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WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Professionalism is a choice, an opportunity for you to think, behave and act in a way which will make you stand out from the crowd.

Professionalism is not just for those who work in the traditional professions. It is for you and me and all of our colleagues and friends, whether we are students, doctors or architects, work in a factory, a coffee shop, an office or anywhere else that we come in contact with others. It is for everyone, at all stages of our careers and at all levels of every organisation.

This book offers you an insight into the ways that professionals approach their world and offers some very practical advice, intended to help you demonstrate your own professionalism 24/7.

Make a decision to adopt an attitude and a skill set which will ensure that you always look, sound and act in ways which inspire trust and confidence in those around you.

Definitions of professionalism are hard to come by and some say that those who exude professionalism have a 'certain something' – hard to put your finger on but you know it when you see it. It is about something in a person's manner, their abilities, the way they speak, the way they dress, their obvious standards, all of which add up to a powerful presence and all of which you recognise as professional.

That's not overly helpful is it? What we do know is that it is about the total package, not just adopting one or two superficial signs which you hope that people will interpret as professionalism – a snappy suit or a smart business card. This book will help you to identify all of the elements which contribute to the final goal and show you that it is attainable for everyone.



'Professionalism is knowing how to do it, when to do it and actually doing it'

Professionalism applies to all of us, all the time, not just in the workplace but in our personal lives as well. It's about everything we are and everything we do. So this book applies to individuals and also to the organisations where we work. Encourage your colleagues to read it and ask your employers to adopt its message for the entire workforce.

If you know that just getting by isn't enough and that there must be something missing – professionalism is the answer. It will change the way you look at the world and will have a remarkable effect on how the world treats you in return.

Read this, keep it in your pocket, dip in and out to remind yourself of its contents every so often and you will be amazed at the results.

Susie Kay
London
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CHOOSE EXCELLENCE

We are all used to the idea that society applauds excellence in a variety of ways. We see award ceremonies for the 'best of' everything, from films to books, from holiday companies to advertisements; we hear about prestigious prizes for inventive or ground-breaking ideas; we understand that reaching the top of your profession can attract a larger salary.

Excellence is also the root of professionalism. It is about putting in maximum effort, not just to get something done but to achieve the best possible result and to do it with passion!

An individual's choice not to accept second rate or second best for themselves or those around them means not just looking at the big ideas and issues but paying attention to the little things too. They all make a difference. We can't deny that the big issues, such as maintaining standards and always behaving ethically, are incredibly important but the smaller signs of excellence, apparent in the way we treat other people and in the way we behave each day, are just as important.

Striving for the professionalism ideal is not enough by itself. That ideal needs to translate our thoughts and attitudes into actions, words into deeds, to make a difference. So we need to look at the elements which will help you to support your choice - your attitude, your behaviour and your character - to enhance your professionalism and provide you with the **ABC for success**.

TRUSTWORTHY

Above all else, to be described as worthy of someone's trust is the bedrock on which we build all the other attributes which contribute to the make-up of true professionalism.

To be trustworthy means that you can be trusted, without hesitation, with people, tasks, resources, confidences, secrets or responsibility. Others will be secure in the knowledge that, whatever has been asked of you, it will be carried out efficiently, effectively, and conscientiously. It is taken for granted that you will meet deadlines and produce work of superior quality and fully meet your commitments.



You are always as good as your word and can be relied on without hesitation

We all have a responsibility to be trustworthy, not just to ourselves but to each other as well. As a word of caution, however, trust can be easily lost and is almost impossible to re-establish once it is gone. Recent public events, such as those in the banking industry and in the Houses of Parliament, have shown just how bad things can get if levels of trust between large chunks of the population disintegrate.

Never assume that your needs are more important than others or assume that people will understand or forgive your motivations. Many of the MPs implicated in the recent expenses controversy sought to explain their misdemeanours by stating that they were acting within the rules or had been given permission for the claims they made. Neither of these excuses could explain how they did not see that their actions would be perceived as clearly wrong from any external viewpoint. The result was a further perception that these individuals felt that they were above the law and could no longer, therefore, be trusted with the governing process.

It is as well to remember that we all judge others by our own standards.



People are paying attention. Be an ambassador not an embarrassment

ETHICS, MORALS AND STANDARDS

This is a fundamental issue and one which is non-negotiable. Your behaviour is always driven by ethical considerations.

Professionalism requires that you always work to extremely high standards, both of morals and of quality, set by yourself and possibly also externally if you belong to one of the many professional bodies and membership associations which will provide codes of conduct or practice for your particular profession or skillset.

These standards by which we live and work define us – the personal and work ethics in which we believe and which colour our decision making in every sphere of activity with which we are involved.



‘Doing the right thing may not always be the easiest path but it keeps you looking forward not over your shoulder’

You know and do what is necessary in every situation, even if you don’t feel like it. You never do what is not right and, should you be asked to do so, your internal codes prevent you from agreeing. This can potentially bring you into conflict with others around you, perhaps if asked to do something by a superior or a friend with which you are not comfortable. Although this may be challenging to deal with on a personal level, the result is never in doubt.

Professionals do not allow any cracks to appear in their ethical make up. It is possible to maintain and demonstrate your passion and enthusiasm but still be able to stand up for yourself and your ideals.



The definition of ideology:
a set of ideas with a strong social influence

Professionalism is an ideology. Its application to all areas of work, to all sectors of the economy and to all group interactions should have a major influence for the good because ethical behaviour can also be contagious.