MANUAL
for
INTERPERSONAL SUCCESS

BY
Joshua L. Collver
INTRODUCTION

Most jobs or employment come with very specific rules. Most of these rules are easy to learn and apply to the work you do. For instance, don’t be late. What about all of the unspoken rules required to successfully interact with others? These rules and expectations are subtle and can prove more challenging to learn. Many people use the term people skills or social skills when referring to these ‘unspoken rules’. Some say that these are skills that can’t be taught – people just have to know them.

I worked for Starbucks Coffee Corporation for 12 years before becoming a social worker. One thing I can say for sure is that people can learn interpersonal skills. More importantly, interpersonal skills are a key aspect for success. I was privileged to work with great supervisors who cared about my development and success at work. From these individuals I learned to conduct myself professionally and how to interface with confidence and poise.

Starbucks was an amazing corporation to work for with some of the most fantastic training available. Starbucks placed great emphasis on developing interpersonal skills within their partners (employees), through all levels of staffing. This manual incorporates many aspects of their training modalities and overall approach to employee development.

What I learned at Starbucks is that your growth as an employee is never complete. Enter into your job with a positive attitude, willingness to learn, and an ability to receive feedback. Conduct yourself honestly and with integrity from entry-level positions all the way to the executive level. You will make mistakes and you will have successes – this is all part of your professional journey.

The content of this manual is based on a review of experience, current literature, research studies, and training documents, ultimately culminating in what I feel is key to know for interpersonal success. You can use this manual as an in the moment tool or as a development resource that you look at once a week. Remember, success on the job isn’t just about doing the job right; it is the way you conduct yourself while working. Hopefully you will be able to find some small piece of wisdom in these pages that you can put to use in your future endeavors.

BY

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HOW TO USE THE MANUAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CUSTOMER SERVICE BASICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>INTERPERSONAL SKILLS &amp; EDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>ASSERTIVENESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>STRESS MANAGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>CONFLICT RESOLUTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>HOW TO APOLOGIZE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>NOTES &amp; QUICK COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>INTERVIEWING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>BASIC PRACTICES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The employee, employer, or support person will want to read the manual and examine the content within. A complete grasp of all of the material is not necessary, but the skills all do relate to one another. The individuals utilizing this tool should know and generally understand where to find information within the manual.

The manual has step-by-step instructions for the therapist, trainer and employee on how to write an Employee Development Plan, EDP. A partnership with a supervisor or someone who can monitor performance and success is highly suggested. Identifying a stable support person is key.

Support Person Qualities: This person is positive, believes in the employee’s ability to succeed, and will support the employee and their efforts. The support person and employee need to have an honest partnership with open communication. The support person will need to be available for approximately three-six months.

Delimitations:

The Manual for Interpersonal Success is a basic tool to help supplement training on the job. Although intended to be helpful, the manual does not offer the best solutions to every situation and should not be interpreted as a total and complete resource for building social skills. The manual is based on a combination of research including scholastic and peer reviewed studies. Books, training manuals and the author’s own workplace experience supplement the content in this project.

The manual and Employee Development Plan are designed to help the participant develop a specific set of skills related to interpersonal functioning but may not generalize to all situations. This Manual for Interpersonal Success is meant to be accessible to employee, employer, and support person.

Goals and objectives outlined in the manual should not be enforced as a disciplinary measure – you cannot teach interpersonal skills coercively. Rather, goal setting and support should be done in a spirit of collaboration. The manual and EDP are an in-the-moment tool that help shape positive behavior, assertiveness and conflict resolution and hopefully provide skills that will lead to success in the workplace.
Once the EDP is completed the individual and support person will both need a copy. The EDP should be: 1. Looked at and reviewed daily or weekly during agreed upon meeting times. 2. Discussed and collaborated upon frequently. 3. Flexible to change if needed.

The goal is to list a behavior(s) one wants to develop and build upon. Monitor the experiences, cognitions, and external stimuli that contribute to or challenge the skill being attained. Discussion and partnership between the support person and employee are key elements for success with building interpersonal skill. Incorporate information from the skills pages, and all other content in the manual. Feel free to include a personal goal in the EDP (e.g., go to the gym, take my vitamins). Failure should be expected and embraced as an opportunity for positive change.

Identify when the skill(s) has been achieved. It should take approximately 1-3 months to fully learn and retain a skill(s). Remember, multiple skills can be learned at the same time. The support person and employee should meet to review the experiences, knowledge, and comprehension of the skill after the completion date listed on the EDP. Then celebrate success!

“What a person accomplishes in a day depends upon the way in which they approach their tasks. When we accept tough jobs as a challenge to our ability and wade into them with joy and enthusiasm, miracles can happen. When we do our work with a dynamic, conquering spirit, we get things done.”

- Arland Gilbert
Many jobs require interaction with customers. Customer service speaks to the quality of the interaction during the time a customer is in your care.

You may be providing direct customer service during sales interactions, facilitating services like connecting phone calls, or producing work for the customer, or collateral service where you may not be selling a product, but interface with the person being served. Customer service can be the highlight of a job for some people and for others it can be very challenging. Importantly, the type of service that you provide will change depending on the interaction. The following pages outline general behaviors for success with many different types of customer interactions. As an employee, all interaction with the public should be considered customer service because you are representing your employer.

The quality of service you provide can truly enhance how much you enjoy your work and also lead to great future opportunities. Demonstrating quality and enthusiastic customer services is often a precursor for many leadership positions. Additionally, it is not uncommon to be recruited for employment elsewhere by customers who are impressed with your skills.

Customers are one of the most important aspects of employment because they function as the source of income for the business, employer and employees. At the end of the day, customers pay your paycheck. Your service with them will often dictate your success in your position.

“Demonstrating quality and enthusiastic customer services is often a precursor for many leadership positions.”
MANUAL FOR INTERPERSONAL SUCCESS

SERVICE BASICS

INTRODUCTION

GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE BEHAVIORS

+ Anticipating customer needs, expectations, or wants, and providing appropriate solutions.
+ Manages body language, tone and intonation well while interacting with customers.
+ Is polite, appropriate and engages the customer in a way where they feel heard, appreciated and valued.
+ Making it a priority to greet customers politely and quickly and ends the interaction on a positive note.
+ Takes action quickly to resolve and address customer complaints.
+ Operates efficiently and quickly to meet customer’s needs.
+ Actively listens to the customer, even during challenging interactions.
+ Is aware of and monitors customer’s cues indicating level of satisfaction with service and product.
CUSTOMER SERVICE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES
YOUR ROLE AS SERVICE PROVIDER

ACTIVE LISTENING
Routinely models active listening with customers, e.g., eye contact, nodding, paraphrasing, acknowledging concerns with facial expressions, and faces customer when speaking with them. Uses statement like: “I see, ok, I hear you, let me make sure I understand, alright, hmmm, right, I can sympathize, please continue, tell me more about it.”

CUSTOMER FAMILIARITY
Builds rapport or familiarity with customer/s, e.g., memorizing names, knowing customer preferences, demonstrating recognition through statements like “Oh, it’s good to see you again, how have you been since the last time I saw you?”

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT
Engages in conversation with customer - if appropriate. In addition to standard greetings, incorporate statements like, “How has your son/daughter been? I see you come in all the time with them.” “It’s good to see you! It’s been a while. Did you take a vacation?”

ADDITIONAL COURTESIES
Provides additional courtesies to customers to ensure satisfaction like keeping customers informed of their orders, delays, or changes or remembering small customer requests

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS
Makes open-ended comments. See worksheet for open-ended comments p.6-8.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
 Doesn’t automatically refer difficult situations or conflict to managers. Works with customer to help solve issues before conflict escalates. “I can see you’re upset that the order was delayed and I apologize for any inconvenience that this may have caused you. I am more than willing to do whatever it takes to keep you happy and satisfied. How can I be of service to you?” Rather than, “I don’t think I can help you, let me get my supervisor.”

BE POSITIVE
Reacts positively to customer complaints or concerns rather than a defensive “me/us versus them” approach. “Thanks for the feedback, I am happy to do what it takes to make this customer happy, just let me know what I need to do.” Opposed to, “S/he said we didn’t place her order right, I think she just has a problem because I didn’t make a mistake.” Or, “I can’t believe s/he did that! I will do whatever you say, but I think they are ridiculous.”

NO EXCUSES
Doesn’t make excuses for poor customer service.

STAY APPROPRIATE
Keep conversations appropriate in length, professional in content, and gauge the customer’s reactions and respond appropriately. You “Hi, how are you today?” Customer “Fine.” You “I haven’t seen you for a while.” Customer “Uh huh, can I get a small coffee please.” You “You got it, here is your coffee. Have a great day and I will see you next time.” This customer was clearly not in a talkative mood and you were able to recognize this and meet the customer’s need for efficiency, while remaining courteous.

KNOW YOUR EMPLOYER
Be aware of employer’s expectations, rules, and regulations around customer service. Each business, corporation, industry, or agency will have certain expectations for service. Being knowledgeable about customer service expectations is critical for success.

STAY FOCUSED
Stops tasks immediately to help customers. End peer conversations immediately to help customers. Operate with a sense of efficiency, quickness and clear focus on the needs of the customer.
KEEPING THINGS POSITIVE

Most customers expect a certain level of customer service when buying a product or receiving a service. Providing good customer service is an action that contributes to an overall feeling or experience for the customer. The positive feeling or experience that customer is having can change quickly based on the quality of service you provide. One common and frequent behavior that can cause a negative shift in the customers experience is when employees make close ended statements.

Some customers don’t mind close-ended statements, but many do. Close ended statements can be interpreted as unwillingness to help, an ‘I don’t care’ attitude, or simple laziness on part of the employee. Ultimately, close ended statements translate as you telling the customer “no.” Unfortunately we cannot control how customers will interpret their experiences or our interactions. However, we can become more aware of customer expectations and how to best provide appropriate responses.

Changing a seemingly negative experience into a positive one can be challenging. Remaining positive can be very difficult when you are working to deadline, working at peak business hours, or working with challenging customers. One way of keeping situations positive is learning to frame your answers and responses in a positive or open-ended way. By framing answers and responses positively you are demonstrating a willingness to work with others and provide a high quality of service for your customers.

CLOSE-ENDED STATEMENTS

**Customer:** Do you have this shirt in a medium?
**Employee:** No we don’t.

**Customer:** Can you tell me when my order is going to be in?
**Employee:** I really don’t know.

**Customer:** I would like to order a mocha
**Employee:** We are out of chocolate, I can’t make a mocha.

**Customer:** Can you please put my call through to Mr.John Doe
**Employee:** He is in a meeting.

**Customer:** Can you reheat this item?
**Employee:** We are not allowed to do that here.

**Customer:** Can I get a refill?
**Employee:** We charge for that.

**Customer:** I have a complaint. I don’t like this?
**Employee:** Call our 1-800 number or customer contact line.

**Customer:** I really don’t like how that was done.
**Employee:** I can’t change that. Or, there is nothing I can do about that. It’s company policy.

**Customer:** If I don’t like this can I bring it back?
**Employee:** I guess. There will be a restocking fee and you will have to talk to the manager and the manager isn’t here.
Customer: I changed my mind. I really don’t want this one.
Employee: That’s ok, go ahead and pick the one you would like and we can exchange that for you.

Customer: Why can’t you give me my money back, its’ only 2 days past the return period.
Employee: I would like to do that for you. Our policy states its ‘exchange only’ after the return period and it’s non-negotiable. But feel free to pick out something else you would like and I will be happy to help you.

Customer: Can I get a small mocha? (Out of mocha)
Employee: I am so sorry, we are out of chocolate. Can I offer you a vanilla latte on the house? I know it’s frustrating not being able to get your usual.

Customer: This item was on sale in the paper and I just found out that it’s not on sale here. I drove 35 miles to come here and get this!
Employee: That’s really frustrating and I apologize for the inconvenience. Let me see what I can do and maybe we can work something out for you.

Customer: I want to speak to a manager right now! (No manager is available).
Employee: I see you’re upset, I am more than willing to help with any concern you may have. I know you wanted to speak with a manager but unfortunately there are no managers available. I don’t want you to have to wait any longer. How can I help?

Customer: I need this fixed now and people keep telling me I have to wait 2 more weeks. (Customer does have to wait 2 more weeks).
Employee: I’m so sorry. I can understand your frustration. This is what has to be done to make sure you get a product back that works.

Customer: (Frustrated Customer buying clothes and credit machine is down) I want to pay with my credit card, I told you already, I don’t have cash!
Employee: I’ll tell you what, I can hold these for you until our system is fixed, and I’ll give you a call the minute it comes back on line. We also take checks. I know this is an inconvenience for you but I will personally call you when the machine is working again.

One way of keeping situations positive is learning to frame your answers and responses in a positive or open-ended way.
Do your best to answer these comments with open ended responses.

**Customer:** Why can’t I get my order now? (2 week wait period to make the product)
Employee:

**Customer:** I understand you said you can’t take ATM but that is all I have to pay with
Employee:

**Customer:** But I want to switch part of my order and still get the meal deal.
(You are not allowed to make switches)
Employee:

**Customer:** I want to return these clothes. (Clothes do not have original tags, but look unworn and clean, store policy is unclear on what to do in this situation.)
Employee:
How to use the interpersonal skill guide

**STEP 1**
IDENTIFY COMPETENCY

Identify the competency that you would like to improve on. You can identify your needs yourself, through a peer or a supervisor may work closely with you on your development. Once you have identified your area of opportunity, identify which skill it falls under. For instance, you realize that you can improve on your customer service skills. This opportunity may fall under Communication, Work Ethic, or Composure. It is up to you and possibly your support person to identify which core competency you would like to improve upon. *List this competency under the Interpersonal Skill section of your Employee Development Plan (EDP).*

**STEP 2**
BEHAVIOR SKILL

Once you have identified the core competency or skill you want to refine, like Communication, then you can begin looking at which listed behaviors you would like to adopt or work on. In the Communication section you could pick behaviors from the Skilled or Proficient sections. Pick one or two behaviors that you would like to improve upon or master. For Communication you could select the behaviors “Direct and appropriate body language” or “Communicating what I need using assertive language.” *List these behaviors under the Skill Behaviors section of your EDP.*

You will find that there are **three boxes on your EDP**. You can select three competencies at a time to work on or you may select just one. Remember this is a tool for you to drive your development and skill base. Use the EDP in a way that is most comfortable to you. It is recommended that you keep your EDP in a place where you will see it and be able to read it over on a daily basis.

*See the edp form on the next page*
The next step to filling out your EDP is to select a support person to monitor or help you with your progress. Good support people are supervisors, counselors or therapists, a supportive family member, or a good friend/work peer. You can also list a tool that you would like to use in this section. This can be a book on the topic, this manual, or a daily reminder. A tool can be whatever you identify as helping you achieve your goals in this section.

*List these under the Support Person or Tool section.

The final section of your EDP is the Check in and Expected Date of Completion section. This is a very important section of your EDP. It is recommended that you take no longer than 2-3 months to accomplish a goal set. If you decide that you want to accomplish your goal in two months your check in date would be one month from the start date. You will use your support person to check in with you on your progress. *List both of these dates under the Check in and Expected Date of Completion Section.

Once you have completed your EDP you will sign it and have your support person sign it. The EDP is not limited to only the competencies listed in the Interpersonal Skills Manual. You may come up with additional competencies that you would like to improve on. Feel free to use this form to support and drive your own growth in positive ways.
QUICK GUIDE

USING THE EDP

STEP 1
IDENTIFY COMPETENCY

STEP 2
SKILL BEHAVIORS

STEP 3
SUPPORT TOOL

STEP 4
CHECK IN/COMPLETE

IDENTIFY SKILL TO WORK ON

THE FOLLOWING PAGES HAVE BEHAVIOR SKILLS YOU CAN CHOOSE TO WORK ON

CHECK IN QUICK EXPLANATION

CHOOSE BEHAVIOR TO WORK ON

EXPLAIN HOW TO DO IT

EXAMPLES CAN BE FOUND ON ALL THE FOLLOWING SKILL PAGES IN THE EDP SECTION

CHOOSE SUPPORT TOOL(S)
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EDP  
Employee Development Plan

STEP 1
IDENTIFY COMPETENCY

STEP 2
NAME

STEP 3
SUPPORT PERSON

STEP 4
DATE OF PLAN
CHECK IN COMPLETE
Communication speaks to our ability to relate information to one another. We can communicate many things with our words, behaviors, tone, attitudes, mannerisms and body language. We can communicate ideas, feelings, messages and our inner state of being either formally or informally.

In most work or employment individuals will need to communicate with many people. How we communicate will often change with whom we are communicating with. For instance, a conversation with a supervisor would be different than a conversation with a peer. During these different conversations your tone, intonation, presentation and body language change. See Best Practices for some specific elements related to good communication.

Communication can be chosen as a competency for step 1 of the EDP.

**BEST COMMUNICATION PRACTICES**

- **Speak purposefully with a clear message and intent.** Your stream of thoughts should be communicated in a logical sequence: beginning, middle, end.

- **Good communicators use an appropriate tone that fits their message.**

- **It is good to know your audience.** Tailor your message appropriately to the individuals you are communicating with.

- **Pace yourself when speaking and allow others to finish their statements before you speak or respond.**

- **Pay close attention to the messages of others when they are speaking to you.** Then respond to what they *said*, not just what you think.
The behavioral skills listed below will help establish and promote composure during difficult times. These skills are organized into Skilled, Proficient, and Areas of Opportunity. You may identify certain behaviors that you would like to reform, improve upon or add to your ongoing development.

**SKILLED**

Use of assertive communication. Appropriately uses ‘I’ statements, refrains from using ‘you’ statements, listens to the needs of others, and advocates calmly for their own needs. Assertiveness section p. 23-26

Explains necessary information simply, directly and in a way that is understood by the audience. Often thinks about the way others might interpret what is said and communicates in a way that they will be able to understand.

Listens carefully to others, reflects understanding of the message, and actively responds to the questions, needs or other’s message. “I hear what you are saying, tell me if this is correct...” or “I’m not quite sure I understand yet, are you telling me that...”

Remains cool, calm, and composed when communicating, even when communicating about difficult emotional topics or during high stress situations.

Actively moderates their tone and intonation to match their message. When saying “Good Morning!” saying it with authentic perk and enthusiasm.

Communicates properly in multiple ways: handwritten notes, email, voice-mail, face-to-face, and written communications. Example of written communication p. 37-40

Displays confident and appropriate body language: Head held high, maintains moderate eye contact, smiling appropriately, head nodding when listening, appropriate handshakes and respecting the space of others when communicating.

**PROFICIENT**

Demonstrates effective listening skills: nodding, maintaining some eye contact, waiting to speak until the other is done.

Addresses individuals clearly, “Good morning sir/miss, how are you today?”

Speaks logically, “I’m having a hard time understanding _____________. Can you please tell me more about _____________. That way I will understand better.”

Uses appropriate language with individuals at work: addressing supervisors and peers appropriately, refrains from using excessive slang with supervisors, peers, or customers, no profanity in the work place.

**OPPORTUNITY**

Inactive listening: little to no eye contact, staring in the distance, distracted, body facing away from the individual speaking, rolling eyes.

Dominating conversation: interrupting, rambling, and speaking louder than the other person.

Unaware of or doesn’t care about the communicated needs of others.

Uses passive aggressive or aggressive communication. (Passive Aggressive)

“I guess that’s fine, whatever, I really don’t want to, but o.k.”

(Aggressive)

“You can’t make me! Get away from me! Or use of profanity and/or yelling.”
Composure is our ability to stay in a state of stability where we can make logical choices that will benefit us in the future. Many situations can cause strong emotional reactions in individuals.

These challenging situations can look like a very busy day at work, getting difficult feedback from a supervisor or customer, or maybe having a fight with a family member or significant other. Any of these situations can create an opportunity for an individual to lose their composure.

An important aspect of composure is that the individual is able to maintain perspective and not impulsively react to pressure, stimulus, or challenge. Composure involves regulating your emotions when situations become challenging so that they don’t overpower your decision-making ability. See Best Practices for some examples of what composure can look like.

- Acting calmly during high stress times.
- Remaining balanced in situations that are ambiguous or unfamiliar.
- Being able to be constructive when the situation is frustrating, irritating, or difficult.
- Seeing opportunities during times of crisis or difficulty.
- Utilizes positive coping skills during high stress situations: deep breathing, muscle relaxation, thought stopping. Coping Skills Section p. 27-30 in Stress management section.
- Does their best to maintain a positive attitude in the face of adversity.

Best Composure Practices
The behavioral skills listed below will help establish and promote composure during difficult times. These skills are organized into Skilled, Proficient, and Areas of Opportunity. You may identify certain behaviors that you would like reform, improve upon or add to your ongoing development.

**SKILLED**

Models appropriate and consistent responses to stress. Operates predictably, positively and constructively when situations are difficult. People know what to expect from this person during difficult situations.

Models calm, relaxed and appropriate body language and facial expression during difficult situations.

Is able to manage their own stress without transferring it onto others.

Is able to regulate feelings and emotional responses to challenges. Doesn’t allow their feelings to impact their decision making process. For example, finding out that you did something incorrectly during a prior shift and still being able to operate and complete your job duties well or to standard.

Does not lose composure in presence of others, e.g. supervisors, customers, or peers.

Uses communication skills to manage conflict or stress. For instance, speaking with a manager or supervisor about a problem, utilizing assertiveness skills to manage situations of difficulty.

**PROFICIENT**

Is able to communicate calmly with irritated/agitated people across all levels, e.g. supervisor, peers, and customers.

Respond confidently and calmly when receiving feedback from individuals. “I will take your feedback into consideration.”

Is able to manage small everyday frustrations while keeping focused on larger goals.

Models active listening when people are frustrated or venting, e.g., nodding, paraphrasing, reflecting appropriate responses.

Manages their tone, intonation, and body language to reflect a positive attitude during periods of high stress.

Positive self-talk. “I can do this. This is stressful but I can manage. Just take a deep breath, count to ten.” Or incorporate another relaxation technique from Stress Management section p.27-30.

Is actively able to use deep breathing and muscle relaxation to manage physical responses to stress. Stress Management p. 27-30.

**OPPORTUNITY**

Has difficulty managing negative thinking, e.g., focusing only on the negative, ruminates, or assumes the worst.

Unprofessional displays of emotion, e.g., shouting, slamming, breaking things, moving too quickly, bumping into people, and use of profanity.

Inability to make a decision or respond appropriately during difficult times. Receiving tough feedback and crying, yelling or leaving instead of using assertiveness and communication skills. Conflict resolution section p.23, 26, 31-34.

Abandoning your assigned task or job duty without communicating needs, concerns or feelings to a supervisor or peer.

Reacting immediately and aggressively to the comments of others. “How could you say that to me!!! S/he said what?!”
Throughout life we will face situations where we do not always know what to do. These situations can occur at work, home, on the street and in many different contexts and with different people.

Coping with ambiguity speaks to the individual’s ability to successfully navigate through challenging or uncertain experiences. Ambiguity means that a situation can be understood or interpreted in multiple ways.

During employment, or when at work, individuals can face sudden changes and unexpected occurrences with great frequency. There may be changes to policies, the schedule, expectations or someone may be absent due to illness. Ambiguous situations, arise on a daily basis and vary in severity. Some situations can be extremely difficult to effectively cope with.

An important aspect of coping with ambiguous situations is the ability to adapt quickly and remain calm. It is important to regulate your responses and reactions to changes or challenging situations. Listed in Best Practices are some examples of core behaviors for coping with ambiguity.

**BEST AMBIGUITY PRACTICES**

- Thinking before reacting.
- Regulating your stress responses before they get out of control.
- Challenges themselves to adapt to the situation and model composure.
- Self-awareness of behavior, responses and affect (expression, energy, emotion).
- A flexible approach that allows for open communication despite challenges.
- Can face conflict or tough situations and come up with solutions.

Ambiguity can be chosen as a competency for step 1 of the EDP.
The behavioral skills listed below will help establish and promote composure during difficult times. These skills are organized into Skilled, Proficient, and Areas of Opportunity. You may identify certain behaviors that you would like to reform, improve upon or add to your ongoing development.

**SKILLED**

- Is able to weigh the pros and cons of a situation and modify the approach if needed. For instance, Jill came in late and I can’t give out breaks on time, I could skip my own and violate the rules. I would be able to get on track with breaks but I would still be violating rules. I will take my break.

- Is able to handle challenges, goals and requests – even when they seem like unfamiliar territory, for example, e.g., “Jack/Jill I need you to lead a meeting on customer service and I don’t have time to show you what I want – just do something good!”

- Remains composed and able to make difficult decisions during tough times. For example, Tyler is always late and his shifts are when there is no manager on the floor. This results in lower morale among the team. You decide to anonymously report him.

- Is able to use resources to come up with answers and solutions to difficult situations or questions by consulting manuals, policies, labor law posters, or a manager.

**PROFICIENT**

- Can shift priorities according to direction and need. For instance, wanting to continue working on a side project but deciding to help a customer waiting at the register instead.

- Is seen as flexible and accommodating by fellow staff.

- Supports changes in the workplace, e.g., 3 people did not show up for work, you will have to get your break later in the day. You accept the situation and remain upbeat and positive regardless.

- Maintains composure and makes good choices during stressful times.

**OPPORTUNITY**

- Reacts negatively to changes in the workplace.

- Unable to make a choice when it is required. Q “Sarah is not coming in today can you stay 20 minutes later so I can take my break?” A “I don’t know….I kind of don’t want to, but I don’t know, let me think about it.”

- Unable to let go of past ways of doing things. For example, your old or favorite supervisor lets you divide your 30 min lunch into six five minute breaks. Your new supervisor doesn’t.

- Inability to make a point during conversations or questions.

- Unable to provide specific and timely responses to questions or concerns.

- Inability to think on your feet for instance, you ran out of $1.00 bills when making change and can’t figure out what to do.
SKILL INTERPERSONAL

At work, home, or in your social environment you will interact with other people. The way in which you interact can change with the setting, context of the interaction and the person.

Importantly, most jobs require well developed skills in relating to other people. Most service level jobs require daily interaction with customers and peers. The context of your relationships and the dynamics that you develop will depend on the quality of your interactions. Specifically, interpersonal skill means having positive and mutually rewarding interactions with others.

An important component of having successful interpersonal relationships is to build appropriate rapport with others. Good rapport with others means that you have a harmonious, predictable and dependable relationship; there is a productive mutual understanding between you and the other person. Throughout your career it is important to develop positive and consistent relationships with the majority of individuals you work with: supervisors, peers, customers, and other service people connected to the work you do.

BEST INTERPERSONAL PRACTICES

+ Makes a positive first impression with others.
+ Demonstrates an ability to understand and empathize with the needs and feelings of others.
+ Develops positive working relationships by demonstrating dependability and consistency.
+ Keeps feedback, comments, and discussions positive and constructive.
+ Can work effectively with multiple people in different contexts.
+ Projects a calm and pleasant affect around others.
The behavioral skills listed below will help establish and promote composure during difficult times. These skills are organized into Skilled, Proficient, and Areas of Opportunity. You may identify certain behaviors that you would like to reform, improve upon or add to your ongoing development.

**SKILLED**

Is able to handle conflict with others while maintaining a calm approach and a focus on a positive outcome. See p. 31-34

Encourages collaboration among individuals with a solution-oriented focus.

Operates with a positive sense of willingness, enthusiasm, and camaraderie. “Would you be able to work an extra shift this week?”

“Absolutely! I am happy to help out. When is the shift? Is there anything else I can help with this week?”

Promotes a positive environment that fosters respect for other people: supervisors, customers, peers, subordinates, and service people. For example, keeping conversations professional, establishing appropriate boundaries between friendship and work, using assertiveness skills to address conflict.

Is able to communicate well with multiple and diverse individuals across all aspects of employment. For instance, being equally nice to bosses, staff, and guests.

Operates with respect, appreciation, and gratitude for the needs and efforts of others.

Is able to communicate well with multiple and diverse individuals across all aspects of employment. For instance, being equally nice to bosses, staff, and guests.

Operates with respect, appreciation, and gratitude for the needs and efforts of others.

**PROFICIENT**

Keeps relationships at work positive and appropriate not spending excess social time with your boss/supervisor.

Often praises the efforts of others and supports the efforts of individuals – even when not successful. Is enjoyable to work with and by the group. Is willing to help out and work well with others. Stays focused on the efforts of the team even in challenging situations. “Hey we’re doing good, hang in there guys.”

Works well with others willing to help others. For instance, saying “hello, good morning, good afternoon, and goodbyes” as well as “I can get that for you. Here let me help you with that. Good job on completing that project it really made a difference!” Is seen as a ‘team-player’ regardless of gender, background, race/ethnicity, personal, religious, spiritual, or political background.

Recognizes other people’s needs, e.g., a fellow employee has been working longer than you and has not yet had a break and you make sure they get their break before yours.

**OPPORTUNITY**

Not responding or acting negatively when asked to do something by a supervisor, customer or peer.

Gossiping or Slander-ing another person.

Speaking negatively about a supervisor, peer, or service person when they are not present.

Making their own needs and agenda a priority over the needs of their team, job, or fellow co-workers, e.g., taking a break out of turn because you wanted it at that moment. Not following policy because you don’t understand it, versus getting help from a peer or supervisor.
Having a good work ethic speaks to your quality of workmanship, or how well you do something. Different jobs may have a different expectation of what constitutes a good work ethic. Work ethic speaks to your own set of values and quality that you bring to a job and position. A work ethic can change, grow and will develop as you mature in the work environment.

Most people will have their own set of standards and rules that they operate by. There are also the standards, principles, and values of the place where you may/will be employed. Most businesses will have a mission statement that outlines their values and goals. Establishing that you know these values, rules and principles and are able to merge them with your own job performance will demonstrate a good work ethic. Listed under Best Practices are some behaviors associated with a good work ethic.

**BEST WORK ETHIC**

**BEST PRACTICES**

- Demonstrates the ability to follow rules and expectations.
- Arrives on time, dressed appropriately and ready to work.
- Dedicates the energy to doing a job and doing it well, no matter how small or big the task.
- Conducts themselves with pride and positivism.
- Accepts responsibility for their performance, quality, and service.
- Promotes high standards for honesty, fairness, and quality.
- Is credible, consistent and reliable across all fields of employment with all people.
The behavioral skills listed below will help establish and promote composure during difficult times. These skills are organized into Skilled, Proficient, and Areas of Opportunity. You may identify certain behaviors that you would like to reform, improve upon or add to your ongoing development.

**SKILLED**

Is able to honestly critique their own performance and make improvements on their own.

Sets high standards and quality of workmanship for themselves, e.g., follows work standards for safety, security, and health.

Follows the policies, procedures and expectations of the employer.

When faced with a question, will attempt to decide the best course of action on their own and then present their question and a solution to their supervisor.

“I have a question about ________, this is what I think is the right course of action__________. Do you think that is the best approach?”

Is open and honest and acts with integrity; is consistent in their approach and mannerisms. For instance, calling in the prior day if you are not feeling well, attempting to get your shift covered if necessary, make a personal commitment to making up the work if you can. Conversation with supervisor, ” I am not feeling well today and I am sorry for any inconvenience this may cause you and the other staff. Is there anything I can do to minimize the impact of my absence? I should be back to work in 3 days.”

**PROFICIENT**

Comes to work with a positive and upbeat attitude, e.g., ready to work when you arrive, politely greeting people when you arrive.

Sensitive to being polite, fair and courteous to others.

Holds themselves accountable for their own behavior.

Can admit when they are wrong or have made a mistake and take steps to improve the situation. See Apology Section p. 35-36.

Is timely and punctual for appointments and scheduled shifts.

Makes an effort to call well in advance if going to be absent from shift. Makes attempts to get their shift covered.

**OPPORTUNITY**

Disregards policies, rules, standards and requests from employer, supervisors or fellow teammates.

Is inconsistent in behavior, attitude, timeliness and actions.

Does not follow through with expectations, promises or commitments.

Disregards the needs of others and prioritizes their own wants and needs.

Participates in gossip against other team members, customers, and managers/supervisors.

Blames others for their own mistakes.

Sense of entitlement to certain hours, privileges, schedule, or pay, e.g., You have a specific schedule and are unwilling to be flexible because you feel like you are entitled to that schedule. Reality Check: There was never a set schedule or guarantee for hours when you were hired.

Does not communicate their own needs, wants and expectations to supervisors or managers.

Allows feelings of resentment, anger, and frustration to brew.
What is Assertiveness?

There are many different approaches to being assertive and many aspects within the individual’s life dictate how being assertive is allowed and expressed. Culture, age, rank and status will all influence how the individual will express their assertiveness. From my professional experience, learning to be assertive is a major skill that can greatly increase a person’s sense of confidence and ability to get things done at work.

Character or behavioral approaches are usually defined by three categories.

1. AGGRESSIVE

Aggressive behavior and responses are often characterized by a combative tone. An aggressive approach could be characterized by lots of “you” statements. “You didn’t do this right!” “You make everything bad around here.” Aggressive characters can be very good at “put-downs,” hurting other people verbally so that they win the argument by default, or really getting in your face about something they decide they don’t like. Think drill sergeant. Aggressive individuals do not have a problem pointing their finger at others short comings or answering for other people. The goal of the aggressive character is to win.
Passive individuals do not enjoy conflict and can be unwilling to engage in arguments, heated discussions, or directly addressing problems. Not challenging authority in a healthy way, not advocating for your own needs or taking advantage of opportunity characterizes passivity. Passivity in a person can be a good thing but can lead to long-term challenges. If you find yourself always apologizing, not sticking up for yourself, and taking one for the team you may be relying on neutrality and passivity as a major coping skill.

Assertiveness can take form in many ways. Assertive people advocate for themselves and their needs. There is an agreement between what they say, think and do. Assertive people respect the rights, feelings and opinions of others without compromising their own. If you can say “no” without guilt and are comfortable making mistakes and taking ownership for them you have some assertiveness skills. Can you stand up for yourself with a demanding and intimidating boss? Can you ask for a raise with confidence – not arrogance, winning, or complaining? At the core of assertiveness is confidence and consistency. These are skills that can be taught and learned.
Listed below are the assertive person’s “bill of rights”. These outline some of the values that are at the core of assertiveness. These values are adopted from Dr. Cal LeMon’s work Assertiveness: Get What you Want Without Being Pushy.

1. You have the right to take responsibility for your decisions, actions and behavior. You do not have to take responsibility for other people’s behavior.

2. You have the right to make mistakes and be wrong. You have the right to take ownership of your mistakes and also work towards correcting them.

3. You have the right to express your opinions and feelings.

4. You have the right to advocate for your needs without feeling guilty, selfish, or needy.

5. You have the right to defend yourself and your position. You also have the right to respect other people’s position and sense of security.

Language

Using the correct language is a key component of being assertive. One common mistake people make when resolving conflict is using “you” statements versus “I” statements. When you use “you” statements the level of conflict often increases and assertiveness skills can evaporate. The point is, the minute you say “you” people can really go on the defensive.

I Statements VS You Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I don’t like the way that looks.</th>
<th>You don’t look good in that.</th>
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- You will have to meet me later
- I am angry about how I was spoken to
- You make me angry when you talk like that

Assertive individuals recognize that discussions, arguments and conflict are not about winning; they are about finding mutual common ground. One step to effectively navigating conflict is focusing on the goal you want to achieve when advocating for yourself. Listed to the right is an example of an assertive conversation between an employee and their demanding boss.

**SCENARIO**

**BOSS’S GOAL:**
Tell the employee what they have to do this week and get back to his/her demanding schedule immediately.

**EMPLOYEE’S GOAL:**
Let boss know these expectations are not reasonable and to walk away from the conversation not feeling like an earthworm.

**EXAMPLE**

**BOSS** *(With raised voice)*
Your numbers last week are not what I expected. I have brand new employees with better numbers than these.

**EMPLOYEE**
Is there something wrong with my performance?

**BOSS**
I’m telling you that you need to bring in an additional 20% this week to make up for last week. I don’t care if you have to work overtime and drop the attitude.

**EMPLOYEE**
It is impossible for me to bring in an additional 20% this week because I have requested an extra day off to take care of my daughter. We also just received a memo stating overtime is not allowed for this quarter.

**BOSS**
Well you need to figure something out now!

**EMPLOYEE**
I feel uncomfortable with this expectation. I need the additional day to be with my daughter this week and I will do my best to bring in an additional 20%. Is there anything else we need to talk about?

**BOSS**
No, we are done. Just do your best.

**IN THIS CONVERSATION**

the employee did several things correctly. They did not use “you” statements. They did not engage with the boss in a negative way by raising their voice or becoming defensive/combative. This employee was able to hold their ground and advocate for their own needs. This individual also stated that they were uncomfortable with the boss’ expectations, which were pointing to breaking ‘overtime’ rules to get results. This person was not allowing their boss to back them in a corner. Being assertive doesn’t always mean you will get your way and that everything will turn out picture perfect. It does mean that you are able and willing to stand up for yourself in a healthy way.
causes of stress

Deadlines Ineffective communication Peak business times Poor Interpersonal skills Customer complaints Out of product or merchandise Tardiness Constructive feedback Supervisors High expectations Changes in the work place or ambiguity Over-stimulation or too much going on at one time Confrontation Having to confront someone Technical difficulties Difficulty with peer group or fellow employee Illness Turbulent home/work environment Crisis Situations Unanticipated changes Holiday times/season Gossip Loss of composure – you or someone else Unsolicited feedback Burnout or boredom New management Authority figures Thought distortions Starting employment or new job On a final warning Not knowing policies and procedures Life challenges: car won’t start, no babysitter, no gas money, no clean clothes etc Fighting with significant others or family members No shows or employee absences Performance evaluations, reviews or raises Equipment malfunctions Poor planning Unable or unwilling to follow direction Unsafe, unfair or unhealthy working conditions Unmet needs in the workplace: raise overdue, underpaid, overworked, laws and rules broken by authority figures, sexual harassment, and/or harassment, Unfair pay, Reminations
Work and employment can bring unexpected situations that can cause excess stress in our lives. Certain days can start off bad. Maybe you got a flat tire on your way to work, someone was unkind to you, or you just don’t feel great. Or, you can have an initial bad experience at work and the rest of your day can be impacted. Consequently, these stressful experiences can affect workplace performance. You will have stressful days at work regardless of the type of employment you are in. Thankfully people can learn to manage most stress.

Relaxation techniques and coping skills have been shown to be useful in managing the effects of stress. Stress management techniques cannot always make the causes of stress go away, but they can help reduce the impact stress can have on individual performance at work and at home.

A key component of managing the affects of stress is to identify specific stressful circumstances. Some stressful circumstances can be positive and improve work-place performance. Other situations can be very difficult. It is important to learn for yourself what you identify as causes of stress. You will then be better able to prepare for those situations when they are present.

A key aspect of learning to identify stressful situations is to identify the triggers and sensations that indicate you are feeling stressed. These will serve as a ‘red flag’ or indication that something is going on with you.

Some people begin to feel irritable. Others begin to sweat or tense their shoulder and neck muscles. Some other common responses to stress include: stomach aches, nausea, headaches, aggression, muscle tension, inability to concentrate, rushing, shallow breathing, panic feelings, anxious feelings, freezing or inability to do anything, inaccurate thoughts, and impulsivity. Everybody manifests stress in different ways. Some people are more sensitive to stressful situations than others. Regardless, it is essential to learn how you manifest stress in your life. What are your indicators?

Most importantly, you can learn to manage the stress in your life and particularly at work, since work is only one component of your life. Once you have learned to navigate through stressful experiences and master stressful situations you have gained a powerful skill. Turning stressful experiences into positive and productive situations is possible and indicates leadership presence.
I. Deep Breathing

Taking a moment to breathe can really help regulate feelings and reduce tension. Often times during high stress situations like peak business, workplace conflict, receiving a performance evaluation or critical feedback from your boss we often revert to shallow breathing. This is when you only breathe into your upper chest with quick breaths. When you catch yourself doing shallow breathing it is your body’s way of sending up a “red flag” that says “Hey I’m getting stressed out here!”

Being aware of when you are shallow breathing is half the battle. The other half is practicing how to take a deep breath. When you are stressed and are chest (shallow) breathing, your lower abdomen is pulled in while your chest expands. With deep breathing you breathe all the way down into your stomach with the breath continuously filling you all the way up into your chest. Your lower abdomen or belly should expand during this exercise. Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Inhale and exhale should take 5 seconds each.

By taking 3 good deep breaths you can make a big difference for your body during stressful times. Deep breathing doesn’t fix everything but it can help bring you into a state of stability where you can manage your stress better.

steps

1. Identify that you are getting stressed. Be mindful of your body’s stress indicators e.g. tense shoulders, stiff neck, tight scalp, shallow breathing.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose.
3. Bring the breath all the way down into your lower abdomen.
4. Fill your lungs with air - all the way to the top chest. This step should take about 5 seconds.
5. Exhale slowly through your mouth by slowly bringing your lower abdomen in. This should also take 5 seconds.

tips!

During the time you are deep breathing you want to relax your mind. This can be difficult. Be aware of any thoughts that come up while you are breathing. Hold the thought lightly in your mind and then release it. The goal is not to over think, judge, or worry, but to bring your attention back to the deep breath while letting the thought pass.
II. Muscle Relaxation

When we are stressed our muscles can become very tense. People often know they are tense because their shoulders and neck hold a lot of tension. We also hold tension in our faces and our scalp. One way to effectively help reduce stress in the moment is to practice progressive muscle relaxation. You can do this simultaneously with your deep breathing. A great time to do progressive muscle relaxation is on one of your breaks at work.

The Big Five:

1. Start by relaxing your scalp. Feel the muscles at the top of and around your head relax – especially at your temples.

2. Allow all of your face muscles to relax. Release any tension around your eyes, relax your lips and mouth and unclench your teeth. Squeeze your eyes shut tight and then slowly relax them open if you need to.

3. Relax the muscles in your neck, especially at the base of your skull – where your neck and head meet.

4. Drop your shoulders and relax those muscles.

5. Squeeze your hands into tight fists and then relax them into open palms.

Once you practice this pattern of muscle relaxation you can get really good at releasing tension fast. This is an excellent way to stop the progress of stress in its tracks. When you combine muscle relaxation and deep breathing you are able to better regulate your emotions and reactivity.
Conflict is an inevitable part of working with others. Conflict can occur between people at all levels of industry. You cannot make everybody happy all the time and sooner or later a conflict will probably arise. It may be during a customer interaction that isn’t going well, or you may disagree with a supervisor’s decision. Regardless, challenging situations will give rise to conflict. Conflict can be tough for many people, it can kindle feelings of anxiety, powerlessness or failure.

Can people just work together and get along? The honest answer is no — not all the time. Work and employment brings all different types of people to the table and each one has their preferences for what they like and don’t like. Each individual has their own unique habits, customs, beliefs and value systems that they operate by. Rarely, if ever, will conflict be absent from the bringing together different people.

On a positive note, in the work setting people usually have a common goal or objective with their peers, supervisors and the people they serve. Learning to manage the intense feelings and opinions that arise with conflict is a great part of working.

This section serves as a basic guide for navigating through the high stress situations that result in conflict. It will outline basic steps to managing conflict and using the situation as an opportunity for success.

I. Steps to Managing Conflict

Identify the feelings that alert you to when there is a conflict and know which type of conflict situation you are dealing with.

Identifying your triggers is key to managing conflict. Being aware of when you don’t feel good about how a situation played out versus reacting immediately to your feelings will be a big step towards better conflict management. I once worked with a woman who thought it was perfectly fine to wear my jacket on her breaks (without asking) and keep all of her things in my pockets. Personal things identifying that I didn’t like this and that I needed to talk to her before I became resentful was the 1st step towards managing that conflict situation. I could have just snapped at her when she put my jacket on, but that relationship would then be damaged and I would have lost my credibility as a calm and responsible person.
This type of conflict is like the “jacket” situation. These are small manageable every day conflicts. For example, John Doe came in 5 minutes late, or you only got 20 hours on the schedule instead of the 24 like you like. Although small these types of conflict can build into serious resentment if left unmanaged.

2. Potentially Serious Conflict

This type of conflict takes the form of a debate. People begin to take sides, keep score and tally up who is winning the argument and who isn’t. This could take the form of a manager who is punishing staff by shortening their hours. You may begin to see a body of staff come together against the manager, either directly or behind his/her back. Another example could be an employee being held accountable for something they did and other staff think this is not fair. At this stage of conflict, sides and opinions begin to develop based on opinions and feelings related to the issue.

3. Serious Conflict

This level of conflict is when something grievous has been done, or someone has taken the conflict to the highest level possible. During this level of conflict changing the situation, solving the problem or coming to terms with the other person is not enough. You want the source of the conflict gone! The internal drive is to get rid of or eliminate the other party. At work this could be a major conflict you have with an employer. Perhaps you were discriminated against, harassed, or you have had many small battles with your supervisor resulting in this intense feelings of resentment. This level of conflict often requires the help of others to solve. Once, at my work I had to report that a manager was sexually harassing another employee, I needed to bring in Human Resources to resolve this issue. It was not possible or appropriate for me to discuss the issue with him or the other party.
When you identify that you are reacting strongly, address it with the person by saying “Hey Steve/Sue I want to work this out with you, let’s make a time to talk about it.” By acknowledging that you want to work things out you are demonstrating responsibility and leadership skills. By setting a date to meet in the future you are controlling the meeting time and have bought yourself additional time to think about how you want to respond to the conflict - in a professional way.

Start out by thanking everyone for coming.

Identify what everyone agrees on “We all want what is best for the store and staffing.” If the manager says s/he is concerned about not having enough hours to give, validate this concern by saying “I understand.” Hear out the opposite party and be a good listener.

State the facts of your argument, not your opinions and feelings. Use “I” statements, do not berate, belittle, or bash the other person. Be tough with the facts not with the person. “As you know, I have repeatedly asked to work 40 hours a week, this was the expectation when I was hired.” Rather than, “You lied to me and won’t give me the 40 hours I need. You have ruined my life!”

Without forcing your position, state what you want and why. You state, “I have worked here for a year now and feel like I deserve a raise. I have completed x,y,z trainings, I am timely and rarely call in sick, and am working at a high level of productivity. I feel like a raise is fair at this point.” Be willing to compromise but don’t give up your position. Manager states “Unfortunately no one is getting a raise this year due to cut-backs.” You state “I understand, cutbacks are tough for everyone. When the year is up I would like to discuss this again with you.”

Be gracious and polite. Thank everyone involved for the meeting and for their time. When managing conflict you build credibility by checking in a few weeks later with the other party. If your boss has been giving you those extra hours for the past few weeks make it a point to write him/her a card. You write, “I want to thank you for the extra hours you have been giving me. I am glad we were able to resolve the issue we had before. Thank you for being so accommodating with the schedule — it really makes a big difference for me.” You stated what s/he did that worked for you and acknowledged why it made a difference. This shows you were serious about the issue and you are responsible enough to show appreciation when it’s due.
During situations of conflict often the first things to go are manners and courtesy. Furthermore, when people become agitated or mad they often don’t manage their tone and intonation well. Intonation is when you change the rise and fall of pitch in your voice. Tone speaks to the energy, mood and emotion you impart to the words you use. You could say the nicest thing to someone, but use the wrong tone and intonation and you can end up in big trouble.

When in conflict situations, no matter how intense, keep a calm, firm and steady tone. You want to demonstrate that you are in control of yourself and the situation. Maintain eye contact and keep your chin level with the other person. You are demonstrating that you are able to advocate for yourself and your needs. Never raise your voice with the other party involved, don’t use swear words, or insult the other party.

Manage the attitude you have during these important conversations – it will pay off later. You want to demonstrate that you are not here to fight, you are here to resolve the issue. Remember, when the conversation gets tough it is ok to pause and take a slow deep breath to relax. Take time to think.

Always make sure and use your manners. Say your hellos, goodbyes and thank you(s) to everyone – in a nice way. Avoid ignoring certain people, not looking them in the eye, or not speaking directly to the person you feel is creating the conflict. Sometimes in conflict situations, in attempts to fight back, we stop providing common courtesies. This approach rarely, if ever, goes well for the employee. Even if you end up resolving the issue, your manager or other party will remember your lack of tact and respect. You have to play fair even if it is an unfair situation.

Before having a serious talk or meeting with some one it is a good idea to create lists. Lists will help you think things out more clearly and plan better for meetings. It is always good to go into meetings prepared with key talking points or goals.
There may come a time during your employment when you will need to apologize. You may have done something incorrectly, forgotten something, or were not on your best behavior. You may have even been inappropriate, cruel or said something you regret. Or, you forgot to get approval for something and went ahead and did what you wanted. No matter what happened, a genuine apology can help alleviate some of the tension, worries, lack of trust, and resentment that can build after ‘something’ happens.

You can make an apology and people do not have to accept them if they don’t want to. Apologies don’t fix everything but they can help make people feel better about situations. Apologies are best kept in small doses. If you say sorry for everything you do, your apology has lost its potency.

There is a time and a place for apologizing. It is not on Monday morning when your boss walks through the door with a huge stack of administrative paperwork. Apologies are not get-out-of-jail-free cards. You may apologize and still have to be held accountable for what you did.

Apologies should be done in the spirit of contrition. Meaning, don’t make an apology if you really don’t feel bad about what happened or you just don’t care. An apology should never minimize responsibility – it should highlight your responsibility. Apologies are not excuses; they are a request for forgiveness.

Apology Basics
You can make an apology and people do not have to accept them if they don’t want to.

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“A genuine apology can alleviate some of the tensions, worries, lack of trust, and resentment”
POLOGIZE

THE STEPS

1. Recognize and Acknowledge an Offense
   Describe what you did wrong. Do not avoid the most difficult or uncomfortable aspect of what you did. The goal of the first step is to show that you can identify what you did was wrong and that you damaged the other person’s sense of trust. Show them that you know what you did was unacceptable.

   **Effective Acknowledgement**: “I recognize that my tardiness was unacceptable. I know that you have warned me before and I also know that this really complicated your giving out breaks for the rest of the day. I know this was not o.k.”

   **Ineffective Acknowledgement**: “Yeah I know I was late and that it messed up your day.”

2. Explain your Actions
   An apology is not an excuse. Explaining your actions is meant to demonstrate your knowledge that the other person or party may want an explanation. Explaining your behavior can be difficult. This step lays the groundwork for change and demonstrates that you understand your own behavior enough to want to change it. Explanations are not excuses, they are the embodiment of accountability. Do not wine, blame, or deflect your behavior onto others.

   **Effective Acknowledgement**: “I know I lost $50.00 from the safe. There really wasn’t anything I could do because we were down a person and I had to run back and forth from the safe to my register. I didn’t have time to count or something – I don’t really know.”

   **Ineffective Acknowledgement**: “I know I lost $50.00 from the safe. There really wasn’t anything I could do because we were down a person and I had to run back and forth from the safe to my register. I didn’t have time to count or something – I don’t really know.”

3. Express Remorse
   Remorse speaks to the tone and emotion that you express during your apology. This is the step where you can communicate your feelings about the incident. If you feel badly about what you have done or caused to happen this is the time to say it. Sincerity is important during this step.

   **Effective Acknowledgement**: “I sincerely apologize for talking out of line. I feel ashamed about my behavior. I feel terrible about how much trouble it has caused for everyone. I am sorry about all of this.”

   **Ineffective Acknowledgement**: “I’m sorry that when I talked to Rachel about Shana she got so upset. That really wasn’t what I intended. I’m really sorry she got so mad because of me. I apologize for her reaction – that was not my intent. I’m sorry she upset you.”

4. Offer to Make Reparations
   This is the part where you attempt to make things right and also show that you know how to do things correctly in the future.

   **Effective Acknowledgement**: “Here is $100.00 for the window I broke. Are we o.k. now?”

   **Ineffective Acknowledgement**: “I would like to have someone come by to fix the window, or I will pay for the damages myself if you hire someone to fix it.”
During the course of employment it is very likely that you will have to write a note, letter or other quick correspondence to a supervisor or peer. Although these are quick notes or brief communications, they should be taken seriously and be done professionally.

Reasons for writing these notes are many. Maybe you have some simple concerns you want to discuss. Perhaps you noticed someone was doing something inappropriately and you have to tell your supervisor. Maybe you need to request some time off or are tendering your resignation. You will likely have to document your needs, concerns, or feelings at some time.
Here are some specifics about workplace documentation

1. Always write/type your correspondence with professional language and good grammar. Avoid using slang, jargon or just stating something on paper like, “I am sorry but I quit – today.” Notes like these will cost you a good reference in the future. Good references and letters of recommendation will help you advance your career.

2. Don’t leave notes or letters lying open on someone’s desk or pinned up on a bulletin board. When leaving a note for a supervisor or peer, put it in a sealed envelope with the person’s name or business card attached. Most supervisors will have a designated space where they like correspondence left for them. Don’t leave an important note in their office junk pile or the box they never check. If necessary, give the note to them in person.

3. Don’t leave a lengthy note. Most supervisors are busy and have to prioritize their day by the importance of their activities. Your note should be specific, to the point, and brief. If writing a note concerning an interpersonal problem or issue, stick to the facts. If your note includes documentation of the problem, adhere to the “who, what, when, and where” of the situation. Supervisors do not enjoy trying to decipher “…then Sue said this about Paul and it got back to me that you might be changing my schedule. So we should probably talk.” Make your correspondence quick, legible and efficient.

4. Professional notes are important. They reflect your sense of integrity and that you care about how things are done. Furthermore, some notes can help you out in legal, termination, or complaint procedures. Make copies of notes you leave if the situation is important. If you need to report sexual harassment and you have left 3 notes trying to make an appointment with your boss, you are demonstrating to authorities that you tried to communicate your concern – and you can prove it.
Dear John/Jane Doe,

This note is to inform you that I am happy to work the two extra shifts you need covered this week. Please think of me if you need any other shifts covered.

Sincerely,
Jack/Jill

Dear John/Jane Doe,

After looking at my performance evaluation I have a few questions I would like to ask. I know you are busy so please let me know a convenient time to meet with you.

Sincerely,
Jack/Jill

Dear John/Jane Doe,

I just wanted to thank you for providing me with the customer service training last week. It was great! I noticed on your calendar that there is an upcoming training on Food Safety. I would really like to attend. Please let me know what I need to do in preparation for this. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,
Jack/Jill

Dear John/Jane Doe,

Thank you so much for the experience of getting to work in your store. I have recently accepted a new position at Big Money Bank and I start on ______. (Should be about 3 weeks notice so your employer can hire and train your replacement). I’m tendering my resignation as of______(today’s date). Working here has been so educational. I genuinely appreciate all of your help and support. Please let me know if there is anything you need from me during my last 2 weeks. I am happy to help with anything.

Sincerely,
Jack/Jill
Dear Jane,  03/5/10

I hope you are doing well. Sorry to have to leave a note but our shifts rarely cross over. I need to talk to you about some concerns I'm having with Sue. They are nothing major, but I would like your advice on how to handle the situation. Please let me know when we can meet or have a phone discussion. I am available Mon-Fri 8:00-1:00pm.

Thanks so much,
Jeremy
Think of an interview as an audition for a job. In addition to your application and resume, this is your chance to really show who you are and demonstrate that you want the job. I have interviewed over 300 candidates for entry-level positions including supervisory positions and promotions. I’ve also had the experience of interviewing for several positions myself – and not being selected for some of those positions. From these experiences I have learned that there are some key aspects to interviewing that lead to success.

4 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

I PREPAREDNESS

II BE PROMPT

III BASIC MANNERS

IV SKILL LIST & QUESTIONS
You need to prepare before your interview. Start preparing approximately a week before the big day. Here are some things you will need:

1. A professional folder with a fresh copy of your resume, references, letters of recommendation and business card if applicable. Even though you have probably already given these to the potential employer it is good to provide them on the spot to help refresh their memory. Remember, supervisors often interview a lot of people and read several applications a week. Providing these documents again automatically sends the message that you are a professional, prepared, and want the job.

2. A nice outfit to interview in. This makes a big difference to employers. Once I had someone interview with my team in cut-off denim shorts, a Wienschnitzel tank top, and flip-flops – it didn’t go so well. Remember, a nice outfit does not have to be expensive. The clothes should have a good fit and look professional.

   **Men:** An ironed dress shirt with a collar, khakis, chinos, slacks and a tie if applicable.

   **Women:** A blouse or dress shirt, slacks or professional length skirt are fine.

   For both genders please wear leather/dress shoes. No sneakers, sandals, or flip-flops. For women, high heels that are not more than 3 inches are fine. Keep jewelry to a minimum and wear a watch if you have one. Please take out any facial jewelry and cover visible tattoos to the best of your ability.

3. Know the agency, business, or industry you are applying for. Find out information about the place. Many businesses will have handouts or websites that talk about their mission statements (what they are all about). Commit this information to memory for discussion during the interview.

Prepare by mock interviewing. You can do this with friends, family, a therapist or the mirror. Think of some questions the employer may ask you related to the information you found out, or reference the included list of general questions pg XX. Rehearsing your answers in advance will make it more comfortable for you when you are interviewing. Once I have scheduled two interviews in one day. The first one was awful; the second interview went a lot better because I was “warmed up” and knew what not to do.

**tip**

Set out an already addressed and stamped envelope with a thank you card in a place you will see it right when you get home.
4 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

II
BE PROMPT

Show up 10 minutes early for the interview, no more and no less. This demonstrates you care, you are timely and you want the job.

Announce that you are here for your interview with John/Jane Doe to a staff member or other person. Remember to smile and be courteous with all people in the work place – you might be working with them shortly.

When the supervisor or manager comes out to interview you stand up, smile and shake their hand. When they begin to sit down, then you sit down.

III
BASIC MANNERS

Remember that interviews are not interrogations they are professional conversations. Start out by saying hello and thank the interviewer for meeting with you. Make sure to smile politely and make periodic eye contact, relax your shoulders.

The interviewer will probably try to make ‘small talk’ with you.

Good Example Interviewer:
Boss: “So, thanks for coming in. How is your day going?” Applicant: “It’s going great, I’m happy to be here, thanks for asking.”

Bad Example Interviewer:
Boss: “How’s it going?”
Applicant: “Oh my god! Getting here was crazy! I missed my first bus and had to catch the N11, which is always disgusting. I’m really nervous. Can you let me know right after the interview if I got the job?”

Your interviewer will ask you a set of questions. These may be questions that they come up with, or they may be a set of scripted questions they have to read to you. Make sure to listen to the entire question and know that it is ok to take some time to formulate your answer. You do not always have to maintain eye contact while coming up with your answer.

If there is a tough question don’t get mad or frustrated. You can say “That’s a great question, I will have to think about that for a second.”

Thank the interviewer when you are done and shake their hand again. It is ok to ask when an appropriate time to call and check on the position would be.

Go home and fill out the thank you card you got ready, seal it and get it in the mail. Handwritten thank you cards make a big statement! Very few people complete thank you cards.
Before you go into interview you will need to make two lists. Make these lists a few days in advance before your scheduled interview.

One list should include your skills, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant put them down on paper. Make sure you provide some specific examples of your skill.

The second list will be questions you think the interviewer may ask you. You will have to think of questions specific to that job. After you have written out the questions do your best to answer them. You may want to work with a friend, peer, support person or past supervisor on this list. Practice answering the questions you came up with in the mirror.

Sample Lists

1. Strengths & Skills Lists
   I have good customer service.
   Example: Helping Paula with her groceries.

   I am very timely and punctual
   Example: 2 big projects I had to do at my last volunteer job.

   I can work well with others.
   Example: One difficult co-worker that you developed a great relationship with.

   I can follow directions well

2. Potential Questions Lists
   Why do you want to work here?
   What can you offer this agency?
   What are three good qualities about yourself and three bad?
   Why did you leave your last job?
   You don’t have a lot of work experience. Tell me about that?

Sample Interview Questions:

Q. Tell me about a time when you provided great customer service?
   A. I got to know one of my occasional customers really well at my last job. She had given me her business card. One month she didn’t come in at all so I called her and found out that her husband had been sick. She really liked that I called her and she has since become a regular.

Q. Tell me about a challenging or difficult situation at work and how you resolved it?
   A. I volunteer at my church and one of the challenges we have is gathering enough donations to provide to our homeless youth group. I helped organize a weekly donation route that helps us get everything we need and to deliver it. This has turned out to be really helpful for everyone.

Q. What is your definition of a good work ethic?
   A. I think that depends on the person and the job. For me, I think coming to work on time, with a smile and good attitude is a good place to start. I am committed to doing a good job and providing quality work. I think the ability to get along with your team and be flexible is important too.

Q. What about this position made you want to apply here?
   A. One thing I have learned about ___(organization)__ is that you support ___(pick something)___. I really enjoy working in ___(whatever environment, e.g., customer service, clothing)___. I think I have skills that would work well here, like ___(elaborate)___.
   *Tip-Do not say money, hours, or my friend works here.

Interviewers cannot ask you about the following: your age, your religion, your living situation, your criminal history, your ethnicity/race, medical status, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by anti-harassment laws in the state of California. A potential employer can ask you if you have reliable transportation.

Q. What skills do you have that are relevant for this position?
   A. You will have to mentally check your list of skills that are translatable for jobs. Think customer service, ability to sell product, your great work ethic and desire to work hard. Relate these skills to what you have found out about the company.
   *Tip-Don’t brag or be arrogant, but highlight your strengths. “I have worked really hard to develop my customer service skills and I think that is a trait that is useful in any position.”
One of the challenging aspects of employment is balancing your needs with what you think your employers want. This can be tough. However, listed below are some best practices found to positively build reputation and professionalism.

1. **Camaraderie**
   One goal for the "new" employee is to establish himself or herself as a team player. If you see other people cleaning the bathroom, start cleaning the bathroom (without waiting to be told) too. Come to work on time. Tardiness can greatly inconvenience the peers you work with. If people are staying late on the job, you can volunteer to stay late as well. Speak well of your team mates when they are not around, this establishes that you think positively of your fellow workers. Don’t complain.

2. **Positivism**
   Do your best to maintain a positive outlook at work. Starting a new job can be very stressful for some people. One way to combat stress is to make it a goal to come to work in a good mood. Different from personality, attitude(s) change with circumstance and while at work you want to demonstrate a good attitude. While working you want people to know that you enjoy being there. Make sure to smile, greet others politely, accept difficult feedback with tact, and remain upbeat despite challenging circumstances.

3. **Ethics**
   Ethics come into play when you act out your morals and values. A good work ethic is unique to the individual and everyone brings his or her own positive attributes to the job. The following are some examples: completing a job once you start it, willingness to do any job at work, showing up on time, staying late when needed, volunteering for projects, timeliness, honesty, and an overall enthusiasm for the job.
One of the most insightful things I have ever read on what to do once you get a job comes from *The First Two Years of Employment* by authors Ivancevich, S., Ivancevich D, and Roscher, R. (2009).

**4 Learning**

Become knowledgeable about where you work. If you work at a coffee shop make sure to know all the different types of coffee you sell (whole bean and beverage). If you work in a restaurant make sure you know the menu and how some of the dishes are prepared. Work in clothing? Become knowledgeable about where products are made and from what fabric. Know your company, agency, or location’s values and mission statement. At any job there will be lots of information to be learned. By acquiring and retaining this information you have gained an edge. Employers look to retain staff that apply themselves and show they have initiative. One way to demonstrate this is by showing you have a willingness and ability to learn.

**5 Enthusiastic**

Be enthusiastic. This doesn’t mean that everyone at work needs to be a cheerleader. However, showing a lively interest in the work you do, the tasks you are assigned, and your interactions with others speaks to your commitment and dedication to the job. Take on a new responsibility or project at work. Do the job no one wants to do, and make sure you do it enthusiastically!

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**MANUAL REFERENCES**


