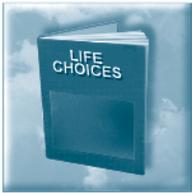


Lesson 2: You in the Workplace

How do ensure you are a success at a job once you are hired? One of the major aspects of doing well at a job is your attitude. (Of course, you also need to have the skills required for your duties.) Employers recognize and value enthusiasm and a strong work ethic. They appreciate an employee with good work habits who arrives each day excited and interested in doing a good job.



To learn about the importance of attitude in the workplace, turn to your *Careers* textbook and read “Learning Is Job #1” on page 13. This article discusses the characteristics that are appealing to employers—those qualities that can help a person to both get and keep a job.

In some ways, your first job is the most crucial because it is when your personal work habits and standards are developed.

Once a person has developed work habits, whether they are habits with high standards and goals or ones that aim much lower, these habits will become instilled. They can become very difficult to change. For this reason, it is important to set high standards on the first job.

There are three important goals for a worker:

- Quality: doing high quality work in all that is done
- Accomplishment: being successful in completing all tasks
- Satisfaction: personal satisfaction with the work that is done

These three goals are interrelated. If a worker sets quality work as a personal standard, it is likely that the worker will succeed at many of the tasks required by the job. Succeeding at work is a source of pleasure and satisfaction for the worker who has set high standards.

¹ Judith Campbell, *Lifecoices: Careers Teacher Resource* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ginn Canada, 1999), 119. Reprinted with permission by Pearson Canada.

1.
 - a. What do you expect a job should give to you?
 - b. What do you expect you should give to a job?

Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.

How do you prepare for workplace expectations? In addition to considering your own expectations in a job, you must consider employer expectations. You also need to work within **workplace protocols**.

workplace protocols: the expectations, customs, and rules of the workplace

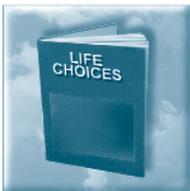
Workplace Protocols



Following workplace protocols is like fitting in with any social group. There are appropriate topics of conversation and there are topics that make people uncomfortable or angry. There are rules about taking coffee breaks, using the washroom, talking on the phone, using the lunchroom, and talking to other employees. There are as many different protocols as there are workplaces. Part of your job is to be watchful and to take your cues from your managers, supervisors, and other employees in that workplace.

The following articles in *Careers* discuss two aspects of workplace protocols:

- “Fashionably Yours” on page 50 provides advice on dressing for casual Fridays in an office setting.
- “Mind Your Telephone Manners” on page 123 provides instructions on how to handle telephone calls in a business setting.



Employer Expectations

Employers expect that employees will

- do whatever it takes (be flexible)
- have integrity (ethical principles; honesty)
- find better ways to do the job (be innovative)
- work well with other people
- have a spirit of service (be committed)
- strive to be better

What do these statements mean? Read the following explanation to find out.

Employer Expectations

1) Do whatever it takes.

Valued employees

- have commitment to the job and to doing whatever it takes to get the job done—An employer relies on the commitment of a worker to complete tasks; that is how an employee adds some value to the business.
- are flexible (the ability to change what one is doing, sometimes in mid-stream) so that when a new task or unexpected demand arises, an employee can do it by applying abilities already learned as well as the willingness to learn new things
- are adaptable (the ability to accept changes) to a new situation—Not only must an employee be capable of dealing with changed expectations and demands, the employee must also be willing and able to accept the change. The phrase “it’s not my job so I don’t have to do it” shows rigidity that employees cannot afford to have.

This does not mean that one employee is expected to do everyone else’s work; however, it is expected that employees will pitch in when needed.

- work hard
- have sound judgment
- can set priorities so that the appropriate work gets done—Timelines for projects and work are set so there are deadlines.
- are self-motivated—No one has to make the employee work; the employee can get on the job and keep on the job until it is done.

- have stability, the ability to “hang in there” and get the job done when times get tough—That means the employee is willing to work, within reason, some more hours to get through unexpected demands on the business, or times when the workload for everyone is heavy. It also means that the employee is wise enough to know that these times will end and the demand and stress will lessen. A stable employee has staying power.
- are enthusiastic and interested in the work to be done, even if it is not the most appealing part of the work—The employee recognizes that everyone has some tasks that are more appealing than others but that a job is a combination of tasks.

2) Have integrity.

“Doing whatever it takes” does not mean overstepping the boundary of good judgment, being dishonest, or harming another person. A valued employee’s actions are tempered with integrity.

Having integrity means having the appropriate honesty, trust, and follow-through at work and in working relationships. Integrity is crucial because it inspires confidence and respect from other people—co-workers, supervisors, employers, and customers.



Valued employees

- are responsible; the employer can trust that the work is done to high standard and that it is done when it is supposed to be done
- are reliable; the work gets done all of the time, not just some of the time, and other people can trust that the work will be done—There is regular, consistent follow-through. A reliable employee is not absent from work unless there is a valid reason.
- are honest—It is expected that the worker knows right from wrong and will make work decisions based on those personal values and the values of the business.
- respect confidentiality and privacy of other people and information about them
- observe company regulations

3) Find better ways to do the job.

This statement refers to finding ways to increase productivity on the job.

Valued employees

- have critical thinking skills that help to “solve your own problems if possible” by thinking things through—A company policy manual or a list of guidelines can never cover all the things that will happen at work. Critical thinking includes being able to analyze a situation, whether a small problem or major crisis, to determine how to best handle it.
- use these thoughts in combination with good decision-making and problem-solving skills
- ask questions to do the job better
- follow directions to do the job better
- are well-organized, including the work space and desk, and work schedule
- use time-management techniques to make the most of all the work time, getting the work done and staying focused—The employee is aware of how much time can be wasted on the telephone and the Internet and chatting with co-workers, and makes a conscious decision to avoid wasting time.
- take initiative by being ready and able to find better and quicker ways to do the work or begin new projects
- ask for assistance or advice when needed, such as when there is a work overload

4) Work well with other people.

Valued employees

- have a positive attitude that is visible to other people
- use good communication skills to understand and be understood
- have an appropriate sense of humour, suitable for the workplace
- get along with other people by
 - being respectful
 - being polite
 - avoiding office gossip

- avoiding or dealing with conflict with others—quarrelling between workers is not acceptable in the workplace. Employers do not have time to be referees. Upset employees are not productive and so do not add value to the company.
 - not taking credit for other’s work
 - not undermining others or their work
 - showing appreciation of others and their work
- can compromise
 - have teamwork skills—This means collaborating with other employees to reach a common goal—the company’s success, just as a sports team works toward scoring a goal.

5) **Have a spirit of service.**

The purpose of every business is to provide a product or service to others. Whether the title is “customer,” “client,” “patient,” “fellow employee,” or something else, the focus is always on serving other people so that the company has the opportunity to serve them again. That is what keeps the company in business. In order to do that, all the employees in a business must have a desire to provide service.

Valued employees

- have a “customer first” orientation—this does not mean that the “customer is always right.” Rather, it is an acknowledgement and understanding that every business must have a customer for its product or service. The business wants customers to feel satisfied and that problems have been resolved.
- use customer relation skills such as showing interest and enthusiasm when dealing with a customer, making the customer feel valued, and making the customer feel that their business is important
- take initiative in serving others by working to understand the needs of a customer, working to solve customer problems, offering other services or products that might appeal to the customer, and trying to see things from the customer’s perspective in order to resolve problems.

6) **Strive to be better.**

This refers to seeking personal and professional development in order to become a better employee. Striving to be better is slightly different than the previous statement “looking for better ways to do a job”; it focuses more on the personal development of the employee.

Valued employees

- learn from constructive criticism by focusing on how it can improve personal performance, instead of being hurt by it, and they make an effort to improve—constructive criticism is meant to be helpful.
- set and work toward personal and professional goals—work achievements should be noted and added to one’s personal portfolio.
- continue to learn, both on the job and off



An employee can learn on the job by

- taking advantage of on-the-job training, courses offered at work, and any other professional development opportunities
- reading professional and work-related journals, magazines, and newsletters
- accepting more duties and responsibilities while at work. This is a way of increasing skills and knowledge while still doing the expected job.

An employee can also learn while not on the job by

- taking advantage of weekend or evening courses and programs that will help on the job. However, to do this, the employee must be willing to give up some personal time in order to learn more.
- having other interests in life in which new transferable skills may be learned

In the work world, if the employee is not willing to learn and strive to be better, there will always be other people who are willing and want to be hired. The goal is to learn as much as possible. In some settings, this is referred to as life-long learning.

- seek balance in life—having more than one thing to do in life helps a person to have perspective, a sense of the “bigger picture” of life. It also provides opportunities to learn new transferable skills. Balance in life refers to having a mix of pursuits and interests.

Being a good employee requires commitment and responsibility. You need to recognize that some days work is a grind. It is rare that every day will be fun and enjoyable. Commitment to stick with it can help you through those tough days and lead to those days that are rewarding and fulfilling.

¹Judith Campbell, *Lifecoices: Careers Teacher Resource* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ginn Canada, 1999), BLM #7–10. Reprinted with permission by Pearson Canada.

2. a. Getting ready to go to work the first day on a new job can be very much like getting ready to go to an interview. As a new employee, you will be making first impressions almost everywhere on the jobsite. Being prepared for the first day can lower your stress level. Create a list of all the things you could do to get ready to go to work on the first day of a new job.

- b. Understanding employer expectations is an important part of starting and maintaining a job. Locate an individual in your network of contacts who has supervisory experience. You could use someone in your family, one of your friends' parents or if you have a part-time job, you could even ask your manager the following questions. Record your findings in a chart like the one that follows:

Questions	What I Learned About Employer Expectations
What are the most important things you expect from an employee?	
What are some of the personal qualities that are important for an employee to have?	
How do you help an employee to do his or her best work?	
What do you do when an employee is not working to full potential?	
How do you help an employee who is just starting out on the job?	
What advice would you give a new employee joining your business?	

Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.



To reinforce your understanding of appropriate employee behaviours, view Segment 23: Employer Expectations on your Student Support CD.

Go to page 17 of Assignment Booklet 3B and respond to question 3 of Section 4.

Looking Back; Looking Ahead

This lesson outlined the expectations an employer has of an employee. Did the expectations match what you want out of a job? In the next lesson, you will study the legal rights and responsibilities of employers and employees.

Glossary

workplace protocols: the expectations, customs, and rules of the workplace

Suggested Answers

1. Following are one student's expectations. You may have others.
 - a. I expect a job should give me a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, fair treatment and fair pay, and experience and skills I can use in future jobs.
 - b. I expect to perform the job to the best of my ability, be punctual, and follow workplace protocols.
2.
 - a. You might consider these questions when getting ready to go to work on the first day of a new job.
 - How do I get to the jobsite?
 - What should I wear?
 - Where and when do I eat?
 - Is parking available? Is there public transportation?
 - What is the exact the location (department/floor/office) of the job?
 - Who is the contact person on the jobsite?
 - Do I need to bring any information requested by the employer?
 - b. The information you collect from an employer in your community will vary depending on the nature of the business. How does the information compare to the list of employer expectations given in this lesson?

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