

PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

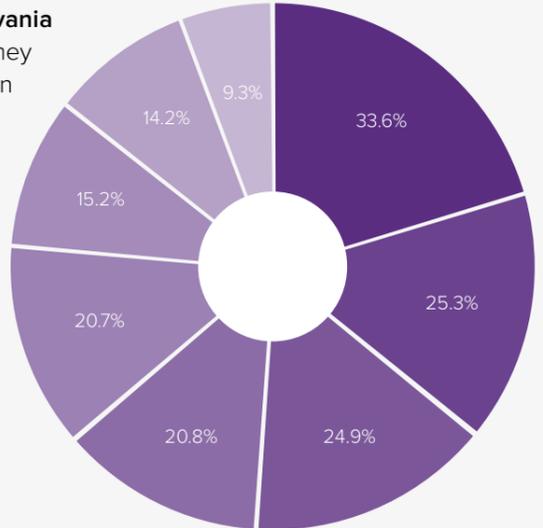


According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, professionalism means “the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or professional person.” Personally, I like to define professionalism as a level of expectation-behavior or competence that is expected of a professional.

How do I know what is expected of me?

The **Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania** conducted a national survey over professionalism in the workplace. They surveyed HR professionals, upper-class graduates and those serving in management/supervision positions. The Human Resources surveyees listed the following as the most essential qualities of professionalism:

- **Interpersonal skills - 33.6%**
- **Appearance - 25.3%**
- **Communication Skills - 24.9%**
- **Time Management - 20.8%**
- **Confidence - 20.7%**
- **Ethical - 15.2%**
- **Work Ethic - 14.2%**
- (Note: Managers & Supervisors had this at 33.7%)
- **Knowledgeable - 9.3%**



How am I supposed to behave?



Be Positive

Show enthusiasm and eagerness to learn new skills and tackle projects. Depending on the nature of your work, you may have sudden-shifting deadlines. Show flexibility and positivity during these difficult times and your manager will take notice.



Understand Your Place

Many millennial employees are criticized for feeling entitled. Overcome the stereotype by recognizing your boss is your superior for a reason and show them the respect they deserve whether or not you agree with some of their ways of getting things done.



Respect Time

You're expected to complete your work within a set period of time and you are paid to complete it within that time. Anything less is inadequacy. Take extra measures to ensure you remain honest and diligent during your work time. This could mean making a checklist of tasks to complete during the day.



Be the Bigger Person

Work is not the place to show up anyone. If a conflict arises within the workplace, show some maturity towards your co-workers. Though winning an argument may make you feel like the king of the world, don't throw it in their face.



Be Helpful

Help out your co-workers! Be someone who takes the time to invest in others and demonstrate your dedication to the company/team and not just your own personal gain. Your coworkers and manager will label you as a team player. When there is an opportunity for promotion, you'll stick out.

How should I go about workplace communication?

Know When to Speak Up

There is a time and place for everything. This couldn't be truer when it comes to office communication. When someone has the floor, show them some respect and let them speak. If you have something valid or helpful to add, wait for an appropriate time and speak up.

Be Proactive in Communication

When you need information or resources from someone, give them plenty of time to gather what is needed and respond. As soon as you realize you need information, let the contact know and give them an idea of when you would like to receive their response.

Use Proper Email Communication

Be clear about what you need, be respectful and don't blow up their inbox. Also, try to be timely with email communication. Email communication is a blog in and of itself but for all intents and purposes of this article, we'll keep it simple - Be respectful, timely and clear.

Don't Participate in Gossip

The office is not high school. Do not spread rumors or begin spreading your assumptions and opinions about everyone to your co-workers. It creates a toxic environment and distrust between co-workers.

Watch Your Language

Cussing is for sailors. Unless your workplace is a sailboat, just don't. That is all.

How should I present myself?



No list needed for this one: **Be presentable.**

Professionalism extends into how we carry and present ourselves to our clients/customers and fellow workers. Dress appropriately and present yourself appropriately. Dressing in appropriate business attire sends a message that you take pride in yourself and your work.

If you are confused as to what you should wear, it is always safer to lean a little bit more on the conservative side until you gain a better understanding of what is acceptable. Does this mean you have to wear a tux or a dress suit? Yes and no. Every business or industry has its own standards.

For instance, lawyers are expected to wear posh suits and carry themselves with a certain level of confidence and poise. Hopefully, you will never be a defendant in a court case but if you were, how would you feel if your lawyer walked into the courtroom wearing a Hawaiian shirt and khaki pants?