Unit 2 – Employment Skills

Objective

Each student will learn important employment skills such as critical thinking, conflict resolution, and decision making. Students are expected to gain an understanding of appropriate behavior in work relationships. Students will also learn how to develop teamwork and leadership skills which will help them develop their careers for long-term employment.

Skills

Each student will gain the following skills from this unit:

a. Demonstrate critical thinking skills and the ability to solve problems.
b. Define effective work relationship skills.
c. Recognize workplace issues such as sexual harassment, stress, and substance abuse.

Instructor Preparation

Study Unit 2 – Employment Skills and determine the most appropriate method for presenting the material. This workbook is not intended to be taught sequentially, so this unit is appropriate for introducing principles throughout the course. Consider using personal experiences which will help the student relate their own experience to the principle being taught.

Materials & Equipment

It is suggested that each classroom be equipped with the following:

- Pencil or Pen
- Notepaper
Suggested Unit Development

This unit may be best presented in segments. Read through each section and determine at what point in the workshop may be best to cover that particular principle. Some of the sections such as 5.2.12 Taking Notes, may be best taught on the first or second day, whereas other sections may be best taught after Module 5, Unit 1 has been covered. In each section, try to create a discussion with the students to help them develop their verbal communication and critical thinking skills.

5.2.1 Critical Thinking Skills

Every day you will be asked to make decisions that influence the worksite, your work, the company’s profits and your team. Making wise decisions is a learned skill that you develop as you make decisions and then take the time to analyze outcomes. To make wise decisions, you have to begin with an open mind to evaluate all the information presented. Forming an opinion before you gather facts will lead you to jump to wrong conclusions. Listen to others with more experience. The time your team members have put into their jobs has value to you, if you listen to them.

Once you have gathered enough information, sit down with paper and pencil and identify your options and their alternatives. Are there solutions you have overlooked? When you feel you have a complete list, weigh the merits of each alternative. Cross out options that will not work and closely evaluate possible choices. What are the cause and effects of your decision? How good is the information you have? Do you need more information? If so, do not make the decision until you have it. At some point, you have to make the decision. That is what you are paid to do. Decide on the best option, stick with it, and make it work.

5.2.2 Barriers to Good Decision Making

After each decision, evaluate your process. It is the only way you will grow and make better decisions. Did you get bad information? Did you begin with a closed mind or prejudge the situation? Did your personality enter into the decision? Are you afraid of change? Ask yourself hard questions. You will not begin the job as a good decision maker, but you can become a great one if you practice and learn from your mistakes.

5.2.3 Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution on the job is an important skill that you need to master before you will be put in any position of authority. People disagree. You may not agree with your boss all the time, but remember that the person who writes your paycheck gets the final vote. Accept the fact that your boss has the final say, let it go and do not carry a grudge. It is their company. When conflict develops, it is time to stop and spend time thinking.

- First realize you have a role any conflict. Examine your behavior first.
- How did the conflict start?
• What kept the conflict going?
• Are personality differences part of the conflict?
• Has a problem been building for a while and not addressed?
• What could you have done to prevent the conflict?
• What could you do to solve the conflict?
• Compromise. Once you agree on a solution, get behind it and move on.
• Be the person that takes the high road.

What about conflict with your supervisor? First, remember the paragraph above. They write your paycheck, and you need this job. Your supervisor is not your equal on the job. Accept that the supervisor knows more about problems and has more experience. Before you go to your boss, make sure you gather your thoughts before you ask for a time to talk. Your supervisor has many more responsibilities than you do, so you need to respect his or her time. When you meet with your supervisor, present your case in a calm and clear manner. Do not be emotional, angry or threaten your boss in any way. You are there to resolve the conflict, not build it up. Do not be a tattletale, and focus on your role in the conflict, not others'. Once you have stated your case, accept your supervisor's decision as final.

5.2.4 Harassment

An important issue in today's workplace is harassment. Harassment is defined as creating an unpleasant or hostile situation, especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct. Cursing and telling off-color jokes are great examples. Many people may laugh or ignore you, but it is still wrong, and you may inadvertently offend someone. Your company can be sued if this happens in the workplace. The employer has an obligation to provide a safe and welcoming workplace for every employee. If your comments or actions are impacting someone else, you are in the wrong. Harassment does not have to be overt; it can be little actions that make someone uncomfortable.

5.2.5 Stress

Stress is a part of every job. The degree of stress is actually based on how well you have learned to handle it. What stresses one person may invigorate another. But stress causes health problems if not dealt with. One of the best ways to deal with stress is first to recognize it is occurring and then counter the effects with something like exercise. You would not believe how much stress a short run can wipe away. Develop a new, healthy lifestyle with this new job.

5.2.6 Drugs and Alcohol

It may be common amongst your friends to have a few drinks on the weekend. But it is not okay for your weekend to impact your work week. You need to be bright and sharp on Monday morning. Showing up hung over has gotten more people fired than any other cause. Even prescription drugs and over-the-counter medication can make you tired and, therefore, a safety risk. Illegal drugs have no place around power equipment.
Your company will have a drug and alcohol policy. You took the job and in order to keep it, you need to follow that policy to the letter.

5.2.7 Relationship Building

A relationship is the process of interacting with another person or group of people. Relationships are affected by actions and perceptions. As you interact with your coworkers, you build a relationship. Your behavior defines whether that relationship is positive or negative. You need to work to develop a positive professional relationship with your fellow workers, your boss and your customers.

5.2.8 Receiving Criticism

When a coworker or boss criticizes you or your work, stop and recognize your role. Do they have a valid complaint? Do you need more skills to do the job correctly? Consider the criticism as a way to learn on the job. This is called constructive criticism and meant to help you grow.

5.2.9 Giving Criticism

Before you criticize, think of how you would take the criticism. Make sure it is constructive. It builds both your relationship and the competency of the team you work on. Stop and think before you act. Make sure you have all the facts first. Make it short and to the point. Make sure your criticism helps your team do a better job and is not just your own opinion of the right way to do things. There are many ways to get a job done. Maybe by observing, you could be the one who learns.

5.2.10 Teamwork

Work is often performed in teams. There are many teams on a typical jobsite, working for many different companies all at the same time. The idea behind teams is that by each person doing their part, more is done by the team than could be done by individuals alone. Recognize your own strengths and the strengths of others. Let each team member build on their individual strengths. Work towards team unity. Think of how an army unit goes through rigorous training together. When one fails, all suffer. That builds the unit into a team. It takes everyone working together to build a team. One person acting as a lone wolf can tear the team apart. When your team fails, so do you. Your job depends on the team’s success. Do what you can to make sure that happens.
5.2.11 Becoming a Leader

This is your first job, but we intend for it to be the beginning of a career. You want to move up, make more money, and take on more responsibility. In order to do so, you have to learn leadership. The best leaders come from the best workers and continue to see themselves as workers as they advance as leaders. A leader recognizes what has to be done and steps up to do it. A leader serves others. Leaders take initiative to make sure the job gets done on time and under budget. By being the hardest working employee, others will see you as a leader and follow. You do not take a leadership role; others give it to you. They choose to follow your lead.

5.2.12 Taking Notes

One of the most effective ways to learn to take notes is to read a paragraph and write a sentence about it. But, you need to write a complete sentence that summarizes what you read. This way, at test time, you will have far less to review. Some people prefer to highlight passages but often find that they are just marking up their book. They pay little attention to the main point the author is making. This technique makes you stop, think and process the information. At the end of each section are three blank lines for your notes. Summarize the main point from each section.

5.2.13 Facts vs. Opinion vs. Generalization

To be an informed reader, you need to be able to critically analyze what you have read. To decide whether you agree or not, you need to separate the author’s facts from his or her opinions, and you need to be careful when you read anything presented as a generalization. A fact is a statement that has been tested by observation or by research and found to be true. An opinion expresses feelings, beliefs or personal judgment that cannot be proved. An opinion usually contains words like believe, think, best, worst, wonderful, or should. A generalization is an opinion that allows for no exceptions. Generalizations often use words like all, always, never, or none.

3.1.17 Making Inferences

Making inferences refers to using information that is stated directly to figure out a message that is unstated or hinted at. It is reading between the lines. You do this all the time. You gather supporting details and then figure out what it relates to. From what you have read on hand tools, you can infer that there are a wide variety of jobs that take place on a site. Each job has its own skills and hand tools to make it go smoothly.