Overview
All of your work experiences (both paid and unpaid) provide you with an opportunity to develop your reputation as someone who knows what it means to be a professional. When you are developing your professional image, keep in mind that you are always being evaluated on your behavior. Sometimes there may be situations in the workplace that present challenges when it comes to professionalism. In today’s job market it’s essential that we learn to manage our professional image. Developing your reputation as a professional begins with your first job. Professionalism refers to your ability to manage change, take initiative, work with others, be a leader, adapt to new situations and be open to learn new technology.

Learning Objectives:
Upon completion of this module, you will be able to differentiate between professionalism, Business etiquette and build, fine-tune and develop your professional image. As well, be open to learn new technology.

Professionalism
dress code, professionalism memberships and networks, email and social media etiquette, workplace culture and how to adapt, expressing the company brand in the work you do. Think of professionalism as your outward appearance and how you are perceived by others.

Business Etiquette
First impressions, communication tone written and verbal, behaviour civility, meeting and greeting (introductions), showing respect, telephone/cell phone, notes of appreciation, business meals and social events and business meetings. Think of business etiquette as guidelines to interactions.
Attitude

integrity, self-discipline, customer service, gossip, office politics, diplomacy and problem solving. Think of attitude as emotional intelligence that sets you apart and helps keep you in balance.

Strategies to increase your professional image at work include:

Getting to work 10 minutes early and arriving at least 5 minutes early for meetings.

Developing a reputation for being reliable – minimizing absenteeism.

Following directions accurately and completing all assigned tasks on time.

Following through on commitments Going “the extra mile”, don’t do the minimum amount of work required of you.

Professionalism isn’t attached to a job title - it’s a quality attached to the person in the workplace.

Being proactive in the workplace, offering to help others when appropriate.

Take a sincere interest in getting to know your team mates, but don’t socialize on the job and/or get too personal with co-workers – your relationships with your co-workers should always remain professional!

Work Relationships - Remember...
Always keep it professional, not personal (work friendships are different from personal friendships!)

Be consistent in your attitude and behaviour
Do not listen to, or engage in, gossip – walk away from the situation.

Maintain confidentialities at all times (inside and outside the work environment)

Respect the organization’s hierarchy structure; respect the position a person holds even if you may not respect the person who is holding it!

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**Activity**

Work with a partner to determine how you would handle the following workplace situations:

**Scenario A:**
A team-mate has told you that another teammate has been gossiping about you behind your back to others in the workplace. A team member is not following through on his/her assigned tasks which has resulted in you doing your colleague’s work as well as your own on several recent occasions.

**Scenario B:**
You get “the feeling” that a co-worker dislikes you personally. It has not however, affected the high quality of work produced when you are working with this person. How should you handle this situation?

- Resolving Conflict
- Situations with Customers/Clients
  - Apply the principle of [H E A T]
  - Hear what the other person has to say
  - Empathize with how the person is feeling and the situation he/she is in
  - Apologize (“I’m sorry you feel that way, it was not my intention to…”)
  - Take action to assist the individual with resolving his/her situation.

**On the job**

Always arrive to work dressed appropriately and ready to work.

Do not engage in personal phone calls / texting or check your social media sites.

Do not engage in personal conversations / interactions while working.

Do not use your iPod while working even if you are not interacting with students. You will appear to be unapproachable and disengaging.

Always use appropriate language while working, even when you are engaging in conversations with co-workers; do not engage in inappropriate conversations.

**Off duty**

Maintain confidentiality, do not relate stories to your friends about encounters you have had with other students while working.

Realize that other students recognize you as working for your department, therefore you must always maintain a level of professionalism in regards to your actions and attitudes when you are not working.

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*Career Management Module 8: Professionalism*
Summary

Professionalism, business etiquette and having a positive attitude are essential to your success in the work world. Maintaining a professional image will be crucial to your success and the path your career will take. Perception is a powerful thing – if people perceive you to be demonstrating professional behaviour that is how they will view you. Conversely, if the opposite seems evident, that is what people will think as well.

Add to your professional image by demonstrating the following:

Excel - Be excellent at something. Figure out the thing that is most satisfying to you and learn how to do it better than anyone else. That might mean a trip to the library, a couple of night classes, reading professional journals etc.

Innovate - Solve problems that impact your colleagues, tell stories that demonstrate how you have created new processes, products, services to inspire your colleagues to do the same. Share ideas and allow others to share with you, use the brainstorming approach where criticism is not allowed in the idea collection stage.

Make People Feel Good - Brighten up your colleague's days with an appropriate joke, a compliment, an engaging discussion about the latest film, book.

You will create a positive impression of those who interact with you.

Share or Teach What You Know- No matter what your areas of expertise are, there are people out there who want or need to know so they can have more power over their own destinies. Put together, an email, webinar, workshop on any topic, share this in a news letter, join toastmasters.

You ALWAYS represent your employer - both on and off the job.