

# Transitions: Life Skills for Personal Success

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## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS MODULE

Interpersonal Relations (IR) are needed for every facet of your career. From the interview for your first job to your speech at your retirement party—IR is the common denominator for nearly all successful employees (Roper, 2005). In fact, research has found that as many as 80% of “first job” college grads who are fired during their first year of work are let go because they don’t have adequate interpersonal skills and cannot get along with coworkers (NACE, 2000). IR isn’t only useful at work, it is critical for life skills as well. Having fulfilling friendships or relationships with family require IR, and IR always comes in handy in the classroom or working with groups of people (Polzer, 2002). That is what makes our Interpersonal Relations Module so valuable, the opportunity for you to gain life altering skills that transfer to all areas of your relations with others!

The Interpersonal Relations Module in the Transitions Program was designed to meet the expectations of employers from ANY industry—as well as arm our learners with the tools they need to get employed, stay employed and enjoy a prosperous career.

Our lessons and activities were painstakingly developed to ensure our learners would experience true to life situations that elicit the interpersonal relations skills that employers expect and demand.

In addition, we formulated a sequence of high-powered topics that begin with the fundamentals for success and culminate with the acquisition of skills that exceed expectations.

Building a great relationship with one’s employer is critical to workplace longevity and IR skills are the required ingredient. In this first lesson, our learners discover that an employee can have a good relationship with his/her boss—it simply takes a few IR skills to do it. Without giving away the contents of the entire lesson, we can tell you that good relationships with bosses are conducted just as they would with other people: with common courtesy, respect, friendliness and of course, a little hard work won’t hurt!

Then, we guide our learners through experiential activities that teach them the meaning of respect. In our cultural sensitivity lesson, learning how to be sensitive to the cultural (religious, nationality, ethnicity, gender, etc.) needs of others in the workplace is taught in thorough detail. Next, we help our learners understand how cultural awareness at work will help everyone get along on an interpersonal level. One exercise addresses whether certain questions are inappropriate from a cultural standpoint so our learners will know not to “cross the line.” Then, we take it one step further by providing workplace scenarios that bring to life real-world instances where an awareness of various cultures will/can/does improve interpersonal relations with coworkers and supervisors.

In some instances, it takes resourcefulness, ingenuity and an ability to motivate others in order to turn a situation around for the better. For the person with high IR skills, if an opportunity does not exist, he/she will create an opportunity. He/she will recognize and utilize the talents of others in his/her group and will motivate them to “make something out of nothing,” which happens to be the title of our next lesson. This is where we show our learners how to use IR skills to do more with less, pool resources of others, and work within a variety of group dynamics under realistic, on the job encumbrances and frustrations.

One of the main inhibitors of good interpersonal relationships at work is arrogance—that personal feeling of superiority that we all have from time to time. Arrogance is a self imposed superstition about our own greatness. In our minds, we want to believe we are the best, the tops, second to none. There is nothing wrong with trying to be the best, but as soon as you actually find yourself thinking about how great you are, you have entered the arrogance zone! This is why we have a two-part series on overcoming arrogance at work, to ensure that our learners don't let it get in the way of their growth as powerful IR experts.

To carry this one step further, it is actually quite rare to find employees who can handle the negative criticism that comes along with operating in the workplace. For in the world of IR, receiving and giving negative feedback with tact, professionalism and savvy is equivalent to being a Samurai Knight in the martial arts—it is the skill sought after by everyone. That is why we offer multiple exercises for our learners to sharpen these critical and elusive IR skills. Employees who can give and take negative feedback with class, dignity and panache are set apart from nearly 95% of the work population who have trouble or difficulties with it. This not only means job survival, but it means job success!

To continue with the cultural theme, our learners explore how the corporate culture works in our lesson called: Corporate Cultures: Learning How to Fit In. In these exercises, our learners investigate the idiosyncrasies and sometime esoteric operations found behind the scenes in the corporate world. They explore cultures within cultures which include operational systems in departments. They learn the cultural importance of a company's rules and employee expectations, as well as why attendance at a company picnic just might be an important part of fitting into the organizational culture.

If for some reason, you find yourself in a situation where your IR skills just aren't working and you are having a conflict or disagreement with someone at work— don't fret! Perhaps one of the most powerful IR skills in the history of humankind is covered in detail in our next lesson: The Art of Compromising. Yes, the IR skill of compromising with others is probably as valuable to a business person as an MBA. For people who know how to compromise and teach others to do the same are very successful indeed. This is because compromising people argue and fight less, they are more productive, have higher morale and can work together in teams with little effort—a boss's dream to say the least!

Time management is necessary for survival on the job, and an individual employee's time management, whether good or bad, affects other employees' abilities to do their jobs, and therefore impacts interpersonal relations. Exercises give our learners a chance to practice the crucial skill of prioritizing, and then to see vividly how time is connected to money in an organization.

Interpersonal Relations training concludes by helping our learners take stock of their overall "attitude" at work. Having the right attitude about taking on extra work that the boss has given you or having confidence in being able to complete a difficult assignment is all about being in the right frame of mind. So, we ask our learners if they need an attitude overhaul or just a slight tune-up as we guide them through the appropriate and expected attitudes necessary for on the job success.

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