

Ten Tips to Strengthen Your People Skills

If you've thought that people skills could not be much of an issue in determining your own success on the job, think again. You could be skating on thin ice when it comes to relating to people and yet be unaware that danger exists.

The ten tips that follow will help you build good working relationships with your associates and at the same time aid you in evaluating what your own assets and vulnerabilities are. Another plus to remember: If you possess the interacting abilities that others lack, you'll be much better off if layoffs come.

Between You and Me...

1. **Try hard to resist** the temptation to belittle ideas or correct someone in public. If you think someone's idea lacks merit, tell the person in private. Otherwise, it's a putdown. Flaunting one's knowledge is unprofessional and insensitive—not to mention a quick turnoff.
2. **Your body language** says a lot about you. But what is it telling? Scowls and frowns, or a defensive stance with hands on hips can spell trouble. Why risk that when a simple adjustment to a positive attitude will keep you from falling out of favor?
3. **Cutting people off** in mid sentence signals that you have already concluded that what they have to say is not important. If you're guilty of this fault, you need to practice patience and self-restraint. Ask yourself if you're a courteous listener.
4. **When you don't share** another person's point of view, can you disagree without being disagreeable? Without flexibility, people skills suffer! Do try to express some merit in someone else's position before you abruptly dismiss it as wrong.
5. **Are you ego-centered**--testy to the point where you become hostile if someone criticizes your work? Remember, everyone has strengths and weaknesses. So get over yourself. Try hard to suppress that ego, and readily accept constructive suggestions.
6. **Do you sense that people don't listen to you?** It could be you have too much to say. Try a role reversal for a minute and ask yourself this: Would you want to be on the listening end of a one-way conversation? Never! So take a good look at yourself and make sure too much chatter isn't part of what you see.
7. **Become a good communicator.** Whether you're speaking to a large group or one-on-one, use good grammar and learn to think on your feet. Articulate clearly and concisely. Shun complex sentences and remember that a good communicator need not use "big" words--orally or written.
8. **Win with teamwork!** Commit to becoming a part of the team. Contribute ideas and believe in what you have to offer. Respect your team members. Give each of them credit and foster a spirit of cooperation instead of competition.
9. **Give a smile** to get a smile. Warm up to people; be friendly. Ask yourself if your co-workers readily approach you. If they don't, you need to be more outgoing.
10. **Invite others' opinions.** Some of the best ideas are yet to be expressed. So ask others what they think. Avoid being a know-it-all and give your associates the opportunity to enlighten you with

their thoughts.

The Choice is Yours...

It's no secret successful companies seek highly-skilled, self-motivated workers with strong interpersonal skills and communication abilities. Yet most people spend more time doing preventative maintenance on their automobiles than they do on their people skills. Don't you make that mistake.

Consider this: A simple refresher course is most likely all you need to bring your people skills up to snuff--and once you do that, **everything gets better!**

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