



Adjusting Your Work Style for Greater Success

Many people dream of making it big, whether that means becoming company CEO or winning over a crucial client. But ambition alone won't land a corner office with a view.

Often, success at work comes only with success in dealing with colleagues, clients and other professionals. Promoting your skills and ideas using an effective, non-abrasive approach can make all the difference.

If you're having trouble moving ahead in your job, spend time assessing your "work style," and, if necessary, making some adjustments.

Think hard about your experiences at work. Maybe you got that great new job a few years ago, but haven't been promoted since then. Do you consistently find yourself on the defensive when talking with your boss about work? Or, maybe you've noticed that co-workers avoid you. To remain valuable in any organization, you must be able to contribute and achieve your goals without antagonizing others.

Assess your work style

First, take an inventory of your "people" skills. It's important to keep your technical skills polished, of course, but communication skills are critical no matter what job you hold. Ask yourself:

- Do I often blame others for my problems at work?
- Do I feel that people misunderstand me?
- Do I frequently clash with my boss or colleagues?
- Do I believe that co-workers take advantage of me or take me for granted?

If you think that you're having problems moving ahead at work because of strained relationships with colleagues, you might want to make some changes. Your college degree and resume don't necessarily guarantee that you have learned good communications skills.

Consider how you interact with your co-workers. Are you passive or aggressive? While aggressive behavior can provoke resentment and anger, and passivity can convey a lack of confidence, most people react positively to someone who is assertive—direct, open and honest in their interactions. Assertive people respect others' opinions, but also realize that they have the right to express themselves and to make mistakes.

Make some "attitude adjustments"

If you decide you need to make some changes in your work style, try these tips for improving your office reputation and your own sense of job satisfaction:

- Stop playing the blame game. Take responsibility for your performance and for the quality of your interactions with others. Instead of pointing fingers when somebody offers criticism, keep in mind that you can use that advice constructively to avoid future problems.
- Everybody makes mistakes, so don't be afraid to own up when you do. Co-workers and supervisors probably will react much more positively if you tell them what went wrong promptly and honestly and offer an apology.

continued on page 2



- When you disagree with someone, don't be confrontational. Nobody likes to hear the words "you're wrong."
- Express your opinions calmly and logically. Avoid using loaded words such as "stupid" or "lazy." And, substitute judgmental phrases that begin with the word "you" for those that begin with "I." For example, don't tell a co-worker, "You did this wrong." That language can cause people to become defensive. Instead, say, "I don't think I explained this thoroughly enough."
- Don't use a middleman to transmit information for you. Deliver your message directly to the recipient. Then, make sure that you expressed your message clearly—ask for specific feedback and avoid ambiguities.
- Express clearly what you want to accomplish at work. Passive people may not believe that their opinions have value or that they can ever come up with a good answer to a question. Lack of confidence shows. So stop letting yourself feel disgruntled when you think that colleagues misunderstand or discount your input. Work on firmly stating your point of view.
- Build allies—don't make important people angry. Chances are you will find it easier to get ahead in your job if you have a network of supporters rather than a list of people to avoid. Don't burn your bridges.

By Kristen Knight

© 2002 Achieve Solutions - reviewed January 3, 2008



For other related articles check out the Achieve Solutions website found at www.efr.org.

Know Your EAP - We may believe that fate will intervene and our destiny will simply unfold. But most of us will need to be more hands on in order to achieve the life we want. While we can do solid planning on our own, you might consider asking a certified coach from Workplace Services to support you in making your plans a reality. Learn more about [life coaching](#).

To access your EAP services call (515) 244-6090, toll free (800) 327-4692 or TTY (877) 542-6488.