MODULE 00108-09
BASIC EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
(00108 LESSON 2 of 2)
SLIDE PRESENTATION
Computers are used in the construction industry for job planning and tracking, design, accounting, cost estimating, timekeeping, and a variety of other purposes.

The most familiar computers are the desktop computer, laptop computer, and handheld computer known as a personal digital assistant, or PDA.

Figure 7 Laptop computer.
Computer systems consist of **hardware**, **software**, and **operating systems**.

In addition to the basic hardware components, the computer can be linked to a **scanner**, which converts text and illustrations to electronic form so they can be manipulated on the computer.

The **processor** contains the CPU, which performs all the computing functions.

*Figure 8* Computer hardware.
• A variety of software packages are used. Typical applications include **word processors** and **browsers**.
• Among these software programs are computer-aided design (CAD) programs and project management programs.
• Some companies use proprietary software designed specifically for them in addition to off-the-shelf software.
Figure 9  Samples of computer software used in the construction industry, including AutoCAD™ and Primavera. (1 of 2)
Figure 9  Samples of computer software used in the construction industry, including AutoCAD™ and Primavera. (2 of 2)
Some computers used at job sites use wireless communications technology, which allows you to communicate with other computers without a physical connection.

Site personnel use wireless computers to obtain information; order materials; and send reports, photos, and other data to the main office.

Global positioning systems (GPSs) provide reliable location and time data any time of day, in any weather, anywhere in the world.

Figure 10 Many modern tools and machines are computer controlled.
• Computers are also used to control machine tools that are used to mill materials such as wood, metal, and plastic. Machine tools that are controlled by computers are known as computer numeric control (CNC) machines.

• Computer-controlled machines known as electrical discharge machines (EDMs) are used to cut and form parts that cannot be handled by other types of machines.
Your success depends to a great extent on your ability to establish good working relationships with your peers, supervisors, and clients.

A relationship is the process of interacting with other people. It is affected by both actions and perceptions.

Part of establishing good relationships is acting professionally.

The way you speak, dress, and interact with others, known as self-presentation, along with your work ethic, are all key ingredients in establishing professional relationships.
Among the personal traits that will affect your ability to establish good working relationships are:

- Being dependable
- Being organized
- Being qualified
- Being willing to take on new or difficult work
- Being honest
- Being well groomed
- Being discrete (do not share confidential company information with others)

A good work ethic is very important. You need to give a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay every day.

Because a supervisor will not be with you every minute of every day, you need to be able to work independently and solve problems as they come up.

In short, it is important to show **initiative**, but it is also important to know your limits.
Part of being seen as a dependable employee is showing up for work and being there on time.

Construction projects depend on tight schedules where most of the activities are dependent on other activities. If people are not there to perform their assigned activity, the tasks down the line will be affected.

The entire project schedule can be thrown off schedule because one person fails to show up for work.

*Figure 11* Construction companies operate under tight schedules.
Because people are people, conflicts with other employees and sometimes your supervisors, will occasionally arise.

The ability to solve such conflicts before they get out of control, called conflict resolution, is a critical skill.

If you get into a disagreement with a fellow employee, do not lose your temper. Think it through and walk away if necessary.

Above all, do not make the problem worse by accusing, threatening, or embarrassing the person with whom you have the disagreement.

The first step in conflict resolution is for both parties to acknowledge that there is a conflict.

In order to arrive at a solution, it is necessary to determine the source and nature of the conflict using a process similar to the one described for problem solving.
A compromise between the parties may be needed to finally resolve the conflict.

If you have a conflict with a supervisor, a different approach is needed. Start by taking some time to think about the cause of the conflict.

Approach the supervisor respectfully and lay out your concerns in a logical, organized way.

It is a good idea to be prepared to suggest a solution to the conflict.

Once you have stated your case, give the supervisor time to think it over and reach a decision.

Once the decision is reached, accept it, even though you may not agree with it.
As a beginner, you can expect to receive **constructive criticism**, which is advice given to help you learn.

You should assume that supervisors and peers who offer constructive criticism are trying to help you.

*Figure 12* A good employee never stops learning on the job.
If you are in the position of offering constructive criticism, be sure to do it in a positive way and never do it in front of other team members or supervisors.

When you offer criticism, include a suggestion on how to change the behavior you are criticizing and be sure to compliment the person.

Think of criticism as a way to learn and improve your skills. If safety is involved, it may be a matter of life and death.

When receiving constructive criticism, take responsibility for your actions and do not be defensive or try to make excuses.
Any construction project is a cooperative effort by groups of people working toward a common goal. This is known as **teamwork**.

Members of a successful team cooperate with each other, help and encourage each other, and do whatever is necessary to achieve the team’s goal.
As you gain experience, you may have the opportunity to assume greater responsibility. With hard work and commitment, anything is possible, including owning your own company.

To progress through your career, you will need to develop leadership skills and learn how to use them.

A good leader sets an example for others to follow. He or she is well organized, self-confident, and a good communicator.

A leader can be called upon to perform a variety of tasks, but there is a core set of tasks that is common to most leadership positions.

You need to determine what leadership style works best for you and for a given situation. The three commonly recognized leadership styles are:

- Autocratic—Makes all decisions without consulting the team
- Democratic—Involves the team in decision making
- Hands-off—Leaves decisions to the team
As you progress in leadership positions, ethics plays an increasingly larger role. As a leader, you must:

- Make sure all laws and regulations are obeyed.
- Treat everyone fairly.
- Respond appropriately to particular events and situations.

Some of the ways that leaders motivate their subordinates are:

- Giving recognition and praise for good work
- Encouraging people to feel that their job is important
- Providing opportunities for growth and change
- Rewarding people for their efforts

A leader who can motivate people at one level is more likely to move to the next level.
Three common issues you may encounter that can affect workplace performance are harassment, stress, and drug or alcohol abuse.

Harassment is a type of discrimination that can be based on race, age, disabilities, gender, religion, language, and other factors, and can create a hostile, unproductive workplace.

**Sexual harassment** occurs when someone makes unwanted advances or requests, or exhibits other behavior with sexual overtones. It is the most commonly reported and talked about form of harassment.

Sexual harassment in any form is illegal and can result in lawsuits and other civil penalties.

If you experience or observe sexual harassment, notify your supervisor.

With any form of harassment, some people will think it is all in fun. However, the victims generally do not see it that way, and can cause the perpetrators to lose their jobs.
Figure 13 Today’s construction workplace is a cross-section of our society.
Stress is the tension, anxiety, or strain that you feel when you face unexpected or unpleasant events or situations that are outside your control.

Stress can cause a variety of health problems such as headaches, irritability, and exhaustion. Therefore, it can affect job performance.

Avoid stress by eating properly, getting plenty of exercise, and managing your time and money wisely.

When stress begins to overwhelm you, it is time to talk to someone about the problems that are causing it.
Alcohol use is a common way to avoid or forget about stress. While moderate use of alcohol is socially accepted, drinking to excess is not.

Alcohol abuse creates a serious health and safety risk for you, your family, and your co-workers.

In many states, you can lose your driver’s license if you drive after having only a couple of drinks. What if your job depends on having a driver’s license?

Illegal drug use is never acceptable. Most companies will fire you on the spot if you are caught using illegal drugs.

Use of certain amphetamines, barbiturates, and hallucinogens can seriously impair your job performance and put you and others at risk.

Caffeine and tobacco are common legal amphetamines.

Hallucinogens distort your perception of reality to the point where you experience hallucinations.

Some prescription drugs, including pain medicine and cold remedies, can impair performance, so it is important to know how a drug is likely to affect you and avoid doing anything that will endanger you or others while you are taking it.