

### **1. Wake up thinking positive thoughts.**

Too many people awaken each day focused on the expectations, obligations and deadlines that await them in the day ahead. They begin their day with a less than positive attitude. Try a different approach. During the first ten waking minutes of every morning, take inventory of all you have in your life for which you are thankful. Then check your attitude to see if you feel differently.

**Think about it:** Each morning verbalize three things that you are thankful for.

### **2. Get up 30 minutes earlier than is necessary.**

Now stop moaning! You can still get your beauty sleep—just go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Rising early allows you the opportunity to do many things... read the newspaper, take a walk around the block, watch the sun come up, enjoy a second cup of coffee, or even wake your children calmly for a change. You will be starting your day like a professional, in a controlled state, not rushing madly to and fro.

**Think about it:** Take care of two morning activities the night before: e.g., take out the garbage, check your calendar for the next day's agenda, check the weather.

### **3. Arrive early.**

Rushing into work (or into a meeting) in just the nick of time, or worse still, a few minutes late, immediately diminishes your professionalism like few other things can. The perception is clear to all. You're unorganized. You're unprepared. You're inconsiderate of others who are counting (and waiting) on you. Avoid the problems. Get there early.

**Think about it:** Set a reminder on your phone or your computer. Plan tomorrow's activities well in advance.

### **4. Be loyal.**

The organizations you work for (or represent as a volunteer) expect you to be a good ambassador. Watch your words and your attitude. Never

disparage your organization to people who are unable to do anything to improve the situation. That includes individuals both outside and inside the organization. It boils down to this: if you can't be loyal to this organization, respectfully resign and go find some other organization to which you can be loyal.

**Think about it:** You are an extension of the organization you work for. Are you unwittingly discrediting or demeaning yourself through disloyalty to your organization?

### **5. Don't whine.**

Nobody likes a whiner—nobody. At the very best, whiners are tolerated. It is impossible to be perceived as a professional by others if they know you as a whiner. Let them see you differently. Be a dreamer, a planner, a doer—but not a whiner.

**Think about it:** Do you have a reputation for whining? Restructure your comments into positive ideas or suggestions for change.

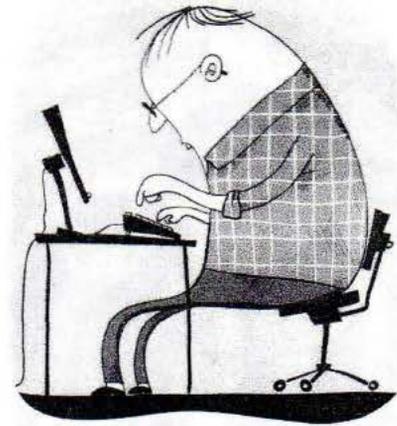
### **6. Eliminate the slightest possibility of self-pity.**

Let's face reality. Life is often hard, unfair, and uncompromising. Under such circumstances it is relatively easy for anyone to spiral down into their own little personal pity party. RESIST! Things can always be worse. If you don't believe me, take a walk through the pediatric wing of your local hospital. Or visit a homeless shelter. Or if both of those require too much effort, just read the headlines of your local newspaper. You'll see. Things could be worse—a lot worse.

**Think about it:** Once a month, do something for someone who is truly needy.

### **7. Establish a presence.**

Walk like you are headed somewhere and stand like you just got there. Establishing a presence does not mean acting in an arrogant, prideful, or aloof manner. Instead, it means we should be purposeful in all that we do. How





we approach our jobs and professional responsibilities will be interpreted either positively or negatively by others.

**Think about it:** Ask yourself, "how would a professional act in this situation?" Answer the question, then do it.

#### **8. Smile.**

There is simply no better way to break down barriers between people than for them to share a smile. Professionals should use their smiles as a trademark, a defining characteristic. You want people to say, "You know Barbara, she's the one who is always smiling," instead of "You know Barbara, you can tell she's unfriendly just by looking at her. She never smiles."

**Think about it:** This one speaks for itself. Smile!

#### **9. Be the first to say "Hello."**

Beyond a smile, a pleasant greeting has the power to open doors to future relationships. Being the first to speak often allows us the opportunity to develop a reputation as being friendly, outgoing, and approachable, all of which are great credentials for aspiring professionals.

**Think about it:** Make a game of it. Challenge yourself to be the first to say hello.

#### **10. Have a firm handshake.**

For professionals, the limp-wrist, cold-fish, fingertips-only handshake is absolutely forbidden. So is the knuckle-crushing, wrist-twisting, arm-wrestling handshake. Learn to shake hands firmly, confidently, professionally.

**Think about it:** Are you a limp-wrist, a knuckle-crusher, or does your handshake say "professional?"

#### **11. Do more than is expected.**

If you always do more than is expected you will never have to worry about evaluations again. What is the worst thing people can say about you? The problems start when a professional

thinks s/he can do just enough to get by without being noticed. Remember, "just enough" is "never enough!"

**Think about it:** If your customers, co-workers or supervisor were polled, would anyone respond that "s/he's doing just enough to get by?"

#### **12. Dress like a professional.**

Worry less about what the models in *GQ* and *Cosmopolitan* are wearing and more about what the people you interact with and serve are expecting of you. Dressing like a professional does not have to be expensive, but it does have to be intentional.

**Think about it:** Is my personal attire (clothing, hairstyle or personal hygiene) a distraction to anyone?

#### **13. Continuously increase your job knowledge.**

It's simple. The more you learn the more valuable you are. And what you learn is not only valuable now, it's valuable wherever you may go in the future. Professionals are not the ones that ask, "Why do I have to take that class (attend that seminar, or read that book)?"

**Think about it:** What two steps can I take to immediately increase my job knowledge?

#### **14. Seek opportunity, not security.**

I hate to break it to you, but there is no such thing as security any more. Everything seems to be in a state of uncertainty. However, in the absence of security, opportunity abounds. New opportunities present themselves in the things we see, the people we meet, the conversations we have and the things we think. Constantly seek out new opportunities and our security issues will take care of themselves.

**Think about it:** In my current situation, what new opportunities have been brought about by change? Which of these opportunities is most interesting to me? Investigate the pros and cons of this opportunity.

**15. Strive for excellence, not perfection.**

You will never be perfect. Perfection is a myth, an illusion, a mirage. Stop striving for perfection. Instead set your goals on being excellent in everything you do. Be excellent in your preparation, communication, application, and follow through. Good things await the professional who excels.

**Think about it:** In my current responsibilities, what three activities can I improve upon immediately?

**16. Be bold. Take some risks.**

With risks come rewards. It always has been true. It always will be true. Peak performing professionals have learned not to focus on the possible failures associated with risk taking. They certainly acknowledge and prepare for potential setbacks. Instead, professionals see the adventure, the opportunity and the reward that calculated risk taking offers.

**Think about it:** List the pros and cons of the opportunity. What would be the greatest benefit from taking this calculated risk?

**17. Never use profanity.**

I know, I know. Public profanity is everywhere. Athletes do it. Entertainers do it. Politicians do it. But that doesn't make it right and it doesn't make it acceptable—especially for professionals. Be different. Distance yourself from the crowd in a positive, controlled way. If the possibility exists that your behavior will create an obstacle in your business relationships, avoid it. I doubt you will be criticized because you do not curse more.

**Think about it:** Could anything in my speech be perceived as offensive?

**18. Learn to listen.**

Learning to listen means to listen actively, openly and without prejudice. Professionals know the importance of keeping both their minds and their ears open. If you are a good listener, not only will you be welcomed into many

interesting conversations, but you're almost guaranteed to learn something along the way.

**Think about it:** After each conversation, mentally review the exchange. Rate yourself. Are you 100% sure of what was said? Is there room for improvement?

**19. Get good ideas from others.**

Intersperse your listening with a few well-placed questions and then quickly return to your listening. Learn to ask good questions with the objective of securing good ideas. Ask others for the best lesson they've learned. Ask them what course of action they would never take again and why. Ask them what they think might be a good approach for you. Listen and learn.

**Think about it:** Invite someone you admire to lunch. Ask them to share two best practices with you.

**20. Share the credit.**

Professionals know that no worthwhile objective was ever accomplished in isolation. Always take a few minutes to remember all those individuals who in any way, large or small, contributed to the successful completion of the task at hand. The credit belongs to many, not just a few.

**Think about it:** Develop the practice of writing thank you notes immediately after projects are complete.

**21. Be generous with praise.**

Sing the praises of others long and loud to anyone that will listen. Sing them even if you can't get others to listen. Professionals know that those being praised will listen and appreciate the effort.

**Think about it:** Am I generous with praise or do I have the attitude that "it's what they are being paid to do?" List team players or key persons I may have overlooked.

**22. Take a minute longer than is necessary.**

Life is too hectic as it is. Don't intentionally rush through the good parts. Professionals recognize the value of lingering just a little longer than is necessary in conversation. Don't rush away too quickly. Don't miss the opportunities that arrive in those extra minutes you give.

**Think about it:** How many co-workers or customers did I cut short today? What is their perception of me?

**23. Always offer your assistance.**

Everyone appreciates someone who is genuinely interested in helping others. No matter how large or small the offer, others always appreciate the offer of assistance.

**Think about it:** Did you offer to help anyone today? This week? Select two people each day to offer your assistance to.

**24. Never compromise your integrity.**

Professionalism is too hard to come by for us to let it slip through our fingers. When push comes to shove, integrity is all a professional really has. Do the right thing for the right reason—always.

**Think about it:** If the activities I am engaged in were listed in the newspaper, would my integrity and credibility be compromised in any way?

**25. Don't give up, give out.**

Winston Churchill is famous, in part, for uttering the World War II rallying cry, "Never, never, never give up!" I will take it one step farther. My interpretation of "give out" means to give all that you have, holding nothing back. If a professional never gives up and constantly gives out, how can anyone ever question that individual's commitment?

**Think about it:** How committed are you to your reputation as a professional?