

5 Bad Habits & Attitudes to Bring to Work From Home

Category Professional Series **Date** January 25, 2010

The ultimate goal of a business owner, or an employer, is to serve the needs of the right customers. When the right customers of a business are satisfied with the products and services received from the business, then the organization has a much better chance to prosper and grow. To serve the needs of customers, an employee needs a work environment that facilitates work performance. A respectful workplace culture supports effective work performance—numerous studies have shown this to be the case.

But, cultivating a respectful workplace culture is not a task that is the sole responsibility of just the employer, or the sole responsibility of just employees. Both employer and employees share this responsibility. An employer can only do so much—albeit the larger share—to cultivate a respectful work environment. In *The Top Ten Laws of Respect in the Workplace*, I provide great insight for the employee perspective.

There are several bad habits and attitudes that an employee can bring to work from home. These bad habits and/or attitudes can undermine a healthy workplace culture, or contribute to an unhealthy culture. Five big ones follow.

Respect Fact

**Respect begins with the right attitude;
Lack of respect is often driven by the
wrong attitude or a bad habit.**

One — Dressing for work the way you would dress to hang out at home or dress to a social party.

Your home is a personal sanctuary—your base, your comfort zone, a place where you can relax, a social venue to host your friends, and much more. It is also a place where you can dress any way you wish—to be most comfortable. A work environment is not your personal sanctuary, nor is it your base. It is a place created by an employer, for use by a group of people, to perform work activities that help to provide products and services to paying customers. The money from these paying customers is used to pay you and the other employees. With this basic understanding and an attitude that reflects this understanding (and focus on customers), it becomes clear why it is important to dress for work in a manner appropriate for your workplace, and not as though you are hanging out at home for the day or heading out to a friend's party. The [4th law](#) of *The Top Ten Laws of Respect in the Workplace* captures the added significance of this point.

Two — Engaging the use of profanity when conversing with coworkers.

As humans we possess five basic senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Of these, our sense of sight is almost always engaged first when we meet a person, barring a visual disability. Right after sight, our sense of hearing almost always engages next. We process and store what we see and what we hear—sometimes for a long time afterwards. The easiest way to poison quickly a work environment, with any number of people, is to inject profanity into workplace dialogue. This behavior, often a habit, causes several

negative effects: it degrades the quality of a conversation; it diminishes the level of professionalism; it may be perceived as, and is often, a form of bullying; and it often paves the way for verbal assault during times of conflict. There is a relationship between respect and what we say (and how we say it). The [4th law](#) of *The Top Ten Laws of Respect in the Workplace*, again, speaks to this.

Three — Treating subordinates the way you would treat your child.

We all love to be bosses at some point in our work lives. As the boss, you are in charge and you are in control—you are the big fish in your part of the pond. At home, if you are a parent, you are also the boss. Quite often some parents bring this attitude to the workplace and treat their subordinate employees like children—bad, bad, bad idea. Employees are not children—even though some do act childishly. They are adults and need to be treated as such. The only way for employees to grow and mature professionally is to be managed responsibly and held accountable, while being provided the resources and a work environment that they need to perform their duties. This approach fosters a healthy workplace culture.

Four — Engaging a coworker the way you would engage your spouse.

A spouse or a significant other is your soul mate or partner. A coworker is a kind of “partner”—but a very different kind. A primary objective that you share with your spouse is building a life together. A primary objective that you share with your coworker is serving the needs of customers. These two objectives are very different. Engaging a coworker the way you would engage a spouse reflects a wrong workplace attitude and can lead to unintended consequences that include: loss of productivity (focusing on the wrong things), a perception of unfairness, diminished level of professionalism, and quite often harassment. The [1st and 4th laws](#) of *The Top Ten Laws of Respect in the Workplace* reflect this point.

Five — Turning your workspace or office into a mini-family room.

Many people like to bring a touch of home to the workplace. Many of us bring a framed picture, or two, of our family and loved ones to display and brighten our offices and workspaces. This is a good thing—after all, a work environment that reflects positive artifacts can help foster workplace morale and shape positive attitudes. However, there is a distinction between an enhanced workspace and a transformed workspace! When you transform your workspace or office into an image of your family room, then you subconsciously trigger an attitude (a mindset) that can undermine workplace performance. And, if you are a manager or supervisor, then you set a bad precedence for the rest of your team. So, keep it simple and do not overdo it with the family photo gallery; leave your toys and gadgets at home; put trash where it belongs—in the trash bin; eat at the company cafeteria with other coworkers, if you have a cafeteria; and keep your workspace neat and orderly—studies have shown that it improves productivity. It really does!

About the Author



Niyi Taiwo is the founder of EKTIMIS and the lead editor for the EKTIMIS eLibrary articles. He is the author of several books, including the EKTIMIS Top Ten Laws series. He is a continuous improvement expert with over 21 years of industry experience – operational, management and consulting. He has been studying the topic of respect since 2004. He holds an undergraduate degree from WPI and a master's degree from RPI. He is a certified Lean Expert and an ASQ-certified Six Sigma Black Belt.