



# Work Relationships

**H**ow you relate to people at work is an important part of being successful on the job. When you begin work, one of your top goals should be to develop good relations with your co-workers and the supervisor. Although this may take some time, in the end it will be worthwhile.

Good relationships allow you to make progress and make work more enjoyable, but you must keep a balance with the work itself.

Here are some rules of thumb to keep in mind:

- **Do not become too intimate with co-workers or the supervisor.** Co-workers may become angry and jealous because they think that you want to be the supervisor's "pet." Becoming friendly with a co-worker is OK as long as you do not exclude others, and you treat everyone with the same respect in work-related situations. Your first consideration is to get the job done. Your second consideration is to enjoy your work.
- **Try not to burden your employer or co-workers with personal**

**or family problems.** This may make them feel uncomfortable and want to avoid your company. Besides, talking can take up too much of your work time.

- **Learn to keep your emotions and feelings under control.** No matter how rude someone is to you, stay calm and don't lose your temper. It might help to explain how you feel about what was said or done. Keep your voice calm and speak clearly. Don't curse or start to cry.

It is usually better to try to solve problems yourself, if possible. But if the co-worker continues to harass you after you have discussed the matter, talk to the supervisor in **private** about the problem. Let the supervisor handle it from there.

- **If you dislike or cannot seem to get along with a person at work, don't tell the whole world.** Talk to the person involved and be civil when working together. Keep your distance from this person in social situations. Keep conflicts with co-workers at a minimum or transfer to another job.

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When you begin work, one of your top goals should be to develop good relations with your co-workers and the supervisor.

- **Avoid gossiping about co-workers.** For example, running to the boss all the time to tell him/her that a co-worker was on the phone or a co-worker was reading a newspaper at his desk is not professional or ethical. Workers who do this are rarely trusted because they are so busy with other people's business that they can't tend to their own.

- Check your skill at solving work problems to build good working relationships:

1. Billie is a bus driver. At work one day her supervisor called out, "You are much too slow in driving your route." Billie calmly says she's driving the speed limit and that she doesn't appreciate that boss's tone of voice. Did Billie handle the situation well? If so, why? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Shawn works at Motor World. He is responsible for parts inventory and repairs. John, a co-worker, is constantly on his case. He makes fun of the way Shawn looks, and he even makes jokes about Shawn's family. Shawn has asked John several times to stop teasing him, but John continues. If you were Shawn, what would be the right thing to do?

- A. Beat him up
- B. Curse him
- C. Go to the supervisor and ask him to make John stop.

D. Ask the supervisor to meet with you and John to talk about the problem.

How can "D" help solve the problem? What do you think will happen in the end? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Cynthia is constantly running to her supervisor to tell her who was on the phone or who went to the vending machine to visit with a friend.

A. How do you think Cynthia's co-workers feel about her? \_\_\_\_\_

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B. Do you think Cynthia's supervisor will trust her with more responsibility? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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C. Why does Cynthia have time to tend to everybody else's business? \_\_\_\_\_

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D. Does Cynthia overstep the authority of her supervisor? How? \_\_\_\_\_

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E. What will probably happen to Cynthia? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Jean has been asked out several times by her supervisor. List three reasons why she should/should not go.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Bobby's pregnant girlfriend just broke up with him and is threatening to have an abortion. Bobby has been finding it hard to concentrate on his work. He is called into the supervisor's office. What do you think Bobby should tell his supervisor? \_\_\_\_\_

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Another important way to build good relationships at work is to learn how to handle criticism. The natural reaction to criticism is to become angry, deny the problem and put the blame on someone else.

This is expected because feelings have been hurt and the ego wounded. People automatically try to protect themselves. Learning how to override the natural reaction takes time and practice and will help improve relationships at work.

Here are some ways to overcome criticism:

- When you first enter your workplace, take a deep breath, smile and try to relax.
- Keep good eye contact with others at work, especially the boss.
- Put negative thoughts and feelings about yourself out of your mind. Shift your thoughts to what you do well or like most about yourself.
- Don't take the criticism personally. It is your work you are being asked to change and not you as a person.

When the supervisor or boss criticizes your work, listen carefully without interrupting. Taking notes may be helpful, but be sure to keep good eye contact to show that you are paying attention. You can look back to your notes whenever you need to do so. This helps avoid making similar mistakes in the future. At the same time, you will be viewed as an individual who is concerned about getting the job done the right way.

Your relationships with co-workers and supervisors will improve if you handle criticism well. Your co-workers will also respect you more. Tension in the work place will lessen, and you will feel better about the job and about yourself.

Learn to keep your emotions and feelings under control

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