

**INSTITUTE OF CORPORATE
ADMINISTRATION**

Mastering The Art of **PROFESSIONALISM** in Modern Organizations

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MASTERING The Art of PROFESSIONALISM in Modern Organization



“Professional is not a label you give yourself - It’s a description you hope others will apply to you”.

— David Maister

Introduction:

The subject of professionalism has come to the front burner in very recent times in Nigeria. In view of the relevance in creating a vibrant and productive workforce., we consider it crucial to give it the deserving attention, both as a conference theme and as a seminar/workshop topic.

This is to ensure a better understanding of the concept and encourage appropriate adoption across the public and private sector, the armed forces and paramilitary organizations.

What is Professionalism?

Professionalism is a commonly used word in the modern workplace. In practical sense, it refers to a way of thinking, behaving, and appearing that demonstrates a commitment to excellence in all aspects of one's work. It encompasses a range of qualities, including a positive attitude, being coachable, taking responsibility for one's actions, displaying a strong work ethic, and exhibiting respect for others.

Who is a Professional?

A Professional is a member of a profession or any person who works in a specified professional society. The term also describes the standards of education and training that prepare members of the profession with the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform their specific role within the profession.

Fostering a Culture of Professionalism

A culture of professionalism is a necessity in any progressive work environment. A culture of professionalism is characterized by adherence to high standards values as well as the expectation that all employees adhere to these standards and values. The benefit of having such a culture are numerous, including improved morale, employee productivity and customer Satisfaction.

Steps to Creating a Culture of Professionalism

- Setting expectation early enough on what is expected
- Providing training and development opportunities
- Rewarding employees for their hard work
- Creating environment where everyone feels welcome and respected.

Characteristics of a Professional?

1. Observing Organizational Ethics

Business ethics are a set of moral principles that businesses use as a guideline to determine what is right, wrong, appropriate and inappropriate in the workplace this should bind even employees in top positions. Individuals in the organization may also have their own professional ethics in addition to that of the organization.

These ethics may assist employees and organizations in adhering to defined standards of responsibility, accountability, and competence as they navigate various challenges and day to day events. Maintaining these standards in the workplace can have several key benefits that can improve the lives of staff, clients, stakeholders, and the general public.

Organizations insists on a set of ethics to ensure employees are all following the same moral code and as to create a positive work environment.

2. Communication Skills

Developing exceptional communication skills is vital to be professional. Good people skills help you connect with peers, customers and other stakeholders, depending on your industry. Individuals who behave professionally structure their words to avoid using slang or inappropriate language in the workplace. Excellent communication is useful anywhere, from meetings and presentations to emails and memos, to make the best impression on your audience.

3. Appearance

How you dress reflects how you view your work and others see you. If you're working in a role that requires you to meet clients, it may benefit you to invest in a few classic business-like outfits which can serve as a basis for your overall appearance and style. Staying well-groomed is just as important, which can mean keeping clean, using personal hygiene products, shaving and having clean beard, manicured nails. It can differ depending on your industry.

4. Reliability

Other team members trust reliable and dependable employees in the workplace. Portray yourself as trustworthy by meeting deadlines, arriving on time for work, supporting team members and using your initiative. Sometimes, commitment can mean going beyond expectations or putting in the extra time to complete a project. Demonstrating reliability in your work can make a good impression on your manager and increase your chances of promotion.

5. Team Orientation

Many organizations rely on strong and effective teams to drive them toward success. To be an effective team player, try to understand your teammates and work together to solve problems.



Also, staying flexible to the opinions of others allows you to understand and manage situations by looking at them from different angles. Team players also respect other employees and take responsibility for group-inspired choices.

6. Problem Solving

Excellent problem-solving skills refer to your ability to manage and find solutions for unexpected and complex situations. Employees demonstrating these skills have a combination of both creative and analytical thinking and are confident in making decisions in the workplace and taking on challenges.

You can show your problem-solving skills by starting small. How you handle the smallest of problems shows your ability to manage larger ones, which can potentially impact how your manager views you and your career growth.

7. Compassion

Compassion is the ability to understand another person's feelings and experiences, which can strengthen your connection to others in your team. It also lets you know how your actions impact others, which can lead to more constructive conversations, especially when associating with individuals from different backgrounds. You can improve your empathetic skills by personalizing your communication to your audience and offering help to those around you if they need it.

8. Adaptability

Being adaptable at work means having the ability to change by implementing new skills and behaviours because of a changing environment. Many organizations employ individuals who are flexible and think creatively when challenging scenarios arise.

You can encourage this in team setting by creating an environment where your colleagues feel comfortable sharing and learning. Sharing ideas helps a team open their minds to new ideas, and the people surrounding you are more likely to engage and participate to get the job done.

9. Resourcefulness

Being resourceful is the ability to spot new opportunities and figure out ways to use these before others do. Professionals with this personal attribute tend to lead projects and ensure organizations reach their goals. Employers may aim to hire individual with initiative because they're likely to develop new ideas or alternative solutions for potential issues. Taking the initiative is characteristic of a developing leader and can start with you listing your career goals and the things required to achieve them.

10. Confidence

An important attribute that can distinguish a professional is confidence. Confidence is knowing what you're good at, recognizing the value you bring to the organization and acting in ways that portray this to the people surrounding you. Showing confidence and assertiveness in the workplace can allow you to take on more challenging projects. For example, employers may take notice of your confidence and trust you to undertake more significant responsibilities, effectively progressing your career.

11. Motivation

Being motivational means that you can inspire and energize team members to make them view their roles and responsibilities more positively. It's part of the external and internal influences that contribute to job satisfaction and productivity. As a professional, motivating yourself and others can help drive an organization toward success. You can impress your superiors with your dedication when you show enthusiasm for your work. You can also inspire your peers who have difficulty keeping themselves motivated.

How to Increase Professionalism

Professionalism in the workplace can increase morale, improve job satisfaction and even help you attract and retain customers. Management must model the attitude and behavior you want to encourage the staff to adopt. These include:

1. Encourage Respect

Respect in a professional sense includes the language and approach used when interacting with others in the workplace. Don't tolerate gossip, interruptions, rude or abusive language or behaviors. Educate the staff on problem solving techniques, mediation and conflict resolution approaches. If a staff displays a lack of respect for a colleague's ideas or work, behaves in an inappropriate manner with a customer or prospect, counsel that individual and develop a plan of action for improving behaviors.

2. Set Professional Parameters

Establish professional expectations throughout all levels of your business. Create a formal dress code and describe how customers and colleagues should be addressed by phone, email and in-person. Add a section to your employee handbook that addresses workplace professionalism and cover it during orientation and subsequent staff training. Include a category in your performance evaluations that discuss professionalism in appearance, attitude and business interactions.

3. Role Play

Arrange training sessions in which you demonstrate professional and unprofessional attitudes, acts and behaviors. Involve the employees in the process so they have first-hand look at best practices in the professional arena. Include a question and answer session following your role-playing activity to go more in-depth about what transpired. This gives you an opportunity to discuss company policy and corporate image.

4. Invite Staff Input

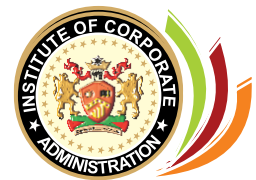
Invite employees to participate in group brainstorming sessions on how to increase professionalism in the workplace. This approach gives employee a vested interest in the process and allows them to contribute thoughts, ideas and suggestions. Create an in-house team of volunteers to vet ideas, and come back to the group with a plan of action for implementing new approaches.

5. Explain Impact of Professionalism

Provide employees with feedback about their levels of professionalism and explain how different actions help or hurt the business. For example, a sales person who laces conversations with four letter words makes the company appear unrefined, while a manager who attends a presentation in a t-shirt and jeans can give the company a lazy image. When employees understand how these actions impact the business – and therefore their jobs – it can change their attitudes.

Why We Care

The professional world is becoming increasingly competitive as the pace of change is accelerating. Unfortunately, our country is currently facing a severe quality crisis. The factors responsible for this underperformance, and underdevelopment are multifaceted. Obviously, lack of professionalism is a prime factor. Our survival as a nation is a cause for concern.



When the workforce receives adequate training in professionalism, it boosts their competence and credibility which in turn boosts individual performance and organizations overall productivity.

It is crucial for both new and experienced workers to keep training and retraining as to hone their skills. This is aimed at avoiding complacency and indolence. Professional development gives the workers the opportunity to learn and apply new technology and skills that can help them in their jobs and further career development thereby qualifying them as real professionals.

Key Take Away

- ◇ Achieving high level efficiency and productivity consistently does not happen by chance. Real effort is required.
- ◇ Being a real professional goes far beyond acquiring some requisite professional certificate.
- ◇ Professionalism is an attitude, a way of thinking, behaving, appearing that demonstrates a commitment to excellence in all aspects of one's work.
- ◇ Organizations are encouraged to invest on training programmes that encourage and fosters professionalism recognizing its great impact on enhancing productivity.
- ◇ As an individual, you are expected to invest in your career in order to qualify as a real professional.

Conclusion

Professionalism in the workplace is crucial for enhancing productivity, building trust, and positive work environment. By understanding the importance of professionalism and demonstrating professional traits, individuals can build their careers, contribute to their organization's success, and create a more respectful workplace.

All these do not happen by chance. It must be fostered.

Thank you for listening.