

Facilitating a Group Discussion About Professionalism

Use this job aid to have a discussion about professionalism at your next staff meeting.

This discussion will take 30-45 minutes.

STEP 1. Open the conversation by asking the group: “What does the word professionalism mean to you?” Collect as many answers as people are willing to give. Then point out that everyone has a different idea of what it means to be “professional,” making a conversation about professionalism important.

STEP 2. Write the following table on a whiteboard:

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATING WITH PROFESSIONALISM

A dapt	Consider how others are different and similar
L anguage	Use language that is work appropriate
L isten	Actively listen to others
A wareness	Be mindful, or self-aware, of how you come across
N onverbal	Remember that nonverbal is 90% of your message



STEP 3. Discuss ALLAN with the group. Start with “Adapt” and ask employees what kind of differences and similarities they might have that would affect communication. Answers might include age, gender, culture, religion, etc.

Next discuss “Language.” Ask employees what “work appropriate” language means. Answers might include no cussing, keeping your voice calm, and using polite language such as please.

Repeat with each letter, essentially asking the group to help define what ALLAN means in your workplace.

STEP 4. Next, turn to your whiteboard and write “10 Professional Boundaries” on one side, and “Observable Behaviors” on the other (see example below).

Ask the group to get into pairs and write down 10 professional boundaries, and what those boundaries look like in action. Give them 15 minutes to complete the exercise.

Then facilitate a group discussion, writing their answers on the white board as they offer them up. Here are some examples of what your whiteboard might look like:

10 Professional Boundaries	Observable Behaviors
1. <i>Appropriate personal space</i>	<i>Getting no closer than an arm’s length away; never touching a person at work; sitting down in a person’s office instead of standing over them</i>
2. <i>Be inclusive</i>	<i>If you invite several people to lunch, invite everyone; make eye contact with people and say hello when you pass them; use words like “we”</i>