

Workplace Readiness Series

Getting Along With Co-Workers

Easter H. Tucker
Family and Consumer
Sciences Specialist

Once you have landed the job that you really want, you're not finished! You have to start developing relationships with people with whom you will be working every day. This process is not all that easy, because people have different attitudes, working styles, goals and moods.

Remember, the customers, other employees and the employer or boss may be different from you. Each of these groups will be discussed separately because of their role in the organization.

Customers

Customers provide the money for your paycheck. Without them a business cannot survive. Here are some basic rules to follow when dealing with customers.

1. Be polite, even when customers seem rude to you.
2. Listen to the customer's concerns about the company's products or service.
3. When a customer enters the store or business, approach them first to show that you are eager to help them.
4. If problems arise that you cannot handle, keep a positive attitude and get the manager to handle the problem.

5. Apologize to the customers who return broken merchandise or are just dissatisfied with the product or your service. Help them resolve the problem – fill out appropriate papers, exchange merchandise or return money.

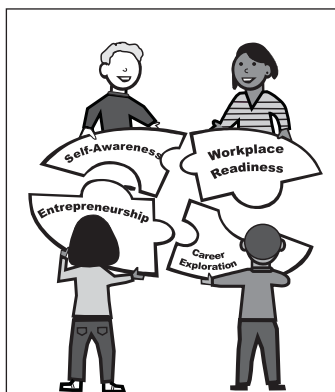
For example, Mary works in a department store. She is always ready to help customers. She approaches them with a smile. She encourages the customers to buy clothes that look good on them. One day she had a customer who was upset about merchandise that she had bought the day before.

Customer: "I did not know it, but this dress has a stain near the hem."

Mary: "Yes, Mr. Jones will be glad to talk with you. In the meantime, I need you to help me fill out these forms while Mr. Jones is coming."

Throughout the conversation with the customer, Mary did not agree nor disagree with her nor accuse her of getting the stain on the dress. Her response was positive, which encourages the customer to return.

John works for a painting company. He always greets his customers with a smile and a handshake (if he knows them). He listens closely to what they want



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by

Earlene D. Brecheen
County Extension Agent - FCS
Van Buren County
and

Debbie DeRossitte
County Extension Agent - FCS
Craighead County

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and tries to make sure that he is getting the right products for his customers. One day a customer was mad because the bathroom color was a different color than the one shown on the color chart. John agreed to give the customer enough paint to repaint his bathroom a lighter color.

When he contacted the boss, he found out that the color used to paint the room was on the job work order. Nevertheless, the problem was corrected and the customer was happy with the end result. In this particular case the employee was right, but he did not accuse the customer of being wrong, which prevented a lot of problems and perhaps kept a good customer.

If the situation had involved greater quantities of paint, the solution would probably have been different. The paint identified in the contract would have had to be used. In dealing with customers, you must show concern but not allow customers to bully you or lose profit for your company. You lose too much money when you continuously give away products.

Co-Workers

In any type of job, you have to be able to get along with fellow employees. You must realize that not all people are the same as you might be or want them to be. Employees must work together in order for the company to be successful and to solve problems that may arise. Follow these rules of conduct to build good relationships with your co-workers:

- Always treat co-workers as you would like to be treated.
- Never lie or spread gossip in order to get ahead or to get in good with the boss.
- Respect the moods of your fellow employees. Everybody has a bad day once in a while.
- Be polite.
- Try to get along with other employees. Be a team player.
- Don't show off or try to impress your fellow employees or the boss.
- Try to work out problems with other employees first before going to the supervisor.
- Take pride in the work you do.

For example, Mark works in a sawmill. He works with many other employees on various projects. He always has an outgoing personality

and a caring attitude. He tries not to gossip or invade the privacy of his fellow employees. In return, there is mutual respect between Mark and his co-workers. When workers try to gossip about others in the department, he says, "Look, I'm sorry, but I don't gossip about people."

Mary is an aide at the hospital. She works hard not to cause any problems with her co-workers. One day while she was trying to get the patients served, she yelled at the kitchen help, "Hurry up with my trays." After she realized what she had done, she apologized for her actions. The cook said, "It hurts our feelings when you yell at us. We are working as hard and fast as we can. Thanks for apologizing."

The atmosphere on the job between all employees must be a positive and cooperative one. Teamwork is the key to getting a job done well. Working together gets the job done faster and better.

Boss

In any work environment there will always be someone in charge. This person may be called the boss, manager, crew chief, supervisor or assistant manager. These are the people who are responsible for your performance while on the job. They are in charge of the immediate work area, and you work for and with them. Here are some basic ways of dealing with your supervisor:

- Remember that the supervisor is in charge.
- Do not be afraid to talk to the boss if you are having problems or need to ask questions.
- When you respect your supervisor and develop a close relationship with him or her, you are in a better position to get a good evaluation if you need to change jobs or want to be promoted.
- Remember, when you change jobs, your supervisor will be contacted to see how you performed on the job.

For example, Marie is a nurse's aide at a local hospital. Her immediate supervisors are the licensed vocational and registered nurses. If Marie is not busy and is asked to take blood pressure and temperatures by the nurses, she does so in a timely and orderly fashion. She does this because she knows that it is her job and her patients' treatment is important. If she had said, "That's your job!" what would have happened to her relationship with the nurses?

Employees must understand their role in the organization. That's why it is important to know what your job is and what your boss expects when you begin a new job.

Fill out the following sheet. Mark the situation as the "Right Way" or "Wrong Way."

	Right Way	Wrong Way
Mary is yelling back at an angry customer.		
John is teasing a co-worker in front of customers.		
Doris is daydreaming and ignoring customers.		
Joseph is showing a customer the size lawnmower that is large enough for his yard.		
Joyce is helping a customer pick out a belt that is too small just so she can make a sale.		
Bob is popping his gum while talking to a customer.		
Margaret speaks to everyone each morning as she goes to her desk.		
Johnny is helping the janitor fix the window in Johnny's office.		
Joseph tells a customer that he will finish helping him when he gets back from a break.		
Mary tells the customer, "Have a nice day."		

Understanding, politeness, sincerity and hard work will make the workplace a more pleasant place to be. In return, everyone will be eager to go to work. It is important that customers recognize this as a happy and cooperative place of business so they will return. Management will notice how you behave on the job, too, and this could eventually lead to a promotion or pay raise.

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Original manuscript by Dorothy Taylor, Extension family life specialist, Texas A&M University System. Adapted for Career Orientation Classrooms in Arkansas by Debbie DeRossitte, Craighead County Extension agent - family and consumer sciences, and Earlene D. Brecheen, Van Buren County Extension agent - family and consumer sciences. Recommended to Arkansans by Easter H. Tucker, family and consumer sciences specialist, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock, Arkansas.

EASTER H. TUCKER is family and consumer sciences specialist with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock.

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