

PEARSON NEW INTERNATIONAL EDITION

**Professionalism
Skills for Workplace Success**
Lydia E. Anderson Sandra B. Bolt
Third Edition



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individuals to speak a different language (bilingual) when at home. At work, speaking a second language can be a means of attracting and meeting customer needs. Therefore, being bilingual can be a workplace asset.

Do not make fun of people with different cultures or lifestyles or individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Even jokes that we believe are innocent may cause deep wounds. Moreover, they may not only be offensive, but may violate someone's civil rights. Inappropriate comments can be construed as both workplace discrimination and harassment.

For example, Cory is invited to lunch with some new coworkers. During the meal, one of the coworkers tells a joke about a blind person of a certain ethnicity. Cory politely chuckles at the punch line but is actually offended. Cory wonders how to best handle the situation. Should Cory tell the joke teller that the joke was offensive? Should Cory tell the department supervisor? Cory clearly believes that this type of behavior is inappropriate. Cory decides to informally let the joke teller know that the joke was offensive. If Cory continues to see inappropriate or offensive behavior from this employee, Cory has decided to mention the behavior to the department supervisor and request diversity training for the department.

Companies are attempting to better address workplace diversity through several actions. First, they are developing **diversity statements**. These statements remind employees that diversity in the workplace is an asset and not a form of prejudice and stereotyping. Second, companies are providing **diversity training** to teach employees how to eliminate workplace discrimination and harassment. This training applies to all employees, customers, and vendors. Third, they are eliminating the **glass ceiling** and **glass walls**. These are invisible barriers that frequently make executive positions (glass ceiling) and certain work areas or work-related places, such as a golf course (glass wall), off limits to females and minorities. A glass ceiling prevents females and minorities from moving up the corporate ladder through promotions. Glass walls are barriers that exclude females and minorities from certain situations. Proactive companies offer formal mentoring programs to assist in identifying and training women and minorities for promotion opportunities. People should not receive special treatment because they are female or a minority, but they should be given an equal opportunity. The employer is responsible for hiring the most qualified candidate.

Cultural Differences

Our society is a mix of individuals from all over the world. For this reason, it is important to address cultural differences and their impact on the workplace. Cultural differences include religious influences and are related to the treatment of individuals based on age, gender, and family.

There are many different religions in the world. Although most major U.S. holidays are based around Christian holidays, not everyone who works in the United States is a Christian. Individuals who do not share your religious values are afforded the same rights as you. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Civil Rights Act protects individuals from discrimination based on religion. Everyone is entitled to observe his or her respective religious holidays and traditions. Once again, we must be respectful of everyone's individual religious beliefs and not condemn someone for his or her religious difference. Although

an individual's religious beliefs may permeate every element of his or her life, as with other issues of diversity, if religion negatively impacts performance, the issue must be addressed.

Some countries have cultures that focus on the individual, while other countries prioritize what is best for society over personal needs. In some cultures, women and children are often not treated as equals to men. Although we may not agree with this treatment, we have to respect cultural differences. Understand these differences so you do not offend others. For example, some hand gestures commonly used in the United States may be offensive to someone who has come from another country. If you feel you may have offended someone based upon a cultural difference, find out what behavior offended the other person, apologize if necessary, and try to not repeat the offensive behavior.

Cultural differences have both a positive and negative impact on business. Learning about other cultures can provide insights into new markets and stimulate creativity. With so much diversity among employees and customers, knowing other cultures will result in improved relationships. Outcomes can be negative when companies do not properly train employees and address cultural differences; this is when prejudice and discrimination may emerge.

Workplace Dos and Don'ts

<i>Do</i> always behave in an ethical manner	<i>Don't</i> behave one way at work and another around your friends
<i>Do</i> keep information confidential	<i>Don't</i> break the company's trust
<i>Do</i> recognize and increase your workplace power bases	<i>Don't</i> use your workplace power in a harmful or unethical manner
<i>Do</i> know your rights regarding workplace diversity	<i>Don't</i> accept defeat in discriminatory situations
<i>Do</i> learn to respect differences in others	<i>Don't</i> use your minority status to take advantage of situations
<i>Do</i> be proud of your culture and heritage	<i>Don't</i> show prejudice toward others
<i>Do</i> take responsibility for increasing awareness about workplace diversity issues	<i>Don't</i> label people

Concept Review and Application

Summary of Key Concepts

- Personal ethical behavior is a reflection of the influences of friends, family, religion, and society
- Do not share confidential information with individuals for whom the business is of no concern
- Power and power bases are effective tools to use in the workplace
- Be cautious to not use power and reciprocity in an unethical manner
- A conflict of interest occurs when you are in a position to influence a decision from which you could benefit directly or indirectly
- No matter what our differences, treat everyone with respect and professionalism
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on sex, religion, race or color, or national origin
- Diversity should be used as an asset that utilizes our differences as ways to create, innovate, and compete
- Workplace diversity should be an issue only when the diversity negatively affects performance

Key Terms

character	charismatic power	coercive power
confidential	conflict of interest	connection power
culture	diversity statements	diversity training
ethics	ethics statement	ethnocentric
expert power	glass ceiling	glass wall
implied	information power	labeling
confidentiality	legitimate power	levels of ethical
morals	networking	decisions
perception	politics	power
prejudice	race	reciprocity
reward power	stereotyping	values
workplace	workplace diversity	
discrimination		

If You Were the Boss

1. You have just been promoted to boss. What are the first five things you should do?
2. What is the best method of dealing with an ethical decision regarding the performance of an employee?
3. What would you do if you noticed an employee treating another employee in a discriminatory manner?
4. What can you do to minimize workplace discrimination and harassment?

Video Case Study: Making Ethical Choices

Two employees are having a conversation at work. This video shows two different ethical perspectives. To view these videos, visit the Student Resources: Professionalism section in www.mystudentsuccesslab.com. Then answer the following questions:

1. Are either of the characters in this video demonstrating unethical behavior? If so, what are the specific unethical behaviors?
2. Is Brian's ethical behavior Regina's business? Why or why not?
3. How does the ethics test apply to this scenario?
4. What should the company be doing to address the situation?



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Web Links

<http://www.discriminationattorney.com/eeocdfelh.shtml>
<http://www.managementhelp.org/ethics/ethics.htm>
<http://www.dol.gov>
<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/discrimination/index.htm>
<http://www.executiveplanet.com>

Activities

Activity 1

Is it ever ethical to take paperclips, copy paper, and pens home from work?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

Support your answer.

Activity 2

List a time when you overheard confidential information that should not have been shared—for example, sitting in a physician's office or overhearing a private conversation while shopping.

How should this situation have been better handled?

Activity 3

Identify at least three potential areas for employee theft on a small scale.

1.

2.

3.

Identify at least two potential areas for employee theft on a large scale.

1.

2.

Activity 4

In the United States, the thumbs-up symbol communicates a job well done. Research and identify what the thumbs-up symbol communicates in at least two other countries. What did this activity teach you about various cultures and hand gestures?

Country	Meaning

Conclusion: What did you learn?

Activity 5

Identify a recent experience where you observed act of prejudice. How could you have handled the situation differently?

Act of Prejudice	How You Would Handle the Situation?

Activity 6

With a partner, dialogue what you would say if someone offended you with a joke. Was this dialogue easy? Why or why not? Share your findings with your class.
