

Daily ways to uphold your professionalism and workplace etiquette



Whether preparing for an interview, starting your first day on the job or advancing in your career, professionalism and workplace etiquette are always important. Regardless of overall performance, careers have been known to stall (or even fail to start) because an individual did not display these qualities. Here are some everyday ways to show professionalism and stay on the right track to building a reputation that will benefit your overall career goals.

Honor your commitments and get your job done

Above all, the most important factor to professionalism is doing what you say you are going to do, which includes getting your job done. You can meet every other factor of professionalism, but if you don't honor your commitments and get your job done, none of it will matter because nobody will want to work with you.

Be on time for work and any meetings/events

Being on time sends an unspoken message of respect for your responsibilities as well as the value you place on the time and effort of your colleagues. Be consistently on time for meetings, even if they tend to start a little later than the time scheduled. Your consistency will build a reputation for punctuality and prevent you from being late the one time they decided to start promptly!

Pay attention to cultural norms and follow them

For cues on office-appropriate dress, pay attention to how others in your workplace dress. Although conventional wisdom will tell you to wear a certain type of clothing, you really need to look around in order to follow company culture. If nobody, including the CEO, ever wears a suit jacket, then consider leaving yours at home. However, a great tip when it comes to deciding what to wear is to dress for the job you want, not the job you have – observe their attire and dress accordingly.

Communication also varies based on office culture. Ask yourself, how does everyone communicate? Do they prefer to connect in an email before talking about an issue, or can you just pick up the phone to discuss? Should you formally request a meeting via an administrative assistant, or simply walk into their office unannounced? Once learned, these cues and others will reflect the unofficial rules of your organization and help you to navigate to success.

Check your communication

Your communication while at work will convey important (and unspoken) messages about you at your organization. Here are some tips for professionally written and verbal communication:

- Use professional language while at work and avoid sending messages using all CAPS or using “text speak” (e.g. ur for you’re) in messages, and never send messages containing foul language or expletives.
- Always include a “greeting” and “closing” to each email message, no matter how short or informal.
- Enable automatic Spell-Check on your outgoing messages to prevent embarrassing spelling and grammatical errors.
- Double check who the message is going to when responding to group messages, and never write anything in a company email you would not feel comfortable having being read (or distributed to) the whole company.
- On calls, be mindful of your volume. Are you louder than everyone else in the room?
- Answer each call professionally even if you know the person on the other end. You never know who else might be listening.

Keep personal business during work time to a minimum

Whether you are in an office, cubicle, or open space, it is important to mind the personal space and time of others.

A “quick” conversation about the movie you saw last night could turn into 15-30 minutes which is not a productive use of time for you or your colleagues. Catch up on last night’s game or weekend plans at lunch time or after work.

Bring a notepad and pen or pencil to every meeting

By showing up without these, you are communicating loudly and clearly that there will be nothing said or done in the meeting that is worth writing down or remembering. Even if that’s how you feel, you don’t want to send that message.

Think before you post, tweet or comment at work or about work

Some companies have specific policies around using social media. If yours does, make sure you know what it says and follow it. However, even if there isn’t a policy, never post or comment negatively about your job, boss or coworkers. Those words may likely end up back to someone within the company and could put your job in jeopardy. Plus, it’s just in poor taste to bad mouth your employer and say as much about you as it does about them.

Avoid office politics and gossip

It’s true that office politics can be unavoidable and at times may even be required to climb the corporate ladder or even just to get a project pushed through. Try to avoid the negative side of office politics by maintaining constructive relationships and knowing how to work with various individuals. Gossip will also naturally exist within any office environment, and you may not be able to avoid it. But when you do encounter gossip, don’t participate in the conversation and never repeat what you’ve heard.