

Employability Skills Area: Work Habits and Workplace Effectiveness

Assignment: Increase Your Job Success

By the end of this lesson, learners should be able to:

- Follow steps to increase satisfaction and success in the workplace
- Recognize the better employee

Ten Ways to Increase Your Chances of Workplace Success

Once you've found a job, you'll want to do everything possible to be successful in the workplace. While a number of factors can affect whether or not you'll be successful, increase your chances by following these basic steps.

1. Do your job.

To ensure you're doing your job, make sure you fully understand all of the duties assigned to you. Upon beginning your job, your employer should provide you with a list of job duties and on-the-job training. Ask questions, and find the most efficient ways to perform your job. When you make a mistake, learn from it rather than repeat it. Refer to your list of job duties from time to time to stay focused. If you take pride in what you do, you'll make yourself-and your employer-happy.

2. Follow the rules.

Take the time to read and understand your employer's policies and procedures manual. It's your duty to learn and follow your employer's rules and regulations. Refer to it when you have questions. If you can't find an answer, ask your supervisor. You'll decrease your chances of careless mistakes.

3. Be courteous.

A self-confident attitude, a smile, and a friendly word go a long way towards establishing strong working relationships with your supervisor, coworkers, and customers. Make an effort to be friendly, but realize you are there to work and not to socialize. A sense of humor is usually appreciated, but always maintain a professional attitude.

4. Be a team player.

In a team atmosphere, be an active listener. Your supervisor and coworkers will feel you value their opinion. However, don't be afraid to share your knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm. Employers want employees who take initiative, follow instructions, respond well to constructive

criticism, and cooperate. Make it a point to attend meetings and company-sponsored social events.

5. Find a mentor.

Find an experienced coworker who can serve as your mentor. Mentors help nurture your career--they may give advice, make suggestions, increase your access to senior management, and are often good listeners. To find a mentor, first identify your weak areas. Then, identify individuals who are strong in those areas, those whose careers you admire, and those who have access to senior management. Begin by being friendly, ask advice from time to time, and slowly build your relationship. If you have trouble finding a mentor, consider joining a professional organization.

6. Fit in with the organization's culture.

Before you can fit in with the culture of an organization, you have to define it. To do so, watch and listen to those around you. You'll quickly get a sense for how you should dress, how much socialization is appropriate, work expectations, how neat to keep your workspace, etc. Also, consider referring to your employee manual.

7. Find ways to be a star employee.

Fitting in with the culture of an organization doesn't mean you should be content with doing the bare minimum. Find ways to take on additional responsibility. For example, volunteer to be a committee leader, take additional training, master new technology, work late when necessary, and develop a reputation for excellent customer service.

8. Conquer negativity.

If you dislike your job duties, supervisor, commute, compensation and/or benefits, you are, to some degree, unhappy in your current job. Negative feelings toward your job can sabotage your chances of workplace success and lead to general unhappiness. To combat negativity, focus on what you enjoy about your job. Do your best to avoid office politics and gossip. Chances are you'll feel worse, not better, after ranting about your boss. Also, never criticize your employer in public--it's considered unprofessional and you never know who may be listening.

9. Take control.

If you are extremely unhappy in your current job, make a list of your job's pros and cons. Then, seek ways to make improvements. If you have a long list of cons, it may be time to look for a new job. However, never quit a job until you have a new one. Our Career Development course provides several useful tools and resources to help you find the career that's right for you.

10. Find a work-life balance.

Work gives a sense of pride and purpose, helps establish an identity, and is a means of providing for our families. While work is important, it's not, and shouldn't be, the only aspect of life. When not working, seek ways to add enrichment to your life.

After reading about steps you can take to increase your chances of workplace success, determine who is the more successful employee.

○ **Mary**

- Works for a mid-sized corporation as a departmental secretary to five team members and a departmental supervisor
- Types 65 words per minute
- Excellent computer skills
- Rarely asks anyone for help
- Prompt and efficient on the telephone
- Occasionally abrupt and rude when taking messages
- Several complaints in her file from coworkers and customers
- Rarely friendly
- Complains frequently about her job
- Reluctant to learn new skills

○ **Brian**

- Works at a university as administrative support for a team of five and a departmental supervisor
- Types 35 words per minute
- Basic computer skills
- Was out of the work force for two years due to an injury
- Retrained in administrative skills
- No prior experience in the field
- Complimentary letter in his file after a month on the job
- Made some mistakes
- Friendly
- Shows a willingness and enthusiasm to learn new skills and is showing improvement

Your Response:

- There are positive and negative aspects to both of these employees. In your opinion, who is the better employee? Why? Give specific reasons for your choice.

- Imagine that Mary and Brian are interviewing for a position as an executive secretary at a large corporation. Who would get the job? Why?