

4 Interpersonal Skills to Succeed in Today's Marketplace

Even if you work for yourself, you have to work with others eventually. No person is an island, and interpersonal skills are crucial for anyone's success.

Unfortunately, few business schools teach interpersonal skills. Most people learn how to relate to others in the business world by trial and error. While that approach can eventually work, too many errors can ruin your reputation and halt your company's productivity.

Whether you know you need an interpersonal skills tune-up or just some new ideas to relate to others better, the following 4 interpersonal skills will enable you to work better with others so you can all achieve your goals.

1. Be an active listener.

True listening goes way beyond just hearing the words someone else is saying. When you're an active listener, you don't interrupt or judge the other person. Even if you disagree with what the person is saying, you're able to understand the person's contribution from his or her point of view. Listening also involves prompting the other person to tell you more by asking open-ended inquiries. Simple statements like, "Tell me more," or "How interesting," show people that you are actively listening. Finally, taking some time to summarize the person's main points helps reinforce what you just heard and alerts the speaker to any potential misunderstandings.

2. Constructively support the speaker.

Just because you support someone doesn't mean you completely agree with him or her. You need to accept what others say without putting your own bias in the picture. Trying to control or manipulate the person's ideas will only lead to mistrust. Therefore, always assume the other person has a useful idea and avoid unnecessary criticism. The goal is simply to let the person know you're listening and that you value his or her contributions.

3. Constructively differ with the person.

If you disagree with what the person said or think the idea is not sound, focus on the problem solving process rather than the problem. Simply stating, "That's dumb," or "I don't agree with you," doesn't help move the conversation – it only fuels an argument. Instead, question assumptions, deal with discrepancies of ideas (not personalities), and reflect on what it would take to move the team or the issue forward.

4. Actively participate with others.

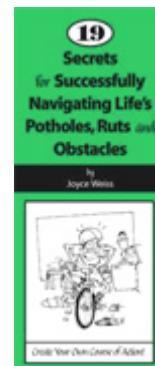
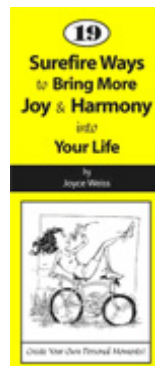
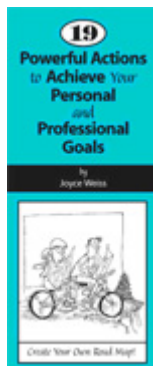
Face any situations that affect the group with the group. Encourage others to join into the discussion and get everyone's buy-in on the current status and the best course of action. Also be aware of the less talkative members. They often have great ideas but need some prompting to voice them. By focusing on the group as a whole, others will view you as a leader and follow your role.

Having above average interpersonal skills will set you apart in today's marketplace. People will want to be around you, which will position you for leadership positions. So sharpen your interpersonal skills today. It'll pay off handsomely later.

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