

# diplomacy

*tact and subtle skill in dealing with people so as to avoid or settle hostility*

The art of diplomacy (or tact) can be the deciding factor between hurt feelings and a positive encounter, both in the workplace and beyond. Although *we want to maintain honesty* at all times, it's also vital that we find the right manner in which to convey information to our colleagues, superiors, and subordinates. This is where diplomacy comes in.

Tact and diplomacy include the ability to understand the feelings, ideas, beliefs and opinions of others. This is a skill that must be mastered by all professionals, regardless of their company ranking. Diplomacy strengthens relationships within the workplace by decreasing the level of negative emotional impact upon the delivery of unfavorable news or feedback. Of course, when it comes to any type of negotiation, tact and diplomacy are invaluable. However, according to the information resource site, SkillsYouNeed.com, in order to develop an aptitude in diplomacy, one must be capable of the following preliminary competencies:

Attentive Listening  
Emotional Intelligence  
Empathy  
Assertiveness  
Rapport  
Politeness

Furthermore, remaining mindful of a few particulars throughout your day can also help build your tactfulness skills. Journalist, business marketing connoisseur, and CareerTrend.com contributor, M.T. Wroblewski, shares her advice."

Listen carefully and respectfully to your coworkers, especially those whose ideas differ from your own. Ask questions of these coworkers to ensure that you fully understand, and can also articulate their points of view", says Wroblewski. This practice helps display your own open-mindedness and willingness to obtain knowledge from others.

Wroblewski also suggests keeping unnecessary criticism in check. "If you disagree with a coworker about an idea or decision, don't tell him you think he's wrong or question his competence". Instead, express your case in calm and professional terms, and offer specific reasons for why you feel the way you do. The goal is to work toward a solution rather than simply preserving your own particular point of view.

It's also important to remain generally supportive of your colleagues. Wroblewski advises workers to "demonstrate compassion, support and encouragement to coworkers who disagree with a particular strategy or agenda". Make a point to hear "both sides of the story", *but also be sure to avow that the company mission must be supported in the end*. Create compromise by being open to dichotomous feedback and suggestions.

Stay alert to circumstances where communication turns negative, and take action to correct the situation. Conversations should remain centered on problem-solving, not finger-pointing. Wroblewski even suggests workers "consider calling for a short cooling-off period to prevent tensions from building". Also, remember the power of body-language and the importance of maintaining composure. Eye-rolling, frowning, or appearing disengaged, for example, will surely chip away at your efforts toward diplomacy.

Employees of all levels should remember that the workplace, in essence, is a community. Relying on this sense and sharing credit for the team's accomplishments will help others observe you as a diplomatic and tactful worker.



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