Getting Along With Colleagues and Co-workers in a New Firm

When you work in an office, you generally become familiar with office politics rather soon. Anyone who has had any job, anywhere, is aware that the dynamics among those who are part of the work environment play a crucial part in how a business is run.

Getting along with fellow employees can be challenging. People may be doing similar work using related skills, but their differences may far outweigh their similarities, and this could create some friction between coworkers. There could be differences in temperament, goals, speed, and ability which could lead to disunity among two or more people working within an organization. Conflict in the workplace can interfere with the company's success, thereby making the ability for coworkers to get along an essential component of the office environment.

Usually, getting along with a coworker doesn't require strenuous effort. Many times all it takes is common sense, courtesy, and compromise. The following is a list of sensible tips that may be of help to make things run more smoothly at the office:

1. **Speak less; listen more.**

Conflicts can sometimes escalate from what started out as harmless word exchanges. Someone says a wrong word, or perhaps too much or too little, and then trouble begins to simmer. It’s been said that during discussions with coworkers it’s best to gauge your contribution proportionately to one-third mouth and two-thirds ears. Learn to identify meaningless babble that some people offer while working, mostly just to pass the time or to be friendly. You can smile or nod your head to acknowledge the comment but still stay focused on the job.

2. **Don’t blab around your desk.**

If you’re stuck next to someone who wants to chat with you on a nonstop basis, politely inform your subject that the task at hand is occupying your attention but that you may have time to catch up at lunchtime or during a coffee break.

3. **Work in a unique but complementary fashion.**
If you are working as a pair or in a team setting made up of employees with different styles of doing things, it may be a good idea to arrange tasks so that everyone can do his or her individual part separately while getting feedback from the other members occasionally. This could even mean working from home or at an offsite location, thus reducing tensions and allowing for differing ways of accomplishing the same task without “stepping on the toes” of others.

4. Avoid touchy subjects.

No matter where you work, there are certain topics that should probably be avoided. These topics usually include politics, religion, and personal values, among others. If you feel that a conversation you’re having is beginning to escalate in that direction, try to introduce a different topic or make a neutral or humorous statement to deflect tensions. Trying to keep things light will help ease tensions that may arise when the wrong subjects are discussed.

5. Allow for diversity.

Some of your coworkers may differ from the majority due to race, ethnicity, gender, age, or other characteristics. These traits may stand out but should never be the subject of crude comments or biased jokes at the expense of the individual or group he or she represents. Try to respect all differences within your work environment, and try to encourage others to do the same.

6. Respect authority.

Many bosses make work life hard for their employees. They can be demanding and completely irrational at times. Rather than refusing to comply with difficult or unreasonable demands from the top, sometimes it is wiser to disregard the negativity and do the job to the best of your ability. Even if you are suddenly the victim of the boss’s wrath at a particular point, try to smile and shrug and continue doing your work as planned. The boss or manager who is coming down on you unreasonably will look like the fool, and you will probably avoid trouble.

7. Stay out of office politics.

Usually in an office there are one or two “squeaky wheels.” These people try to stir things up by complaining, gossiping, or whining. Sometimes the squeaky wheel gets oiled, as the saying goes, but it’s certainly not the best way to attract supervisory attention. Try to avoid being around these employees, and don’t become one. And it’s usually not a good idea to share personal or job-related problems with coworkers. They may only spread rumors and feed the gossip mill that may come back to haunt you.

8. Be careful of your reputation.

Do your job the best way possible. Although getting along with your coworkers is important, don’t do stupid things that may jeopardize your standing or trustworthiness with the company. Don’t become involved in any shady dealings with other employees. Don’t take questionable shortcuts. Try to avoid potentially disastrous situations, such as romantic entanglements or illicit activities using company property or resources.

9. Seek clarification.

Instead of arguing with a coworker or supervisor when a problem arises, try to stay calm and seek clarity on the issue at hand. If, for example, you are informed that you will be laid off due to the company’s financial situation, don’t lose your temper at your workstation where others can hear. Go to your supervisor directly and get the facts. Find out if the layoff is inevitable and if you can possibly be considered for eventual rehiring or part-time employment. Make sure to go to the source to get your information so you’re not relying on rumor or hearsay.

10. Strive for perfection.

Try to go that extra step in dealing with coworkers in finding ways to ease strain and discouragement within the department. Try to keep a positive outlook whenever there’s stress or difficulty. When employees support each other, they are less likely to engage in conflict with each other and can be easier to deal with.

Conclusion

It’s important to be able to get along with your coworkers. A cohesive work environment will help you
perform your job duties more effectively and create a relatively happy workplace. Many top companies report that the ability to become a team player is one of the top three qualities sought in new hires. Make sure to keep your reputation unblemished by learning to appreciate others and veering away from potential conflicts. Occasional disagreements are to be expected when workers are combining their different problem-solving perspectives, but a habitual arguer will soon "wear out his or her welcome" at any workplace.

Smile more, speak less, and listen most of the time to perform your job well, and you’ll be a real asset to your employer and an inspiration to your colleagues. Getting along with coworkers is not always easy, but it does require effort and patience to maintain a peaceful, productive work environment.

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