

Effective Working Relationships



CREATE AND MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

We all work with others in our daily working life to produce the products and services that we provide to our customers.

It is important to maintain happy relationships with all those people we work with to ensure that our work gets done efficiently, so that our customers receive the service they require.

Internal Customers

These are the people who you work with - your colleagues in your department, workers in other departments, supervisors and managers.

The way we react with our internal customers has an effect on our external customers. If one person is not doing their job correctly, this will affect the work of others in the organisation and it will be more difficult to satisfy external customers. It is therefore essential that all people who work together develop good relationships to maintain customer satisfaction.

Developing Good Relationships

These guidelines will help you to develop good working relationships:

- Treat other workers with the respect you expect - they are professionals as well
- Carry out your work and responsibilities in the correct way so that others work will not be affected
- Assist colleagues, supervisors, managers when they request it - you may need to ask for their help at some time
- Be friendly and happy to work with
- Always be polite to everyone who -works in the organisation no matter what position they hold or job they do.

Why Develop Good Relationship?

As well as making your workplace more enjoyable to work in, the customers will benefit from better service as everyone works as a team. It will also help your organisation to maintain a professional image.

What factors affect and influence relationships?

We are all individuals and respond differently to situations and other people. You may find that you get on better with certain people in the organisation than others and it may be due to some of the following factors:

- Age
- Social background
- Same taste in music, sport, hobbies
- Same sense of humour
- Common job role

Your relationships may also be influenced by some of these factors:

- Organisational structure i.e. management and staff
- Personality types - outgoing/quiet
- Length of time you spend with people

It is important to be aware of these factors as they may affect the way your team works. If there is a person in the organisation that you do not get on with, they must still be treated with respect and courtesy.

Remember, we all work as a team and personal grievances must be pushed aside to maintain the team and customer satisfaction. If personal grievances are a problem bring them to the attention of the supervisor or manager so a solution can be sought.

Teamwork

As the word suggests, the whole team-managers, supervisors and workers must work together and this takes effort.

The way even one member of staff feels can effect how the others feel - whether they are positive or negative feelings.

“A Good Team” :

- Talks to each other - this ensures that essential information is passed on to all concerned - it also means that problems or particular difficulties that may affect the way -we work with each other are resolved more easily as people feel happier about discussing their feelings.
- Respects each other - each team member will respect each others job and the role everyone plays in the organisation - they will not treat someone with disrespect if, for instance/ that person has a lower position in the organisation – everyone plays a part.
- Trust each other - they will be confident that everyone will do their job correctly and will not let others down.
- Understands what each person's job involves - so that difficulties are understood and any assistance can be offered when appropriate
- Has team meetings/ briefings - to ensure that everyone is involved in the working of the organisation and has the opportunity to contribute their ideas and raise issues that concern them
- Has fun while maintaining standards - happy staff will work better and this feeling will be passed on to customers, making a better atmosphere for everyone.

Teamwork and Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunities is about treating everyone in .the same way regardless of sex/ age, marital status, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation etc and is essential for a team to work well.

If one person is discriminated against, the team will not be effective and customer satisfaction can be affected. Treatment of everyone in an equal and fair way forms the basis of equal opportunities legislation in many countries, particularly members of the European community.

Communication Between Teams

There are many ways in -which we can relay information to everyone in the team. Communication techniques play a big part in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships, as do the use of interpersonal skills.

These are some of the methods that can be used and you must be aware of them so that you can obtain the information necessary for your job.

- Informal discussions between staff/management
- Specific instructions relating to your job role
- Staff briefings/meetings

What are the important techniques for effective verbal communication?

- Clear Natural speech
- Modulated Tone
- Accurate pronunciation
- Correct use of grammar
- Lack of ambiguity
- Politeness

What are the important techniques for receiving information effectively?

- Listen carefully
- Identify relevant points
- Take notes
- Question and avoid 'closed' questions, which invite very little useful information as an answer or close down a conversation
- Check information

As well as communicating with others using the spoken word a lot can be said by the use of body language or non-verbal communication.

What are the components of non-verbal communication?

- Acknowledge/greet people with a smile
- Use polite gestures
- Maintain eye contact, as appropriate
- Maintain a correct (upright, alert) posture
- Wear clean and correct clothing
- Not displaying unpleasant personal habits or gestures e.g. nail biting, nose touching etc.
- Maintain standards of personal hygiene

Within the workplace we may have to communicate with others in writing or read information that has been passed onto us.

For example:

- Written communication - memos, letters
- Staff notice boards - rotas, diagrams, charts
- Safety and hygiene notices

This could include colleagues with impaired speech, hearing, or those whose first language is different from your own.

Always face the person and speak slowly and clearly, using gestures and pointing to objects and signs and repeat if necessary to ensure understanding is reached. Ask the person questions to check they have the information they require.

Another feature of effective working relationships is being able to carry out tasks in a specified or logical order. Pacing the amount and type of work you do is also very important.

To work effectively it's very important that everyone knows what they should be doing, when they should be doing it and to what standard they should be doing it. All this is recorded in a work plan or schedule. This is drawn up before commencing work and is a document to which everyone can relate to.

What should a work plan or work schedule cover?

Ensure that the following are included:

- Timescales and deadlines
- The people involved
- Targets and objectives
- The standards to be worked to
- Anything special or different to normal working practices

A further feature of effective working relationships is not only knowing, but also understanding the organisations rules and regulations.

It is essential that there are rules that everyone follows at work as this allows for everyone to be treated fairly. You should know your rights and entitlements, as well as the procedures that you and your, supervisor or manager must follow in the event of time away from work, grievance and disciplinary matters.

Effective working relationships with people both within and outside the company are based upon open, honest and friendly behaviour whilst maintaining a professional attitude. Within the organisation, it is important that everyone works efficiently together to meet common objectives and targets. This often involves providing advice and information to colleagues and supervisors/managers.

When might you need to give advice or information to a colleague?

- Problems with equipment
- Problems with quality
- Information about changes to work

What might happen if you didn't give suitable advice or information to a colleague?

- Misunderstanding
- Poor relationships/team working
- Wasted production
- Damage to machinery
- Unacceptable quality
- Customer complaints
- Drop in health, safety, security standards

This section has looked at working with others within the organisation, but we must also remember that we come into contact with visitors and customers as well. Although the techniques of communication are the same as we discussed earlier, there is the added need to maintain a professional attitude towards visitors and customers.

Dealing with visitors

It is important to know how to greet and assist visitors to your organisation so that anyone who arrives, whether expected or unexpected, receives prompt and efficient service.

Why does everyone need to know how to deal with visitors?

There may be occasions when the usual person who greets visitors is not available, or the visitor may not enter by the usual entrance and you may be the only person who can deal with him/her in the first instance.

It is important to determine who the visitor is, what his/her business is, whether the visitor is expected and who he/she wishes to see.

If the visitor needs to be directed to another part of the organisation

It is a good policy to take the visitor yourself if this is possible, although do not leave your place of work unattended, especially if you have expensive stock or money exposed.

Do not leave the visitor alone in these situations. If necessary ask for assistance from another member of staff, or direct the visitor to another member of staff where assistance can be provided.

If the visitor is unexpected

Ask the visitor how you can be of some assistance and determine if you can help, or if he/she needs to be directed to another department.

Give assistance - if you are able to, escort visitors (if appropriate) or direct them to the relevant person or area.

Effective communication with all visitors

When greeting and assisting visitors remember the following points to ensure that customer care is maintained and visitors' needs are met:

- Greet visitors promptly - always acknowledge them, even if you can not be with them immediately.
- Always remain polite and courteous - never ignore people.
- Use clear, simple language and questioning to determine visitors' needs and requirements and clarify any issues you do not understand.
- If visitors have to wait to be seen, explain politely that you will fetch someone who can help.
- Always remember to give visitors general information - avoid giving any information regarding security, cash handling procedures or confidential information relating to staff or customers.
- Identify any special communication needs visitors may have and adapt your methods of communication to suit their needs.

Why is it important to maintain a professional attitude towards visitors and customers?

- Shows visitors and customers that the company considers them important
- Sets the standards that visitors and customers will expect throughout the company.
- Increases likelihood that visitors and customers will adopt a professional attitude in return and not talk down to staff.
- Enables potential problems to be recognised in advance and complaints handled properly.
- Inspires visitors and customers confidence in the company.

ACTIVITY

Now that you have read about working with others and dealing with visitors please apply the following tasks to.

YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION

JOB ROLE

When you start a new job, you need to get guidance on your role and responsibilities.

Where and whom does this come from?

What are your roles and responsibilities in your workplace?

If possible, obtain a copy of your job description. If this is not possible create your own job description, add this to your evidence for this unit. Sometimes you may find yourself doing tasks which are not written in your job description.

When and why might this happen?

List the advantages and disadvantages of the above.

ORGANISATIONAL CHARTS

Organisational charts give a clear picture of who is who within an establishment. They are invaluable to new members of staff, allowing them to identify their position in the company's structure. They can be seen as a jigsaw, showing the importance of the individual member of the team.

Draw an organisation chart for your place of work. Start with yourself and build up from there.



Make a list of your line managers.

Make a list of your immediate colleagues.

Make a list of other members of staff, who do not work in your area, but with whom you still have working contact.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

There are many skills required for communication to be effective, and it is vital these are used at all times. Misunderstandings and communication breakdowns can arise within the team if these skills are not used. For example, it is vital these messages are passed on and that any problems are dealt with immediately.

If the team is not communicating effectively, visitors are also affected. Visitors to your establishment must form a good impression of the company, and effective communication plays a vital part in this.

Visitors to your workplace can be split into internal and external visitors.

List the internal visitors who may visit your workplace.

List the external visitors who may visit your workplace.

You will probably know some of the people visiting your establishment but you will not know others. It is important to give them all a good impression.

It takes the average person only five seconds to form an impression, so it is important that you create a good first impression as this reflects on the establishment for which you work.

YOU WILL NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION

Please answer the following:

- How can you create a good first impression?
- If you do not recognise a visitor, why is it important to find out who they are immediately?
- What information you require from a visitor to your "workplace? (If at all possible, try to obtain persons business card).
- What information might a visitor require from you?
- With what routine enquiries might you deal?
- With what complex enquiries might you deal?
- When might you need to route visitors to other parts of the organisation?

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

In your job consider the methods of communication you use on a day to day basis to communicate with your colleagues and visitors.

List the types of communication which your establishment uses to reach you.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS FORM INTO TWO GROUPS:

Verbal

and

Non-Verbal

Give examples of the verbal communication methods you use:

What kinds of non-verbal and written communications do you use?

WORKING AS A TEAM

It *is* very important to have good working relationships with your team.

What are the characteristics of effective teams?

Who benefits by good teamwork?

How do they benefit?

THE LAW FACTOR

In our day to day work we are governed by a number of rules and regulations. Many of these are required by law:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- COSHH
- Food Safety Act 1990
- RIDDOR
- Manual Handling Regulations

As well as these your establishment has its own rules and regulations which make up their acceptable working practices.

These could include:

- Grievance Procedures
- Equal Opportunities
- Handling Customer Complaints
- Working Practices
- Dress Code

What is a grievance?

Obtain a copy of your own company's grievance procedures.

On what ground might an employer discriminate?

What is your responsibility in promoting Equal Opportunities?

Obtain your company's Equal Opportunities Policy. Does your organisation offer equal opportunities for all?

The following would be useful supplementary evidence of your workplace procedures:

- Work Schedule
- Duty Rota
- Minutes of Team Meeting
- Memos to you
- Health and Safety and Security procedures

