



WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM YOU AS AN EMPLOYEE DURING YOUR WORK CONTRACT:

**A GENERAL GUIDELINE ON GOOD PRACTICE, ETIQUETTE AND
PROFESSIONALISM FOR NEWLY APPOINTED EMPLOYEES.**



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BACKGROUND:

Job-hunting can be an exhausting and anxious journey in an individual's life, especially in the South African Context where opportunities for employment are scarce. It is a time filled with desperation, frustration, financial and economic burden, psycho-social distress, strain on physical and psychological health, conflict in many relationships and an inability to have hope and aspirations for a prosperous future.

When job-hunting turns to job-success and securing placement, all these emotions and circumstances one finds themselves in are eased from burden to relief. However, despite relief, the next challenge awaits them – that being, what to expect from their place of employment and how to conduct oneself as a professional employee. Individuals now have to face the responsibility of quickly learning how to transition from a work-seeker to an employee. The journey of exhaustion and anxiety (particularly “anticipation anxiety”) is still not over.

The following article sets out areas of expectations that Employers have of their employees to correctly guide employees (especially those recently or newly placed into their first formal employment) of good practice, etiquette and professionalism expected of them. Such expectations entail job obligations, work commitment, ethical business practice, etc., in the pursuit of achieving the Employer's objectives. It is envisaged that this guide will assist newly appointed employees to alleviate anticipation anxiety and aid effective business practice.



WHAT IS EXPECTED OF 'YOU' AS AN EMPLOYEE:

In many instances, first time workers have had no or little experience in terms of what is expected of them in terms of behavior, attitude, commitment, execution of duties as well as ethical values. This is very often because they had nobody to coach / prepare them. This can lead to situations whereby the employer may feel that they did not make the best choice in selecting the most suitable person for the job. Sometimes, workers are let go or not have their contracts renewed because of certain etiquette that an employer would've appreciated been demonstrated by an employee. Such etiquette includes:

Examples of Good Etiquette:

- Dress Code applicable to Job Description - provocative clothing that accentuates or reveal one's body in a manner that is indecent and improper for the workplace.
- Presentation - it is important to always look neat and clean as you represent your employer.

- Good hygiene - it is important to follow good hygiene as you represent your employer.
- Greeting Seniors, Colleagues and Clients - always greet your manager/ employer, supervisor and colleagues according to their Title/Rank as it shows respect (e.g. "Good day Director", "Good afternoon Sir", etc.). A handshake is considered to be good business etiquette.
- Be Punctual for work, meetings, courses, etc.
- Work Hard / Play Hard – Rest well so that you are refreshed and energized for work.
- If you consume alcohol over the weekend, always ensure that you are fit for work on your next working day (i.e. not smelling of alcohol or still have substances in your system).
- Do not be under the influence of alcohol or other substances that can impair your performance, judgement and reliability whilst on duty.
- Do not go overboard during work functions with alcohol as this may impair your judgement, resulting in your co-workers making negative judgements about you based on your choices and behaviour.
- Be responsible with what you post on your Social Media accounts because your employer and prospective employers can easily view your accounts and make judgements about your professionalism and what kind of person you are.
- Avoid affiliating yourself with your Employer on your Social Media accounts in case you post playful or inappropriate content that may put your employer in a negative view by others. Effective self-management of your Social Media accounts shouldn't warrant any negative attention on your employer.

Personal Qualities that contribute to the success of your Team and Employer's Objectives:

- Learn the structure of your workplace (ranks, titles, etc.) and their roles.
- Show commitment & Take Initiative: If you're done with your work, ask your employer/supervisor to assist with additional work. This shows that you can be relied upon and that you are highly committed to your Employer.
- Time Management – delays can cause set-backs / Turn-around time.
- Team Work – your work affects others and all individual work produced contributes to the achievement or objective of a Project / task. Always ensure that you don't let your team members down.
- Take constructive criticism – if your supervisor, manager or even a colleague informs you of something that you are not doing correctly, don't take offense, rather use it as an opportunity to learn the correct or better way of doing things.
- Self-Management – maintain resilience and gain support to deal with any life challenges so that your personal life does not interfere with your performance and your commitment to your Employer.
- Networking – this is where you become acquainted with people within your organization as well as outside of your organization in order to learn from them as well as to form connections to assist in your growth, upskilling and possible transition into your next job.
- Develop an open relationship with your Supervisor, especially during difficult times if you encounter challenges in your private life. This will provide your Supervisor with insight into your challenges and possible reasons as to why you may not be able to complete your work or meet certain expectations. If you don't communicate with your Supervisor, he/she will be in the dark and be limited with opportunities to find ways to help you during the challenging time as well as manage your work load effectively and realistically.



Financial Management:

- Comply with the Budget of your Employer to avoid over or fruitless expenditure.
- Manage your Salary – once you receive your Gross Salary (monthly salary), don't over-invest or make big purchases. Rather wait to know what your Net Salary (what is left from your allocated salary after all relevant deductions) is before you make any purchases.
- Financial Security - Invest in Life and Retirement Policies to plan for financial security post-retirement or in the event of your death where you can leave your dependents/beneficiaries with financial security. If you are eligible, purchase a home and pay off the bond over a shorter period of time to avoid losing a lot of money to interest. Once the home is paid off, it will be an asset to you.

Professional and Ethical work practice:

- Compliance to Ethics – ethics are behavioural practices which all employees and professionals should follow where they act always within the “good” and “right” for everyone concerned. Some examples of good work ethics include being on time (punctuality); acting professional at all times; being disciplined; keeping information that does not belong to you confidential; reliability; integrity and respect.
- Compliance to Law – human beings are expected to uphold the law by applying Human Rights and ensuring that they do not act without the boundaries of what is considered to be lawful behavior. Examples of non-compliance to law include theft; harassment; fraud; violence against others; and hate crimes.
- Protection of Employer’s private data / information / records.
- Protection of Private Information Act (POPIA) – always ensure that you keep your Employer’s and the clients that you service protected from releasing their private information. This also applies to business statistics, reports, etc. that are the property of your Employer.
- Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) compliance when access to information is requested.
- ‘Code of Conduct’ - this is a standard developed to promote employees from behaving with values and principles. Some employers may not communicate their Code of Conduct, but information thereof is readily available through multiple research platforms. Should you be gearing up to start your first job, it is wise to conduct research on what a Code of Conduct is and why it is so important.
- ‘Batho Pele Principles’ (for Government Officials) – these are the principles set out by government as a promise to the citizens of South Africa to ensure professional business practices. These comprise of: 1. Consultation; 2.

Service standards; 3. Redress; 4. Access; 5. Courtesy; 6. Information; 7. Transparency; and 8. Value for money. These principles set out to put people first when seeking services from Government Departments.

Examples of Your Rights within the workplace:

- If an employee is being mistreated by a colleague or their employer, they have the right to report it and open up a Grievance process. Employees should not tolerate any misconduct perpetrated towards them, such as racist attacks or sexual harassment.
- Younger, female and low-ranking employees can fall victim to sexual prey by male seniors or higher ranking status. If your boss/supervisor or any colleague makes and/or requests inappropriate acts, it is a misconduct. It is important that employees know that this is unacceptable and must be reported.
- Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) / Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) – it is your right to access and utilize services provided by your Employer to seek Psycho-Social interventions that are pertinent to your Health and Wellness.
- Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) – this is where employees can consult and obtain assistance in cases of unfair dismissals where an employee attempts to fight to get their job back.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

In a world of work where individuals are competing for the same pool of job opportunities, it is critical for individuals to retain a position by growing within their work environment. Due to various reasons, such as lack of support, experience, mentorship or direction, some individuals may not meet the expectations of the employer despite proving competence and meeting all the job criteria on paper. This could be due to the reasons and scenarios listed in this article where individuals simply do not know how to conduct themselves within the workplace. As a result, situations such as drop outs, resignations, dismissals, etc., are a daunting reality in South Africa – a country which is already in a critically unstable socio-economic state.

It is therefore envisaged that this information will prove to be useful to anyone either unemployed, recently recruited and even those who jump from opportunity to opportunity in short periods of time because they do not seem to be coping with the transition into their work environments.

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