

LESSON TITLE: *Discipline and Character*

INTRODUCTION: Upon completion of this lesson, students will understand the importance of good character traits in the classroom as well as in the workplace. In addition, the objectives listed below should be met.

OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain honest behaviors in all situations
- Be trustworthy, reliable and dependable in all responsibilities
- Demonstrate self-discipline and self-responsibility

MODULE OVERVIEW

Desirable character traits include those of responsibility, loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, dependability, reliability, initiative, and self-discipline. Employers as well as instructors require evidence of these traits from their subordinates.

This module examines instructor and employer expectations and the outcomes resulting from the lack of the character traits deemed necessary for employment success. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to gain an understanding of the importance of character traits by participating in various activities chosen by the instructor.

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CHARACTER TRAITS

An employer expects employees to work together toward achieving the objectives of the company. The wise employee who is interested in having a good relationship with an employer will try to help the employer achieve success. An employer, in return for salary or wages and fringe benefits paid to employees, expects employees to develop certain desirable traits that will help them to perform their jobs well so that the company can succeed. Some of these traits include the following:

- Loyalty
- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Dependability
- Reliability
- Initiative
- Self-discipline
- Self-responsibility

Loyalty

An owner of a company might say, “If you don’t like something about our company, tell *me*. If there is something you really like about us, please tell *others*.” In other words, in return for salary and benefits, the firm does expect loyalty from its employees.

Loyalty to a company means going to your supervisor with any problem or complaint that may arise. Part of a supervisor’s job is to handle employee problems. Employers prefer to solve their own internal problems. They do not want dissatisfied employees complaining about their work to outsiders. In the same manner, employers do not want their employees to criticize the company’s goods or services to others outside the company. In fact, all employees should remember that they are goodwill ambassadors and salespeople for their company.

Another aspect of loyalty concerns keeping company “secrets” (or strategies) within the company. Always keep in mind that if the company can succeed, you will be more likely to succeed also.

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With loyalty comes a sense of pride. You should be proud of the work your company does and the work you do for the company. If conditions are such that you cannot feel faithfulness and allegiance to your company, you should seek a job elsewhere.

Honesty

Establishing a reputation for honesty is important in developing a good relationship with employers and co-workers. An honest employee is extremely valuable to businesses because one of their biggest problems is dishonest employees.

Employers are looking for honest employees—employees that will not steal anything from them, not even office supplies. You may be asking yourself, “How does taking a couple of \$1 pens home with me damage my company? A \$7 stapler? \$2 out of the petty cash fund for a coke and some crackers? A \$5 tool? My company can afford these little things, can’t it?” Think about this: If you actually did take these items—which is really **stealing**—you would have taken around \$14 from your company. Let’s assume that your company has at least 30 other employees and that each of them pilfered the same amount. The company would lose \$420 just from these *small* items. If this kind of thievery goes on every week, the company would be losing the equivalent of one employee’s salary to theft! If the company is not making money because of employee theft, the company may not have the extra money to give you the new equipment you need, to hire the new employee that is needed, or to give you the upcoming raise.

Honesty is not only defined by the actual act of stealing objects from your company. If you are scheduled to work 8 hours a day with two 15-minute breaks and a 1-hour lunch break, you need to work 8 hours a day. However, many people will not stay on task, will arrive to work late, and will take extra breaks during the day. They might bring their breakfast to work with them and eat on the job. They might extend break or lunch times or spend too much time socializing with co-workers or with personal callers. These kinds of behaviors are theft also—time theft. People who engage in these behaviors are taking the company’s money to sit around while the company is paying them to work. Therefore, stay on task!

Another honesty issue involves phone abuse. If you make personal long distance calls on your company phone, you're actually stealing money from the company. You should always charge these calls on your calling card or to your home telephone. Again, the more money you lose for

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your company, the more money **you** will lose. In fact, you might not only lose money but also lose your job completely!

Honesty involves telling the truth in all work matters. You would never lie on your job application, timesheets, or expense statements. You would never cheat a customer, another employee, or your employer in any way. You would always tell your employer and others the truth when you are questioned.

If you can prove to be an honest employee, you will be well on your way to acceptability and good human relations in any business.

Trustworthiness

Many cases exist when an employer or supervisor needs to be able to place an employee in a position of trust. When the employer trusts an employee, it often means that the employer can ask the employee to do something beyond the call of duty and expect the employee to accomplish it. The special task could be closing up a business at the end of the day. It might involve supervising others. An employer would want someone who handles the company's cash or keeps a tool room or supply room to be trustworthy. Each of these situations requires that the employer trust the employee to carry out the task. When the employee completes the task, he or she earns the employer's trust.

Dependability and Reliability

Dependability and reliability are related to trustworthiness. A responsible, dependable employee is one who agrees to carry out a task under agreed-upon procedures.

Employees are often put in positions in which they are responsible for money, for other people's safety, for other people's production, for merchandise, for customers' goodwill, for company equipment, and so on. Employers are quick to see which employees can handle positions and situations of responsibility and which cannot. When you are careful to make sure that any job you are given is done well and completed on time, you will build up your reputation for being dependable and reliable. Such work ethics are valuable to any employer.

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Initiative

When employees have initiative, they are willing to take the first step in seeing that work gets done.

People with initiative are motivated to do well and are enthusiastic about their jobs. They are industrious, which means they are hard workers. In other words, they are diligent about completing their work responsibilities. People who display initiative make sure they do what they are paid to do, and then more. They see a job or a task that needs to be done, and they do it without being asked to. They go beyond the call of duty. Suppose that you have caught up on your work for a short time. Rather than sit and wait for someone to tell you what to do next, take the initiative to find another task: take inventory of tools, reorganize the supply cabinet, clean, and so on.

Although you may be hired for a specific type of work or job, situations arise in most companies that require helping out beyond one's immediate responsibility. For instance, employees become ill or have emergencies in their families that require their absence, but their work still has to be done. Or perhaps you see a co-worker who has an unforeseen overload and really needs a hand to get a project completed. If you show a willingness to pitch in and help out in such cases, you are displaying initiative. Although union contracts or licensing may limit what employees are allowed to do outside their own jobs, an overall attitude of helpfulness makes the organization run more smoothly and improves everyone's work situation.

Self-Discipline and Self-Responsibility

Everything in life is choice—even being alive. You don't *have* to work, go to school, eat, or even get up in the morning. You decide to do things because they are profitable to you and the best choice among the alternatives available to help you along toward your goals. Thus, you accept responsibility for yourself when you are motivated to accomplish your goals.

Being self-disciplined is a part of accepting responsibility for your own actions. We are the only ones from whom we can steal time, talent, and accomplishment. Self-discipline requires that you structure your time so that you can cultivate and use your talents and abilities for the betterment of your company and you.

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Self-discipline also requires that you learn to handle your emotions. Emotional, childish outbursts and unreasonable displays of anger cause others to question your maturity. Avoid the irrational assumption that you have to express *all* your feelings. You are in control of your feelings; they are not in control of you. Your anger and irritation can be changed without compromising your personal integrity.

RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

- Discipline and Character PowerPoint
- Discipline and Character1
- Discipline and Character2
- Discipline and Character3

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