# Job Savvy

# How to Be a Success at Work

Sixth Edition

## Chapter 9: Getting Along with Coworkers

## Video Transcript

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# Title Card

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# Chapter 9 Getting Along with Coworkers

Getting to know your coworkers and being accepted by them will help you succeed in your job. Becoming a part of a team requires both time and patience. Learning to know how to work well with the other employees in your work group will take effort.

Everyone likes to be respected for skills, knowledge, or other contributions to the group productivity, but that respect doesn’t come right away. If you do your job well, your coworkers’ respect for you will increase over time.

This chapter will teach you how to evaluate personality traits and personal values and how they work together in the workplace, assess the ways diversity makes a team stronger, and identify ways to resolve conflicts with coworkers.

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# Get to Know Your Coworkers

The use of teams is common in modern organizations and is a growing trend worldwide. Teams are sometimes called quality circles, self-managing or self-directed groups, or project pods.

Team members maximize productivity if they can learn to work together and adapt to each other’s working styles.

Learning to have good relationships with everyone you work with will make a job more interesting and enjoyable. Specifically, collaboration is a key to success and promotion to a leadership role.

*Collaboration* means working well with others to accomplish work. The ideas in this chapter will help you better understand how to collaborate with your coworkers.

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# Get to Know Your Coworkers (continued)

Fitting into a team is an important skill to learn. First, learn how the team functions and then try to work within that system.

To earn the respect of your **coworkers . . .**

Know your position.

Do your fair share, but don’t do other people’s work.

To know your position, you must find out what other workers expect from you and balance this with your supervisor’s expectations. As the newest team member the group may expect you to take certain tasks, like cleaning up at the end of the day. You may also confront some good-natured teasing or joking. Coworkers will test you to learn what kind of person you are. Remember, it’s OK to go along with reasonable tasks the group expects you to do and to take some jokes as a new team member. However, bullying or harassment are not acceptable and should be reported to your supervisor immediately.

Remember, all teams work to accomplish the employer’s goals.

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# Synergy

**Synergy** is often used to describe why teamwork is so important to an organization**.** It is the extra energy and capability that results in combined group efforts to accomplish an objective.

Because of synergy, a team can accomplish more than the same number of individuals working independently.

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# The Value of Diversity

**Diversity** in an organization can be good. Diverse teams work well when they share information, cooperate, trust each other, and have a leader who makes everyone feel included.

Three common ways you see diversity are: preferences, temperaments, and individual characteristics (like gender, ethnicity, and age).

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# The Value of Diversity (continued)

**Preferences** are the values we give to ideas, things, or people. Our preferences are influenced by parents, friends, teachers, religious and political leaders, significant events in our lives, the media, and our community.

Organizational behavior expert Stephen Robbins suggests that people fit into three categories based on these preferences: traditionalists, humanists, and pragmatists.

An effective work team includes people who have values in each preference category. Learn to appreciate these differences and be tolerant of people who hold a different set of values from your own.

Take a moment to read through the differences in each preference type. Which type are you most like?

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# The Value of Diversity (continued)

Your **temperament** is the distinctive way you think, feel, and react to the world. Management specialists refer to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to identify four categories of temperament: optimists, realists, futurists, and idealists.

A strong team includes people of varied temperaments. That said, people with different temperament styles often find one another difficult to work with because of their distinct approaches to life. When differences arise between you and a person with a different temperament, look for positive contributions the person makes to the team.

The Optimist

is never tied down

is generous

survives setbacks

and can be impulsive.

The Realist

focuses on obligations

has a strong work ethic

values tradition

needs order. And tends to be serious.

The Futurist

strives for excellence

is highly creative

lives for work

likes to control things and judges people on their merits

The idealist:

searches for "self"

values integrity

appreciates people

and has difficulty placing limits

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# The Value of Diversity (continued)

The US workforce has become more diverse over the past 20 years and will continue to become more diverse in gender, ethnicity, and age.

Interestingly, demographic differences are less important than preference and temperament differences. Still, we know that leaders who create a feeling of inclusiveness have more productive teams. No matter how different team members are, each person can contribute to the team in a meaningful way.

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# Basic Human Relations

Psychology and organizational behavior studies have helped us gain a better understanding of **human relations** in the workplace. These studies provide some practical steps to help you get along with workers on your team. Get to know other workers. Follow group standards. Take an interest in your coworkers’ jobs. When you start a new job, avoid changing everything. Be honest and direct. Be positive and supportive. Avoid gossip and others’ battles. Show appreciation, share credit when it’s deserved, and return favors. Live in the present. Ask for help and advice when you need it.

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# Good Electronic Manners

Technology has changed communication in the workplace. Your coworkers react to you based on your use of workplace technology such as voicemail, email, texts, and faxes. Practicing electronic etiquette with your coworkers is necessary.

Keep voice messages short and include only essential information. Avoid expressing anger or frustration when using electronic messaging. Don’t read coworkers’ faxes or email. Never use a coworker’s computer without their permission. Be aware that computer files may contain private information. Be cautious when you are using social media. Posting complaints about work related situations is not wise. Follow your company’s email policy.

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# Cubicle Etiquette

Working in a cubicle gives people easy access to coworkers; however, it limits individual privacy.

Because workers are so close together, problems can develop if they don’t practice good cubicle **etiquette**. Cubicles are not soundproof.

Use a quiet voice when conducting business.

Avoid talking to the individual in the adjoining cubicle.

Follow company policy concerning electronic devices.

Put your cell phone on “vibrate” and take it with you when you leave.

Use headphones or ear buds for electronic devices.

Don’t use your cubicle as a meeting room.

Avoid strong odors from scented items or foods.

Treat a cubicle as you would a private office. Knock before you enter.

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# Special Problems with Coworkers

Some problems require special attention. These include **harassment**, dating conflicts, and violence.

By law, employers are required to protect employees from all forms of harassment.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

\* Staring at another person

\* Touching another person without their permission

\* Telling sexual jokes

\* Making sexual comments

\* Commenting on a person’s sexual characteristics or appearance

\* Displaying nude pictures or obscene cartoons

Racial harassment is unwelcome verbal or physical actions directed at people because of their race. This might include the following behaviors:

\* Telling racial jokes

\* Using racial slurs

\* Commenting on a person’s racial characteristics

\* Distributing racist materials

\* Excluding someone from company activities because of race

It may be difficult to stand up for yourself or others in the face of harassment, but don’t participate in any of these behaviors. You may want to point out the harm that can result from harassment. You can report the harassment privately to HR if you are concerned for your own safety.

You could be severely disciplined or fired for harassing a coworker. Just because someone doesn’t confront you directly doesn’t mean the issue hasn’t been brought to the attention of a supervisor or HR.

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# Special Problems with Coworkers (continued)

The workplace is a natural place to meet people to date. But dating a coworker can be risky. For one thing, romantic advances might be considered sexual harassment. Repeatedly asking someone for a date after being turned down is considered sexual harassment.

Some organizations have a policy prohibiting coworkers from dating or limiting who can date whom (for example, they might not allow a supervisor to date a person who reports to him or her).

Be sure to find out whether your employer has such a policy. If you develop a romantic interest in a coworker, follow the company policies.

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# Special Problems with Coworkers (continued)

In 2016, there were 16,890 workers who suffered injuries from workplace violence. People who kill their coworkers make headlines, but fistfights are far more common in the workplace. Not all violence can be prevented, but following some simple guidelines can reduce it. Thomas Capozzoli and Steve McVey, experts on workplace violence, provide this advice. Follow all your company’s security procedures to protect yourself and your coworkers. If a coworker threatens you, tell your supervisor. Walk away from an angry person if needed. Carefully observe your surroundings and people in the workplace. Report unusual situations to your supervisor or security guards.

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# Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution solves disagreements between individuals within an organization. It seeks to avoid emotion, stress, and violence while dealing with facts.

Companies usually have a conflict resolution process. Generally, the first step is to meet with the other person to resolve the problem.

If this fails, meet with your supervisor, who may be able to deal with the problem.

If your supervisor is unable to resolve the problem, go to HR or your supervisor’s manager.

Remember if another person violates the law and no one in the organization takes action, report it to legal authorities.

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# Conclusion

Becoming part of the work team is important to your success on the job. Your relationship with other workers will affect your performance. Your contribution to the team will influence how your supervisor appraises your job performance. Getting along with your coworkers is not difficult. It takes an understanding of yourself and an appreciation of differences among people. Finally, it takes a commonsense approach to human relations. When all else fails, treat your coworkers as you would like to be treated.