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### Contact Us

[hughesconsulting@bellsouth.net](mailto:hughesconsulting@bellsouth.net) or call  
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## Working productively: Getting Along with Employees and Coworkers

The workplace brings together people of many different backgrounds, ages, talents and skills - and we all have different values, expectations and approaches to work. While it isn't necessary to hit it off with everyone at work, tension among employees (and between supervisors and employees) can affect morale and productivity. Getting along with coworkers/ employees leads to greater cooperation and teamwork - making time at work more enjoyable.

Getting along at work is often a matter of being flexible and willing to compromise. It's also important to be tolerant of individual differences and communicate effectively. This helps to head off misunderstandings before they occur and encourages people to respect one another for the talents and strengths they each bring to the organization.

### Treat others with respect

Be respectful in all your interactions at work. Look for the positive in others. Everyone has good qualities. Even if you wouldn't want to be friends with a coworker or employee, you might admire the person's organizational skills or their way of handling clients. Focus on your colleagues' good qualities.

Remember that your way isn't the only way. People bring different approaches to their work and often there is more than one way to get the job done. Your coworker or employee may do things differently than you do, but that doesn't mean their way is wrong and yours is right.

Recognize and respect boundaries. Most people feel protective of their work. When you offer help or suggestions, do it in a way that's respectful of the effort. For example, you might say, "Your presentation is great and you've highlighted so many interesting facts. Do you think it might be easier for people to follow the facts if you break them into categories?"

### Communicate effectively

Good communication improves all relationships, including your relationships at work. You can prevent misunderstandings by communicating frequently and effectively with coworkers.

Respond to messages promptly. Try not to leave people hanging if they send you a request by email or voice mail. It's best to clear up matters before the end of the day.

Be a good listener. Give your full attention to the person talking to you. Stop what you're doing, make eye contact and don't look distracted with other things.

Wait your turn to speak. Don't interrupt. Wait for a pause in the conversation and then take your turn.

Ask for more information. If you're not sure about something your coworker is saying, ask questions until you are clear on their needs.

Discuss important issues face to face rather than via email or voice mail. Allow enough time to discuss important matters. If you have something important to talk about with a coworker, schedule enough time to have the conversation.

### Resolve conflicts

When you have a problem with a coworker or employee, it's usually best to deal with it as soon as possible to keep it from turning into an even bigger problem.

If you're annoyed or upset with a coworker or employee, talk with that person rather than complaining to others. A direct and tactful approach is always best. Talking behind someone's back makes the situation worse.

Schedule a time to talk with the person to try to resolve the issue. Choose a neutral place away from your work area, such as over lunch or in a quiet area during a break.

Use neutral language when discussing the issue. When people are angry they tend to use "you" statements such as, "You shouldn't have done it that way," or "You always put the files in the wrong place." This can sound accusatory and put people on the defensive. You can talk about the problem without blaming by using "I" statements: "I noticed that you put the files in the wrong place and it makes it difficult for me to find them."

Get to the root cause of the problem. If you're annoyed with your coworker or employee for missing a deadline, for example, try to find out what happened. You may find that the problem was caused by short staffing or a system failure. When you figure out the real cause of a problem, you may be able to work together to find ways to correct it.

Seek help if a conflict persists. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, a conflict with a coworker or employee isn't easily resolved. If this is the case, speak to someone you trust who is familiar with the situation. Or contact a human resources professional or a counselor for help.

Having good relationships with people you work with makes it easier to get your job done and improves performance. It also makes everyone's time at work more enjoyable.

*This article was adapted from Ceridian LifeWorks Online service*