should minimize the amount of personal items in their workspace.
Dealing With Your Boss

- Be proactive and request an “Expectations Meeting”
  - Find out what your boss needs you to do in the first few weeks
    - What are the goals, and are they concrete/measurable
  - List your top job priorities and see if they with your boss’ list
  - Observe your boss’ personality and leadership style
  - Watch as the following video provides more tips:
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dulMIWzYQVg
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Networking With Co-Workers

- Get out of your office, and your comfort zone, and meet people that can tell you the hidden rules of success
  - Try to network with 3-5 new people in the first two weeks
  - Reserve 2 days per week for networking lunches
- When networking, be sure to listen and accept advice about the Dos and DON’Ts of the office
- Start to build allies within your office
- Find one, or more, mentors that are willing to take you under their wing
- Take a look at this humorous take on networking: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j1nHdURKgE
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Timeliness
- Plan to arrive at work 15 minutes early
- Build time for bad weather, traffic, construction into your commute
- Set a schedule with your boss early in your tenure so you both know what to expect
- Communicate with your boss any conflicts that do arise
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Sources

- “Professionalism in the Workplace and First year on the Job,” Salisbury University Career Services Office
- “From Suit Coat To White Coat: Ethics & Professionalism in the Workplace,” University of North Texas Health Science Center
- Heaphy, Emily, Sanchez-Burks, Jeffrey, and Ashford, Susan. Cultural Impressions of Professionalism. University of Michigan, Ross School of Business.