

# Work Habits of Successful Employees

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Many employers today are placing more emphasis on personal responsibility, ethics, integrity, and other quality characteristics. Employers need to be able to depend on employees to be responsible for their actions and make the right decisions to maintain a safe and healthful workplace.

## First Impressions

As you prepare for your first day of work you might be thinking, "What will my co-workers be like? Will I understand everything I'm supposed to do? Am I wearing the right clothes? Will I make it through the first day?"

These are good concerns and we'll provide you a few insights to help you get ready. Ask the person who schedules your interview what to wear to the interview. When in doubt, wear a nice outfit to show you're serious about the interview and to show respect for the company and the interviewer. Ask the interviewer what people wear on the job. You need to learn about the job and how people dress and act. Look at the videos at [www.getintoenergy.com](http://www.getintoenergy.com) to learn what clothes you will be expected to wear when you show up on the job. Ask the person who hires you what to wear on the first day. Wearing the right clothes will make your first day much more comfortable. You want to make sure you stand out for the right reasons. Starting off on the right foot makes the adjustment much easier.

First impressions last. Sometimes the first impression is the only impression, because you will not get a second chance if the first impression is not a good impression. Do your research and come to class or work prepared to make the right impression. Here are some tips:

- Remember the basics of good grooming - comb your hair, brush your teeth, and wear clean clothes. Good personal habits pay off for you and the company.
- What if you showed up for the first day of work in business clothes when work clothes were needed? You might ruin a good set of clothes. You might get sent home with no pay. Would this make a good first impression?
- What else might you need on the first day at work? Lunch money? Boxed lunch? Personal protective equipment? Work boots? Eye protection? Water?

Fortunately most companies have an orientation day and many have a training program for you to learn what's expected on the first work day, but these are things to think about to make sure you are ready.

On your first day, assume your cell phone and any other personal communication device are off all day except during breaks and lunch. Even at those times only deal with urgent messages. You are expected to focus on the job. Yes, your breaks are your own time, but you will also need to use that time to build relationships with your co-workers. Once you are on the job you will see how your co-workers handle cell phones and learn how lenient your boss will be. However, don't push the limits or get complacent. You might get assigned to a different supervisor for a day or so who might have more stringent rules.

First impressions aren't limited to the first day on the job. You must always be on your toes and look like an eager employee. You won't be assigned to the same crew your entire career. Teams change and supervisors come and go. You don't really know who will be selecting you for your next assignment or promotion. You need to make sure all potential supervisors know you are a dependable worker who will do a job correctly and on time.

## **Be at Work and on Time**

Your employer is expecting you to be at work every day and on time. You don't get to skip work just because you aren't in the mood one day. You will always have somebody depending on you to be at work every day. Even if you work for yourself, you have customers dependent on you to be there when they need you. Almost everyone is part of a team and the team cannot function effectively with a member absent.

Yes, every company has some plan for dealing with the workload when a team is short a person, but that is an extra headache for someone like the dispatcher and it frequently means some customer goes without electricity for a few extra hours or a construction project is delayed. Delays cost the company money. If you are the cause of too much cost overruns, the company may decide the best way to save money is to stop wasting it on you. Your continued employment is in jeopardy. Important points:

- What would happen if everybody was late or absent frequently?
- How does your lateness or absence affect your team?
- Know and follow the company policy for reporting absences or lateness.
- Keep your supervisor informed of planned absences.
- Give yourself enough time to get to work.
- Return from lunch or breaks on time.
- Cut absenteeism by maintaining good health.

Early is on time. On time is late. Late means trouble.
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## **Dependability**

Co-workers and supervisors need team members who are dependable. Dependable workers do the job correctly and on time. Dependable workers pull their own weight (do their share and more), take responsibility seriously, and look after each other's safety. Dependable workers do what they say they will.

## **Professionalism**

Professionals keep their tools and work areas clean and organized. Craft workers are judged by their tools and keep them in good working order. You also need to follow the procedures and the schedule of work. Make sure you are technically qualified to do your work. When in doubt, talk to your supervisor. Take advantage of all opportunities to learn more about your job.

- Read books and trade publications, take classes and get experienced workers to teach you new skills.
- Volunteer for additional assignments outside your normal work when the opportunity is available.
- Always take advantage of opportunities to increase your skills and value to the company. Supervisors will notice the extra effort. Be careful that you don't take on too much and fail to deliver on your commitments.

## **Ethics and Integrity**

Employees with good ethics and integrity are committed to conducting themselves in a professional and safe manner. Employees should be committed to working within the highest standards of legal and ethical conduct to ensure their personal safety and the safety of others.

## **Personal Responsibility and Personal Management**

Here are some important considerations for personal responsibility and management:

- Employees should work in accordance with applicable safety and health laws and embrace safety and health as a way of life, on and off the job.
- Employees should be self-motivated to make safe choices for their own benefit and the benefit of others.
- Employees must take personal ownership of being safety conscious.
- Employees should acknowledge when their abilities or alertness are impaired by fatigue, illness, or other causes that might expose the individual or others to injury and act accordingly by reporting to a supervisor that they are unfit to safely perform their duties.
- Live within your budget and don't take on debt you can't handle. Know what you are earning and what you can afford. Make a budget and save for the nice-to-have items after you have acquired what you really need to survive. Learn the investment in education, training, and time on the job needed to earn more.
- Employees who get in debt they can't handle have failed to show the professionalism needed for the job. Employees with too much debt are distracted by debt worries and debt collectors and cannot pay full attention to the job while on the job. Supervisors and colleagues will notice and your continued employment could be in jeopardy. If you lose your job, your debt worries will become worse.

## **Teamwork**

The energy and construction businesses are composed of teams, many of them dependent on other teams. This interrelated network means that each member must do his or her job correctly to avoid unexpected problems for other teams. Electricity customer requests are handled by a customer service team, which hands off the request to the dispatcher team to assign the work to a specific work team. The customer service team informs the customer of the expected completion of the request. If the work team wastes time and does not finish when expected all the other teams are saddled with additional work to reschedule the request and keep the customer updated (and not upset) with changes. The same situation exists in construction where different trades are scheduled on site to avoid conflict with each other. If your team doesn't work well together and work can't be completed on time the entire schedule is disrupted and must be adjusted to catch up to the project plan?

All members of a team are committed to helping each other achieve team success. You must watch out for each other and offer your help to the supervisor when you can. If you need help, you must speak up. The team is more willing to spend a few extra minutes helping you than spending hours redoing work you could not complete correctly.

## Cooperation

Cooperation is key to teamwork. Sure one person can do the job, but two working together can make it go faster. For example, one person can gather all the tools from the work site while the other prepares and stows them on the truck. They aren't bumping into each other and walking back and forth over the same ground. Look for ways to cooperate and do the job more efficiently. You might be tempted to say it's

Not your job, but it is your job, it is everybody's job. Telling the supervisor you are available to help with the remaining tasks after finishing your assigned work will be noticed and rewarded.

Companies are not democracies. The CEO, the board, or the owner has made the rules and you follow them.

Like life, work is not fair. Things don't always make sense to inexperienced employees. Despite the best efforts of management, the playing field is not level. Randomness, chaos, and irrationality yank the rug out from under you over and over. You have to find the inner strength to endure the slights and criticism and continue to cooperate to get the work done. A rough day when you can't seem to do anything right is not an excuse to sulk and let others do the work.

This workforce solution was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The solution was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S Department of Labor. The Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership.



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