

Be a Better Co-worker: 10 Tips

By Kate Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com Editor

Taking a moment to think about how we may be viewed by co-workers is an important exercise that could have far-reaching effects. While you may not care what Bob down in accounting or Mary the administrative assistant thinks of you, it's important to remember that Mary may go on to become the administrative assistant to the potential new boss you have an interview with. And one day Bob just may be in charge of auditing your expense receipts at a future company.

"The single most important thing to remember is to be considerate," says John Challenger, chief executive officer of global outplacement consultancy Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

If you truly think about how your behavior may impact others, you will understand how to behave courteously, improving your rapport with co-workers. Here are 10 more tips to help you be a better co-worker:

- 1. Dial it down a notch.** Whether it's talking on your phone, singing to your iPod, or slamming file drawers with a deafening bang, reduce the volume of noises emanating from your office or cube, Challenger warns.
- 2. Keep your ego in check.** Watch your bragging. It's great that you recently aced the deal with a difficult client or made an unbelievable golf shot yesterday. Most of your co-workers don't want to be subjected to hearing the endless reasons why you are so great. Wait to earn a compliment rather than trying to force people to deliver one.
- 3. Avoid office politics (Part 1).** When the resident gossip "confides" insider information to you and is waiting to hear your reaction and rebuttal, don't bite, even if it's about someone you dislike. Scandalous scuttlebutt flourishes on the office grapevine and you don't want your remarks to come back to haunt you.
- 4. Clean up after yourself.** This old standby of mom's is spot-on. Make sure you clear the break table after eating and don't leave food rotting in the fridge.
- 5. Silence it.** Silly noises usually elicit more grimaces than giggles. Avoid annoying phone ring tones or computer sound effects. While you may enjoy hearing "It's a Small World After All" over and over every time your BlackBerry rings, you can bet you're alone in your amusement.
- 6. Cut cube clutter.** Make sure your thriving collection of ferns doesn't cascade over into adjoining cubes or the many pictures plastered around your area don't stick up over cube dividers. While these items may make your cube 'homey,' the view from the other side is far less pleasing.

7. Avoid office politics (Part 2). Today's politically polarized environment makes discussing even the most innocuous issue a potential touchstone for office controversy. So keep your ideas for obtaining world peace or solving economic dilemmas under your hat.

8. Temper your toxicity. Try to not let your moments of personal or professional unhappiness blanket the office. Co-workers will cringe at your ability to put a negative spin on everything.

9. Good hygiene never fails. Oftentimes, you're with colleagues more often than you are with your family at home. That doesn't mean you should become complacent in your grooming. Your co-workers will always appreciate your use of shampoo, toothpaste and soap - and several squirts of cologne do not take their place.

10. Keep the small talk small. While it's important to bond with fellow co-workers, everyone is there to work. By all means share a quick little story that will brighten their day. But don't plop down in a chair and kill a good hour with idle chatter.

"The best environments to work in are those where people really get along and have built friendships in the workplace," Challenger says. "However, if there ever is an issue between co-workers it's very important to recognize it and repair it," he advises. It is in both your best interest and the best interest of the company to maintain a cooperative, friendly work environment.

Kate Lorenz is the article and advice editor for CareerBuilder.com. She researches and writes about job search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues.