

If You're Not Doing These 7 Things at Work, You're Probably Not Seen as Professional

By Kristina Udice

What is career professionalism? Being professional might mean a variety of things, from how you dress at work to how you perform. Mastering professionalism at work is vital for success and happiness on the job. Contrary to what some believe, true professionalism in the workplace is not restricted to any industry. Whether you're a waitress working a part-time job or a lawyer making six-figures, you need to practice professional behavior and be **hard working**. There are certain standards of professional conduct, and not meeting them could make or break your future at a company.

How to Be Professional

It's all about how a person conducts themselves — emulating the skills and traits expected of a professional. And there is an expected behavior in every job field — though the degree, strictness, and amount of practice and training may vary.

For instance, medical professionalism is different from teacher professionalism. But it's better to learn the traits and behaviors of workplace professionalism sooner rather than later. Being self-aware of these behaviors could save you a lot of trouble in the long run.

Exhibiting professional behavior isn't as easy as one might think. It's not just about doing a good job and exhibiting a stellar work ethic. You could be a star salesperson but not have the knowledge or responsibility of a professional person. Workplace professionalism is a mindset. It's an attitude. It's about decorum and respect. It's about responsibility, knowledge, standards, and ethics. It's the persona you put out to the world and into your work for others to see. Mastering these skills and making professional conduct a priority will set you leagues apart from your colleagues.

Here are eight areas where your professionalism in the workplace can shine through:

1. How You Manage Your Time

Time management skills and techniques are something every professional person in the workforce should master. Make it a point not to be late. If you set a deadline for yourself, or a deadline is set for you, make sure you finish that project on time. **Don't arrive late** to meetings or calls. Because when you're late, or you miss a deadline without any reason or understandable excuse, you are telling your colleagues and bosses that you have little respect for their processes. You're saying you don't care about them and certainly don't respect them or their time — which gives the impression that the only thing you care about is yourself. You're also showing you have very little work ethic.

To ensure you don't fall into this hole, make sure you're constantly aware of the time. If anything, you should be arriving early and finishing projects before the deadline to show that you do indeed care. This will make others care and respect you and your work.

2. How You Carry Yourself

Don't let a bad mood ruin your workday — and especially don't let a bad mood linger longer on for days. Of course, you will have your moments. Everyone does. But it's imperative that you keep it hidden as best you can. You don't want to get the reputation as the office grump. You have to make the best of every situation and you can't let a bad attitude dictate your future in the company, or the opinions of others.

Try to always be polite, happy, and considerate to others. You want to be **pleasant and approachable** so that others can look to and lean on you if necessary. This doesn't mean being a doormat, but being reliable and helpful. If your supervisors and colleagues can see that you are happy and working hard, there is a higher likelihood that you will be thought of when big, exciting projects or clients enter the picture.

3. How You Dress

We're not here to tell you how to dress. We're not here to say you have to wear tights and a skirt to look professional. We're not here to dictate your **business attire**. But how you present yourself in the workplace is an important factor, as research proves. Whether your work allows you to dress casually or requires you to wear a suit, you should always look put-together, clean, and neat. Hair should always be washed. Teeth should always be brushed. Last night's makeup shouldn't be smeared under your eyes. Iron out unwanted wrinkles from your clothes. Wear what makes you comfortable and is acceptable by your employer — just make sure you look neat and clean in the process.

4. Your Accountability

We all make mistakes, but in the workplace, it's important you own up to them and take accountability. Even if it isn't a mistake per se, it's still important to hold yourself **accountable** for your actions. If you make a mistake, fix it. If you don't know how, ask for guidance. And once you've made a mistake, learn from it. Don't make the same mistake twice because that shows a lack of care, respect, and understanding on your part. This also means it's vital you don't lie — whether it's about a mistake you made, a skill or experience you said you have, or **calling out sick**. You want to show reliability and competency in what you do and lying will only discredit you further. Make sure you're always aware of your words and actions, and you hold yourself accountable at all times.

5. Your Organizational Skills

Organization is a vital skill to master in the workplace. You want to have a clean and organized desk so that you can easily find what you're looking for in a pinch. You want an **organized** and coordinated desktop and filing system so that you can pull a file from a folder as soon as it's asked of you. You want to look organized and put together physically so you are taken seriously right from the start. Making organization a priority saves you time and energy, and lets others know you can be counted on and relied upon. Don't leave unnecessary papers or unrelated documents lying around when attending a meeting or conference. Don't have personal files or projects out in the open for colleagues and others to see. By keeping an organized persona, you are telling the world that you are a professional that should be taken seriously.

6. How You Communicate

When you speak, others listen. This goes for written and oral correspondences. You don't want to be walking around an open office swearing left and right, or making insensitive and lewd jokes. You never know what might offend someone, so it's better to stay away from cursing and any other inappropriate talk while in the office. Outside of foul language, it's important you articulate yourself and are direct when speaking. It happens to everyone, but try not to sound unprofessional in a naive way. Try not to say "like," "um," or "uh" too often as this might seem unprofessional.

Try collecting your thoughts and formulating your words before speaking them. Similarly, when it comes to emails and other written **communication**, be direct, concise, and polite. Use full sentences and stay away from slang or colloquialisms unless you know that it is acceptable to communicate in this way. You should always speak professionally when talking to customers and clients.

7. Your Integrity

Being honest and having **integrity** are somewhat similar to being accountable. You obviously don't want to lie or get caught lying about a skillset or experience. You also don't want to engage in workplace gossip or scandals which would shed a negative light on you as a person. Even when faced with a stressful or difficult situation, it's important to keep your composure and be true to yourself. Being honest means always keeping your word and doing the right thing. It's having personal ethics and staying true to them. It's also vital that if you say you'll do something, that you do it. This will make you someone that your co-workers can trust and your supervisors will respect and appreciate.

Integrity and honesty are some of the most invaluable traits to have, and are two of the fundamental values employers seek out in potential employees. This is because these values are not just about the work itself, but how a person interacts and creates relationships with coworkers, clients, and customers.

So now instead of wondering what are the qualities of professionalism, you can go ahead and demonstrate them.