

Basic Human Relations

Psychology and organizational behavior studies have helped us gain a better understanding of human relations in the workplace. To get along with workers on your team, consider some practical steps derived from these studies:

- **Get to know other workers.** Take lunch breaks with your coworkers. Join employee recreational and social activities. Listen to the things your coworkers share about their personal lives and interests.
- **Don't try to change everything.** You're "the new kid on the block" when you start a job. Know and understand the organization before you think about changing something. Listen to others. Talk to coworkers about your ideas and get some feedback before you suggest changes.
- **Be honest.** One of the most important things you own is a good reputation. Honesty with your coworkers will build up your reputation. It's one of the best ways to gain and keep respect.
- **Be direct.** Let people know when they do something that bothers you. Most people want to know when there is a problem. However, don't be a constant complainer or a whiner. Make sure that your problem is important before you discuss it with others.
- **Avoid gossip.** Don't listen to other people gossiping about coworkers. More important, never gossip about others. When you gossip, people wonder what you say about them and often avoid you.
- **Be positive and supportive.** Listen to the ideas of other people. When someone makes a mistake, don't criticize. It's irritating to have someone else point out a mistake. When you realize you've made a mistake, admit it and try to do better next time.
- **Show appreciation.** Be sure you thank a coworker who does something to make your job easier. Let coworkers know you appreciate their contributions to the team. People like to be recognized and praised.
- **Share credit when it's deserved.** Take credit for the work you do. When other coworkers assist you, make sure you credit them. People feel they have been taken advantage of if someone else takes credit for their work.
- **Return favors.** A coworker might help you out by exchanging a day off with you. Return that favor. A sure way to make people dislike you is to only take and never give.
- **Live in the present.** Avoid talking about the way things used to be. People don't want to hear about how great your old job was or how great former coworkers were.
- **Ask for help and advice when you need it.** People like to feel needed. Your coworkers can be a great resource. When you aren't sure what to do, they can give you advice and assistance.

- **Avoid battles.** Let coworkers in conflict work out their own differences. Don't take sides in their arguments. This is a sure way to develop problems with coworkers. When you take sides, other people usually resent your interference. Often both sides become unhappy with you.
- **Follow group standards.** Every group has standards—sociologists call these *mores*. For example, they might take a coffee break at 9:15 a.m. Stop work and go on break with them if you are able. These group standards help build a team. Most standards are not major and require little effort to follow.
- **Take an interest in your coworkers' jobs.** People like positive attention. Taking an interest in another worker's job gives that person positive attention. It also helps you better understand how your team works together.

How Job Savvy Are You?

Rosa's family has seven children and enjoys doing most things together. Her grandmother is celebrating her 85th birthday next Thursday and the family has planned a surprise party for her. On Monday, when the work schedule is posted, Rosa sees she is scheduled to work Thursday evening. She is quite upset, although she knows she should have asked for the evening off before the schedule was made.

1. As a coworker, what could be your positive reaction to Rosa's problem?

2. What could be your negative reaction?

Tyler belongs to an animal-rights group. He brings literature about animal rights to work and leaves it in the break room. He refuses to eat meat because he believes killing animals for food is wrong. Tyler has invited you to join him at the next meeting of his group.

1. How could you react positively to Tyler's invitation?

2. How could you react negatively?
