

# Know your worth with pride and professionalism

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## What is professionalism

Demonstrating professionalism is the key to a successful career. Employers, fellow employees and customers all expect a high level of professionalism. For this reason, being professional can help you to achieve your goals and advance your career. We will discuss what it means to be professional and how to develop the key attributes that constitute professionalism in the workplace.

Professionalism involves demonstrating high standards of behaviour, such as responsibility, reliability, and integrity, which are essential for career success and workplace harmony.

Upholding professionalism requires continuous professional development, adherence to a code of conduct, and the ability to balance personal life with workplace expectations.

Employers value professionalism in job interviews and on CVs as it reflects a candidate's ability to contribute positively to the organisation and maintain ethical standards.

## What does it mean to be professional

Professionalism is having skills, knowledge and confidence to perform a job in the highest standards that might be expected of you. Being professional can mean different things depending on the employer or industry, and the confidence, knowledge or skill expected in a new role might not be the same in another.

What is the same across different career paths, though, is the expectation that comes with professionalism. Demonstrating professionalism means taking your job seriously, being reliable to your colleagues and caring about your responsibilities and successes.

## Top 10 attributes of professionalism

While different roles have different expectations, there are common qualities and attributes that employers expect their employees to have that can be developed throughout a career.

- Responsibility
- Reliability
- Accountability
- Organisation
- Etiquette and Manners
- Consideration
- Morality and Ethics
- Integrity
- Dedication
- Expertise

## Responsibility

Being responsible shows that you're aware of what your role entails and that you're ready to be held accountable for your actions and the results they produce.

These are the most effective ways to demonstrate responsibility:

- Be accountable for your actions in the workplace.
- Complete tasks required of your role to high standards and on time.
- Help out colleagues and managers, even if it's not expected of you.
- Develop leadership skills and expertise to take on further responsibility.

## Reliability

Your colleagues and your managers need to know that they can depend on you to accomplish a task, complete a project or take on a new challenge. Proving your reliability could give your managers and employers more confidence in your abilities.

Here are some great ways to always be reliable:

- Be consistent and exceed expectations in the workplace.
- Always be on time and meet deadlines.
- Help out colleagues when you can.

## Accountability

Being held accountable for your actions demonstrates moral fibre and shows that you take your job seriously. Accountability means taking both praise and criticism equally well, and it also shows valuable leadership qualities.

There are many ways to work on being more accountable:

- Be transparent with colleagues and managers.
- Own mistakes in the workplace, work to fix them as soon as you discover them and apologise to colleagues and managers as needed.
- Hold yourself and others to the same standards, including company, moral and legal standards.

## Organisation

Organisational skills, such as time management abilities, are important qualities when it comes to professionalism. They also give you opportunities to progress and to take on new challenges throughout your career. Good leaders highly prize organisational skills and are generally happy to delegate responsibilities and provide opportunities if you demonstrate your organisational capabilities.

Here are some key tips to help improve your organisational skills:

- Keep a diary, work planner or calendar.
- Plan your schedule and tasks ahead of time.
- Manage deadlines and appointments.

## Etiquette and manners

You should always keep to etiquette and have good manners in the workplace or in professional settings. Following the correct etiquette in the workplace or within a company can help keep you in high regard with other employees. Keeping good manners is important both within and outside of the workplace since, as an employee, you are a representative of your organisation.

There are many ways to improve your working etiquette and personal manners, including the following methods:

- Always smile and be positive.
- Be polite and courteous.
- Be humble.
- Always follow the workplace dress code or norms.

## Consideration

This attribute of professionalism involves having empathy for others' feelings, ideas, efforts and backgrounds. Being considerate of others enables you to be a more collaborative team member and effective representative of your organisation to customers, clients and the public.

Here are a few ways to practice consideration:

- Be conscious of your and others' work-life balances.
- Always help out colleagues when you have the time.
- Praise and work with other colleagues' ideas.
- Treat other people as you would like to be treated.

## Morality and ethics

You also need to be considerate of workplace morality and ethics. This can mean different things depending on your industry but being professional means identifying which moral codes you should be following. To establish your own workplace morality and ethics, you can try the following:

- Learn more about company policies and procedures.
- Read books and scholarly articles on business or industry ethics or even philosophical morality.
- Discuss issues with colleagues and managers when morality appears subjective.

## Integrity

Integrity is a key aspect of professionalism because it demonstrates an awareness of the standards you and your colleagues are held to and a commitment to consistently doing what's right based on those standards. Integrity also means being able to choose between right and wrong and sticking to those choices when questioned.

This important attribute leads to many other related qualities that are vital for professionals to have, such as reliability, taking responsibility and being held accountable for your actions. To demonstrate integrity in the workplace, you can do the following:

- Be honest both at work and outside of work.
- Follow your company's moral principles, and lead by example to encourage colleagues to do the same.
- Recognise the achievements and accomplishments of others, especially when their work helps you succeed.
- Stay in line with your moral and ethical principles.
- Adhere to workplace ethics, morality and legal standards in difficult situations.

## Dedication

Showing dedication to your everyday work, your job, your team and your organisation shows that you are interested in contributing to the team's and the company's success. It shows that you are motivated and willing to sacrifice time and energy to accomplish your individual and team goals, which can also show that you care about the longevity of the organisation. Lastly, dedication to your work may also showcase your love of your job, industry, team and/or company.

In order to be more dedicated to your work, you can commit to the following:

- Go above and beyond workplace expectations.
- Always be on time and meet deadlines.
- Express pride in your work and organisation.
- Be a collaborative and agreeable team member.

## Expertise

Being an expert in your field goes a long way to demonstrating professionalism. It shows that you are dedicated to your work and motivated to continue in your career. This attribute also shows that you value improvement and want to be the most effective employee and team member you can be. Expertise involves many years of study, training and practice but can help you to advance in your career.

Expertise involves many years of study, training and practice but can help you to advance in your career. Here are ways to work on your expertise:

- Keep up to date on the news in your field.
- Attend seminars, lectures, training sessions, skill development courses or industry talks.
- Read peer-reviewed books and journals to learn more about your industry.
- Pursue continuing or advanced education and certification.

## Tips for upholding professionalism in the workplace

Since employers expect that professionalism extends to your performance in the workplace, here are some general ways you can begin developing your professionalism:

- Identify the attributes you can improve and the skills that can help you do so, such as role-specific knowledge, helpful technical skills or transferable soft skills.
- Ask your manager, team members and professional connections about the attributes they believe you excel in and which they think you can continue to improve.
- Look for opportunities to put these attributes into practice, such as leadership opportunities, new projects or training.
- Review your current or future organisation's principles, which can often be found in an employee handbook or the organisation's mission statement.

## What are personal and professional values and why are they important?

Personal values are the principles and beliefs that guide an individual's behaviour and decision-making, while professional values are the ethical standards and expectations that define conduct in the workplace. Together, they form the foundation of professional behaviour and are crucial for maintaining high standards of performance and integrity.

In the workplace, personal and professional values ensure that employees act with morality, accountability, and consideration for others. For example, in healthcare, values like empathy and medical professionalism are vital for providing quality care and ensuring patient trust. Similarly, in industries like technology or education, values such as dedication and expertise drive innovation and foster a positive user experience.

Adhering to a code of conduct and demonstrating professional values not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens team dynamics and organisational culture. By aligning personal values with professional expectations, employees can build trust, promote collaboration, and contribute to the long-term success of their organisation.

## How can I demonstrate professionalism in my job?

Demonstrating professionalism in your job involves consistently upholding high standards of behaviour and performance. Here are some practical ways to showcase professionalism:

- Adhere to workplace etiquette:
  - Follow the dress code, maintain a neat hairstyle, and observe social media guidelines to reflect positively on your organisation.
- Develop specialised knowledge:
  - Engage in continuous professional development (CPD) to enhance your expertise and stay updated with industry trends. Attend training sessions, read practice guides, and pursue certifications relevant to your field.

- Exhibit strong interpersonal skills:
  - Show consideration and empathy towards co-workers, clients, and stakeholders. Practice active listening, offer constructive feedback, and resolve conflicts diplomatically.
- Maintain accountability and integrity:
  - Take responsibility for your actions, admit mistakes, and work to rectify them. Uphold ethical standards and avoid behaviours that could lead to racial bias or discrimination.
- Be reliable and organised:
  - Meet deadlines, manage your time effectively, and keep your workspace organised. Use tools like calendars and real-time project management software to stay on top of tasks.
- Follow a code of conduct:
  - Familiarise yourself with your organisation's code of conduct and adhere to its principles. This includes respecting confidentiality, avoiding conflicts of interest, and promoting a positive visitor's experience.
- Demonstrate dedication:
  - Go above and beyond your job description, show enthusiasm for your work, and take pride in your contributions. This not only reflects professionalism but also positions you as a valuable team member.

By consistently applying these practices, you can demonstrate professionalism, build trust with colleagues and clients, and advance your career. Whether you're in healthcare, education, or any other industry, professionalism is key to achieving high standards and fostering a positive workplace culture.

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