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## **UNIT 10 WORK ETHICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE**

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### **10.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This Unit will focus on the importance of ethics at the workplace. Here you will:

- Understand what work ethics are
- Understand the importance of following the Code of Conduct at your workplace
- Develop the right attitude towards your work
- Discuss examples of undesirable work ethics so as to avoid them

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### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Ethics has become an essential workplace function. In this unit, we shall explore the main reasons why ethics is important for companies, new business professionals as well as your personal life. By definition, business ethics refers to the standards for morally right and wrong conduct in business. Legally of course, all organisations have a code of conduct, but “legal” and “ethical” aren’t necessarily the same. Ethics goes beyond the law by outlining acceptable behaviors beyond government/ organisations’ control.

Today’s business professionals understand the link between business ethics and business success. Therefore, companies these days are insisting on high integrity and honesty for both employees and leaders. Another reason why business ethics is important is that it can improve profitability. Research has shown that business ethics is linked to customer loyalty. It cultivates trust, which strengthens branding and sales and hence profits. As there is also a

growing scrutiny of business practices, it's more important than ever for companies to carry out their work in the right way.

## 10.2 ETHICS AT THE WORKPLACE

### Definition

A simple definition of 'ethic' would be a set of moral principles. The word derives from the Greek concept of 'ethos', which means 'the characteristic spirit or attitudes of a community, people or system'. Work ethics would thus mean morality at work.

When you think of it, ethics at work should actually be no different from ethics in your private life. Ethics are thought of by many people as something that is related to the private side of life only. In some businesses, having ethics is frowned upon as a hurdle. This is because they believe that in business the focus needs to be on achieving success, not on what's really the right thing to do. This is a short-sighted view, and success, in these cases, is transitory. For any business to sustain its credibility in the long run, practicing good business ethics is essential.

So how do we go about defining our ethics at work?

In business organizations work ethics are set by establishing a Code of Conduct. A Code of Conduct is a written collection of the rules, principles, values, behavior expectations, and inter-personal relations that an organization believes in as being fundamental to its successful operation. A Code of Conduct enumerates those standards and values that form an organization's ethos and that enable it to stand out from similar organizations.

The Code of Conduct serves as a framework for ethical decision-making within an organization. It serves as a communication tool that informs internal and external stakeholders about what is valued by the organization and its employees. In essence, it is the heart and soul of a company. It is a mirror of an organization's beliefs and how its employees view themselves and their relationship with each other and the rest of the world. The Code of Conduct paints a picture of how employees, customers, partners, and other stakeholders can expect to be treated as a result.

### How is ethics put into practice at the workplace?

Work ethics is a universal norm which makes us feel personally accountable and responsible for the work that we do. Basically, work ethics is usually associated with people who work hard and do a good job.

We can summarize the characteristics of work ethics under three major heads -- interpersonal skills, initiative, and being dependable.

#### Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills include our habits, attitudes, manners, appearance, and behaviour which informs our dealings with other people. This affects how we

get along with other people. Our interpersonal skills begin to develop early in our lives. Our family, friends and our observation of our immediate world influence our attitudes and interpersonal skills. Television and movies also have a role to play in shaping our interpersonal skills. Some of the interpersonal skills are also inherited. For instance, our appearance and our personalities are largely influenced by our genes.

In order to improve our interpersonal skills, we need to know how people look at us. We may have habits or actions that we are unaware of and which may affect our interpersonal skills. Once we become aware of them, we can make a conscious effort to change and this would positively influence our relationship with people.

As adults we have the responsibility of improving our own interpersonal skills because these greatly influence our opportunities and success. This is because people make judgments about one another based on their relationships and interpersonal skills.

### **Initiative**

Initiative is a very important characteristic in modern times. Direct supervision is often not a feature of the modern workplace. Without initiative, we may delay things and miss opportunities which can cause problems for us. And if our performance is poor, we may lose our job and may not get another chance to prove our worth.

This is most important for those who work out of a home office or have a small business. If they do not exercise initiative, there is no one to check it. This will lead to losses or reduced success.

Drive and effort are both components of initiative. Even if we are gifted, unless we work harder, longer and more efficiently than others we will never be the best. The amount of drive and effort we put forth in any of our professional or even leisure activities like sports would make the difference between average performance and high performance. In order to excel we need to have the right attitude, skill and the initiative to perform better than the others or better than before.

### **Being dependable**

Being dependable is a highly valued quality in the modern workplace. This concept includes honesty, reliability, and being on time. People who are not dependable can cause extra expenditure, emergencies and wastage of time and resources. Sometimes lack of dependability can have serious consequences like losses of different kinds, even loss of life.

When asked to list the most important skills and characteristics they look for while hiring new employees, many employers have listed good communication skills, positive attitude, and the ability to be dependable, punctual, and responsible. In addition to these characteristics, we also need some personal characteristics which include dressing properly, being polite, and displaying self-confidence.

### Check your progress 1

- 1) Mark these statements true or false based on your understanding of the reading passage:
- i) There is really no difference between ethics at work or in office.
  - ii) Some people believe that ethics are not important as they slow down their work.
  - iii) A Code of Conduct is a written document that can tell you what moral standards the organization adheres to.
  - iv) A Code of Conduct helps to establish work ethics in an organization.
  - v) A Code of Conduct basically just helps only its employees to understand how the organization expects to treat them.

### Check your progress 2

Now answer these questions:

- 2) I) How would you describe ‘work ethics’?

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- ii) Which kind of worker would you say has good work ethics?

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- iii) Which are the three major characteristics of work ethics?

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- iv) Does our family or environment influence our interpersonal skills?  
How?

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- v) Why do you think interpersonal skills are important at the place of work?

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vi) How can we improve our interpersonal skills?  
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## 10.3 A TALK ON ETHICS

### Check your progress 3

You will now hear a talk on work ethics from an expert on the subject. Listen again to the talk and fill up the gaps in the text provided to you.

**Honesty and integrity:** The first principle of good behavior, at work and in personal life, is (i)\_\_\_\_\_. Be honest with yourself, your co-workers and your superiors. Even customers feel comfortable doing business with a company they can (ii)\_\_\_\_\_, that adheres to moral and ethical principles.

- 2) **Keep an open mind:** Be ready to listen to (iii)\_\_\_\_\_, criticism, (iv)\_\_\_\_\_ and new ideas that can help you to perform better. This is very important for (v)\_\_\_\_\_ improvement of any organization and its employees. Seeking opinions and feedback from both team members and superiors ensures continuous (vi)\_\_\_\_\_ and (vii)\_\_\_\_\_ and teaches you to value opinions other than your own.
- 3) **Honor commitments:** Be sure to honor all commitments and obligations, regardless of adverse circumstances. This is a certain way of (viii)\_\_\_\_\_ and (xi)\_\_\_\_\_ the trust of colleagues and customers. Remember that everyone's (x)\_\_\_\_\_ is as (xi)\_\_\_\_\_ as yours. By not honoring commitments, you may be hampering others from doing their work on time.
- 4) **Be Accountable:** To stay focused and committed, it is important to be accountable. Accountability helps you stay on your toes and put in your (xii)\_\_\_\_\_ (xiii)\_\_\_\_\_ at discharging your duties. Accept responsibility when things go wrong with work you have been involved in. Never shirk responsibility and lay the (xiv)\_\_\_\_\_ on (xv)\_\_\_\_\_.

- 5) **Be Respectful:** Treat others with respect. Regardless of differences in position, age, or opinion, always treat others with professional (xvi)\_\_\_\_\_ and (xvii)\_\_\_\_\_.
- 6) **Be a team player:** Remember that in order to achieve overall success, an organization must have high performance at every level, and by every employee. Be (xviii)\_\_\_\_\_ with what your colleagues are doing, without being (xix)\_\_\_\_\_. Help whenever help is needed. Everybody can have a bad day at work. Extend a helping hand to colleagues when needed.
- 7) **Be punctual:** Punctuality speaks volumes about your (xx)\_\_\_\_\_. Being punctual does not only mean that you need to reach office on time. This is a habit that must continue throughout your working day. Be sure to never be late for meetings, appointments, making calls at promised time, delivering material. Remember if you are late to a meeting you are not only wasting your own time but somebody else's too. If you are delayed unavoidably, be (xxi)\_\_\_\_\_ with your (xxii)\_\_\_\_\_.

**Let us understand how you can be ethical at the workplace. Tape script given at the end of the Unit.**

#### **Check your progress 4**

- 1) Complete the web chart about 'Work Ethics' on the basis of the passage that you have read.

THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

## 10.4 VOCABULARY: POSITIVE QUALITIES

### Check your progress 5

Given below are some good work habits of some people. Match them with the words in the box.

self-confidence	hard work and effort
punctuality and regularity	suitable appearance
good interpersonal skills	dependable

- i) Rama gets on well with the others in her office. ....
- ii) You can give Tamanna any work and you can rest assured that it will be done. ....
- iii) Sameer takes a lot of interest to take on interesting projects and work on them. No one needs to tell him what to do next. ....
- iv) Sally always comes on time. She is never missing from office.  
.....
- v) Bipin always tries to listen to the other person's point of view. Then he gently makes his point. ....
- vi) Pavan may not be very bright but he works hard and sincerely at whatever job he has at hand. ....
- vii) Mike comes very decently and smartly dressed to office. He looks so prim and proper. ....
- viii) We all like the way Tasleen carries herself and interacts with people. She surely makes an impression. ....

## 10.5 ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications which focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. Social media has become larger and more accessible thanks to access to mobile applications, with some examples of social media including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, etc..

Many individuals will use social media to stay in touch and interact with friends and family, while others use it to communicate with different

communities. Many businesses will use social media as a way to market and promote their products. In addition, business to consumer (B2C) websites includes social components, such as comment fields for users.

## Types of Social Media

Here are some examples of popular social media:

**Facebook** is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

**Twitter** is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.

**Wikipedia** is a free, open content online encyclopaedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; however, registration is not required to edit articles. Wikipedia was founded in January of 2001.

**LinkedIn** is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.

**Reddit** is a social news website and forum where stories are socially curated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, known as "subreddits". Each subreddit has a specific topic such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members, also known as, "redditors", submit content which is then voted upon by other members. The goal is to send well-regarded stories to the top of the site's main thread page.

**Pinterest** is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions, but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take a user to the original source. For example, clicking on a picture of a pair of shoes might redirect users to a purchasing site and an image of blueberry pancakes might redirect to the recipe.

## Social Media Etiquette

Social media is used by most of the people who have access to mobile phones, computer system, laptop etc., along with Internet connection. On this media people will post content, videos, photographs, tweet or like, retweet, comment, follow and unfollow. Mostly, there are no guiding rules since it's all anonymous; however, various governments are trying to bring some of them. Social media etiquette refers to the guidelines that companies and individuals use to preserve their reputation online. As social media channels have evolved to become one of the primary ways people communicate in the modern world on a daily basis, typical social rules are finding their way into digital environments. Just as social etiquette suggests how people behave around others in the real world, social media etiquette revolves around online

guidelines to follow. Some of them are listed below which suits for all kind of social media tools:

- **Post the relevant content keeping in mind, your audience:** The number one reason why most users find trouble in social media is because they fail to keep their audience in mind. By considering your audience, you should be able to identify what's worth sharing or posting and what's not.
- **Don't need to share everything in social media:** You don't have to post everything about your personal life and your day-to-day activities.
- **Build a reputable image:** It's a good practice to examine your profile and identify what image you are portraying through your posts and shares.
- **Don't be overly promotional:** Try not to message all your customers asking them to buy your products and avoid sharing constant advertisements on your page. Make your social profiles a blend of promotional and valuable content.
- **Avoid over-automation:** While scheduling your posts in advance and automating analytics is helpful, don't automate everything. Some things still need a human touch.
- **Handle your hashtags carefully:** Avoid using too many hashtags at once. Even on Instagram, where you can use 30 hashtags in a single caption, it's important not to overdo it.
- **Don't bad-mouth your competition:** Don't be petty. Saying negative things about your competitors online will harm your reputation more than it hurts theirs.
- **Be authentic and genuine:** Don't try to be something you're not. Remember that your customers can learn whatever they need to know about your brand online today and things like authenticity can definitely go a long way.
- **Different Account for Business/personal use:** Business and pleasure do not mix in this medium.
- **Don't force to be Friends:** Don't approach strangers and ask them to be friends with you.
- **Take care of grammar and semantic aspects:** Compose your posts, updates or tweets in a word processing document so you can check grammar and spelling before you send them.
- **Don't show hatred / post hatred message:** Social media should be a platform to initiate meaningful discussion and promote better communication. It's not the place to vent out your anger on something or someone. Don't add to its toxicity by trolling and spreading negativity.
- **Respect the opinions of others:** Accept the fact that not everyone has the same opinion as you do. However reasonable you believe your arguments to be, you won't be able to convince everyone. Keep this in mind when you comment, post, or share anything on social media.

- **Don't spread / share fake news:** While there is a lot of content online, it is your moral and social responsibility not to mislead others by spreading fake news. Always check your sources and be critical with what you read. Don't be easily fooled with unreliable information.
- **Say NO to cyber-bullying:** Every social media user should be responsible and mature enough to oppose and not be part of cyber-bullying. Always be sensitive when interacting with others in social media. Treat them as you would like to be treated.
- **Copyright Issues:** Give due credit to your sources. Social media is a wonderful place to share your work but be sure to ask permission and cite your sources when you use material or content from others. Always give credit wherever it's due. Take care of the copyright and plagiarism issues.
- **Value Privacy:** Part of building a good reputation online is to keep anything personal private. Keeping your personal information safe will help protect you from online fraud and identity theft. Make use of the privacy settings of the social media channels you use. These settings are now more versatile and help keep your content secure.

## 10.6 TALKING ABOUT ETHICAL AND UNETHICAL PRACTICES

### Check your progress 6

Listed below are some activities employees indulge in at work. Decide which of them are unethical. Discuss them with your friends and try to find a solution to these issues.

- An employee receives a gift from a company that his organization is negotiating a contract with.
- An employee is lagging behind with some urgent work. He takes the help of a colleague to finish it.
- An employee asks a fellow worker to punch his time card as he is running late.
- Using an organization's toll-free number, copier and office supplies for personal use.
- An employee is concerned about the wastage of electricity in office. He notices, for example, that co-workers leave the air conditioning on when they go out to lunch. He decides to talk about this to the management.
- Wasting company time.
- Not being honest with coworkers and managers.

## 10.7 IMPROVING OUR ETHICS

### Check your progress 7

Here are some examples of bad work ethics that we encounter regularly in organizations everywhere. Now think of and list at least four more such examples. You can also search your memory for examples from your experiences in dealing with people from other organizations or even your own, where you think ethics have been compromised.

- An employee carries home stationery items such as pencils, erasers, and writing pads from office for his school-going children.
- An employee surfs the Internet, shopping for personal items on company time.
- A plant manager decides to ship a product to a customer even though he knows some parts have a quality problem, hoping that the customer probably won't notice.
- An employee spends several hours a week on her phone talking with her children, their caregivers, and friends.

## 10.8 SUMMARY

In this unit we have shown you the importance of ethics at the workplace and in your personal life. Most offices have a code of conduct for employees to follow and employees should adhere to this diligently. We have given you several activities which will help you become a person who is aware of ethical practices at the workplace. Towards the end we had seen the social media, types of social media and etiquette to be followed while using them.

## 10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check your progress 1

- 1) True or false:
  - i) There is really no difference between ethics at work or in office. **True**
  - ii) Some people believe that ethics are not important as they slow down their work. **True**
  - iii) A Code of Conduct is a written document that can tell you what moral standards the organization adheres to. **True**
  - iv) A Code of Conduct helps to establish work ethics in an organization. **True**
  - v) A Code of Conduct basically just helps only its employees to understand how the organization expects to treat them. **False – This holds true not only for employee, but also customers, partners and other stakeholders.**

## **Check your progress 2**

- i) Work ethic is an attitude of determination and dedication toward one's job. It is the ability to maintain proper moral values within the workplace. This is an inherent attitude that an individual possesses which allows him/her to make decisions and perform their duties with positive moral values that include elements like integrity, responsibility, high quality, discipline, humility and teamwork.
- ii) A worker who has moral values, is punctual, hardworking, dependable, cooperative, looks for improvement in him/herself, takes initiative, is productive, and can work in a team, etc.
- iii) Having good interpersonal skills, being dependable and taking initiative for the good of the company.
- iv) Both play an equal part. A child's learning and socialization are most influenced by their family, since the family is the child's primary social group. Also, our genes effect our personality and appearance. Likewise, an individual's self-worth or self-image stems from their interaction with others. Mass and social media now play a great role as well.
- v) Interpersonal skills are the skills we use every day when we communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. They include a wide range of skills, such building empathy, rapport and effective communication skills such as listening and speaking. Regardless of your industry, interpersonal skills are important because they: help employees develop and foster strong working relationships with each other and with their colleagues and clients, Contribute to increasing team and organizational productivity
- vi) Interpersonal communication involves exchanging ideas with others using various communication tools, such as words, gestures, voice tone, facial expression and body posture. Most of all, smile when interacting with others. Teach yourself to be positive by reminding yourself every day of the good things about your life and your job. Work isn't the place to be overly emotional but it is the place to build rapport. Be confident in expressing yourself. Always express yourself in a calm, patient manner. Appreciate team workers/colleagues and develop empathy for others.

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### **Listening tape script: A Talk on Work Ethics**

It is important to recognize the significance of work ethics as a tool for maintaining a favorable atmosphere at work and for achieving success. An organization that instills sound work ethics in its employees and keeps a keen eye on adherence to them can avoid many of the problems that ail inefficient, badly-run offices. Here are some key principles to keep in mind when establishing a Code of Conduct for your organization.

- 1) **Honesty and integrity:** the first principle of good behavior, at work and in personal life, is honesty. Be honest with yourself, your co-workers and your superiors. Even customers feel comfortable doing business with a company they can trust, that adheres to moral and ethical principles.
- 2) **Keep an open mind:** Be ready to listen to suggestions, criticism, advice and new ideas that can help you to perform better. This is very important for continuous improvement of any organization and its employees. Seeking opinions and feedback from both team members and superiors ensures continuous growth and improvement and teaches you to value opinions other than your own.
- 3) **Honor commitments:** Be sure to honor all commitments and obligations, regardless of adverse circumstances. This is a certain way of building and keeping the trust of colleagues and customers. Remember that everyone's time is as precious as yours. By not honoring commitments, you may be hampering others from doing their work on time.
- 4) **Be Accountable:** To stay focused and committed, it is important to be accountable. Accountability helps you stay on your toes and put in your best efforts at discharging your duties. Accept responsibility when things go wrong with work you have been involved in. Never shirk responsibility and lay the blame on others.
- 5) **Be Respectful:** Treat others with respect. Regardless of differences in position, age, or opinion, always treat others with professional respect and courtesy.
- 6) **Be a team player:** Remember that in order to achieve overall success, an organization must have high performance at every level, and by every employee. Be involved with what your colleagues are doing, without being interfering. Help whenever help is needed. Everybody can have a bad day at work. Extend a helping hand to colleagues when needed.
- 7) **Be punctual:** Punctuality speaks volumes about your self-discipline. Being punctual does not only mean that you need to reach office on time. This is a habit that must continue throughout your working day. Be sure to never be late for meetings, appointments, making calls at promised time, delivering material. Remember if you are late to a meeting you are not only wasting your own time but somebody else's too. If you are delayed unavoidably, be sincere with your apology.

### Check your progress 3

- 1) **Honesty and integrity:** The first principle of good behavior, at work and in personal life, is **honesty**. Be honest with yourself, your co-workers and your superiors. Even customers feel comfortable doing business with a company they can **trust**, that adheres to moral and ethical principles.
- 2) **Keep an open mind:** Be ready to listen to **suggestions**, criticism, **advice** and new ideas that can help you to perform better. This is very important for **continuous** improvement of any organization and its employees. Seeking opinions and feedback from both team members and superiors

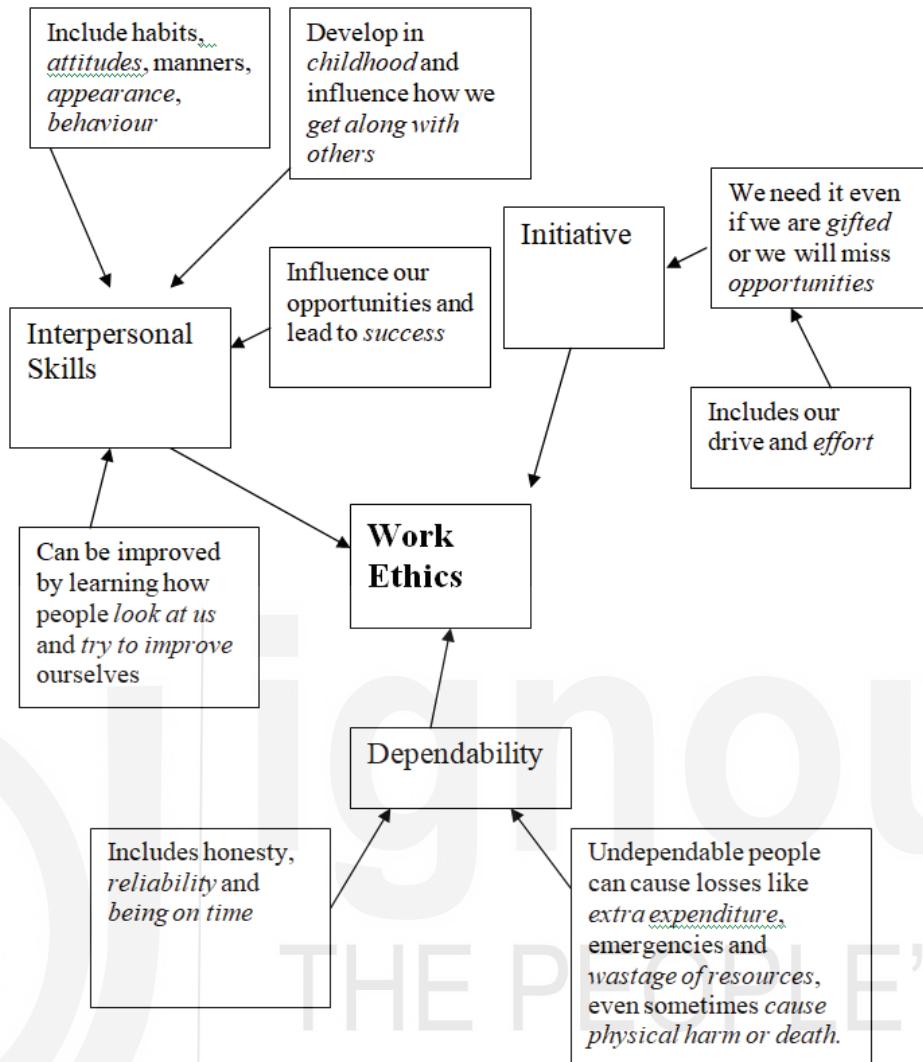
ensures continuous **growth** and **improvement** and teaches you to value opinions other than your own.

- 3) **Honor commitments:** Be sure to honor all commitments and obligations, regardless of adverse circumstances. This is a certain way of **building** and **keeping** the trust of colleagues and customers. Remember that everyone's **time** is as **precious** as yours. By not honoring commitments, you may be hampering others from doing their work on time.
- 4) **Be Accountable:** To stay focused and committed, it is important to be accountable. Accountability helps you stay on your toes and put in your **bestefforts** at discharging your duties. Accept responsibility when things go wrong with work you have been involved in. Never shirk responsibility and lay the **blame on others**.
- 5) **Be Respectful:** Treat others with respect. Regardless of differences in position, age, or opinion, always treat others with professional **respect** and **courtesy**.
- 6) **Be a team player:** Remember that in order to achieve overall success, an organization must have high performance at every level, and by every employee. Be **involved** with what your colleagues are doing, without being **interfering**. Help whenever help is needed. Everybody can have a bad day at work. Extend a helping hand to colleagues when needed.
- 7) **Be punctual:** Punctuality speaks volumes about your **self-discipline**. Being punctual does not only mean that you need to reach office on time. This is a habit that must continue throughout your working day. Be sure to never be late for meetings, appointments, making calls at promised time, delivering material. Remember if you are late to a meeting you are not only wasting your own time but somebody else's too. If you are delayed unavoidably, be **sincere** with your **apology**.

#### Check your progress 4

Completed web chart about 'Work Ethics'.

**Professional Skills  
Needed at the  
Workplace-II**



**Check your progress 5**

- i) Rama gets on well with the others in her office. *Good interpersonal skills*
- ii) You can give Tamanna any work and you can rest assured that it will be done. *Dependable*
- iii) Sameer takes a lot of interest to take on interesting projects and work on them. No one needs to tell him what to do next. *Initiative*
- iv) Sally always comes on time. She is never missing from office. *Punctuality and regularity*
- v) Bipin always tries to listen to the other person's point of view. Then he gently makes his point. *Right attitude*
- vi) Pavan may not be very bright but he works hard and sincerely at whatever job he has at hand. *Hard work and effort*
- vii) Mike comes very decently and smartly dressed to office. He looks so prim and proper. *Suitable appearance*
- viii) We all like the way Tasleen carries herself and interacts with people. She surely makes an impression. *Self-confidence*

## **Check your progress 6**

Do it yourself

## **Check your progress 7**

**Here are some more such examples of bad work ethics:**

- 1) A salesman gives false data on the number of sales calls he has made, while filling in his reimbursement form.
- 2) A manager shares important company information with a competitor for his potential gain.
- 3) A store misrepresents to its customers the quality or functionality of products it stocks.
- 4) An accountant tells a supplier that their "check is in the mail" when he knows he hasn't written the check.
- 5) The supplies manager tells the customer his supplies have been dispatched when, in fact, they haven't.

