Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain the model of interpersonal skills improvement.
   1.1 Describe how an employee's performance can be improved and properly assessed using the interpersonal skills improvement model.

3. Evaluate personality differences among people.
   3.1 Assess how personality types and cognitive styles play a role in identifying the personality differences among people.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 1: A Framework for Interpersonal Skill Development

Chapter 2: Understanding Individual Differences

Unit Lesson

The material of Unit I identifies the basic foundation of developing interpersonal skills and provides insights into identifying personality differences for more productive interpersonal interactions within the work environment. Employees–from front-line personnel, to supervisors, to managers, to CEOs–must communicate effectively to achieve overall organizational success. Identifying interpersonal skills and individual personality differences aids in the learning process and promotes effective communication.

Chapters 1 and 2 cover interpersonal skills and explain how these skills can be improved through the process of effective goal setting. Also, various opportunities are identified in developing interpersonal skills on the job (i.e., informal learning and other developmental experiences). In addition, personality differences are identified and strategies on how to mentally respond to the different personality factors are introduced. The following list includes "five broad factors, known as the Big Five: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness" (DuBrin, 2015, p. 23).

In the world of work, it is extremely important to properly apply interpersonal skills and understand individual differences among co-workers to create a more cohesive working environment. There are several ways to identify opportunities to improve interpersonal skills such as understanding the art of communication, training and developing particular soft and hard skills, and utilizing various exercises and activities. For example, exercises can include how to deal with a difficult customer or coworker, how to manage stress, and how to communicate in written and non-written forms.

Interpersonal Relations

According to DuBrin (2015), interpersonal relations refers to a three-part strategy for succeeding in an organization. The three parts consist of the following ideas: "(1) key concepts of human relations; (2) suggestions for implementation; and (3) quizzes, exercises, and cases" (DuBrin, 2015, p. 4). All of the parts are involved in the bigger picture of interpersonal relations that teach a person how to effectively deal with others and develop through the use of identified best practices. Known as interpersonal skills training, this development process consists of soft and hard skills. The focus of this lesson is the soft skills, which are those basic components of interacting with others such as effective communication, listening skills, customer service best practices, proper behavior, and problem-solving skills.

According to Abbot, Ignatova, and Schnidman (2016), there are additional soft skills, which include cultural fit, leadership, and adaptability. These skills are important within the discussion of human relations and development because, among other things, they contribute to the ability to successfully fulfill the demands of a position. These skills, which are assessed during an interview, can often identify how well a potential team member will be able to work with others in the organization. Of course, the skills can be applied to virtually any situation within the work environment, and highly developed interpersonal skills can contribute to a more cohesive working atmosphere. As the employer, it is a great idea to offer trainings to develop the talent within the organization and identify and apply the best practices developed from a better understanding of the skills.

Hard skills consist of components of a technical nature and tend to be industry specific and are beyond the scope of this lesson.

Model for Improving Interpersonal Skills

An individual's behavior is the starting point for improving interpersonal skills; therefore, set proper goals to develop interpersonal skills and behavior. The model provided by the textbook is a good example of a way to improve interpersonal skills. To properly apply the model, one must be willing to change and have the capability to assess the process; therefore, the process begins with setting goals designed to achieve interpersonal development. The SMART acronym below can be used in developing such goals (Anderson & Bolt, 2013):

S – Specific
M – Measurable
A – Attainable
R – Realistic
T – Timely

SMART goals are just one approach. Refer to Chapter 1 of the textbook for other specifics and guidelines on setting goals. Setting goals and developing a plan of action can be viewed as a blueprint for step-by-step actions in accomplishing and assessing the desire goal or goals. For example, the SMART goal approach states that goals must be detailed and specific enough to build upon, and you should be familiar with how the goal is measured. Of course, regardless of how challenging a goal may be, the one setting it should always be confident it can be achieved by making it realistic. Finally, there should be target dates attached to avoid the goal becoming a never-ending pursuit, with few, if any results.

Developmental Needs

DuBrin (2015) identifies developmental needs specific to what a person should change to improve interpersonal skills. These developmental needs can be identified in several ways: evaluate yourself candidly, solicit feedback, assess feedback received (reflection), and consider performance appraisal feedback.

A developing practitioner should be able to identify developmental needs. Various testing activities can be used in this identification process. One's developmental needs can range from communication, to interpersonal, to problem-solving, to stress management needs. Some organizations offer yearly training that pertains to some of the soft- and hard-skill trainings previously identified. By offering this training, the organizations are investing in the development of the workforce. A human resources professional must be proactive rather than reactive; therefore, the training should be regular and consistent to effectively enhance the knowledge and experience levels of each and every employee.

Refer to the self-assessment quiz on identifying developmental needs in your assigned readings. The assessment is a great opportunity to determine individual needs of improvement for interpersonal skills. In completing the assessment, the results will identify areas of focus for development. Next, you should identify the actions to change and enhance the areas of focus. Some possible actions may consist of seeking training in the areas of effective communication, working in groups, dealing with differences, and proper delivery styles.

Personality

According to DuBrin (2015), personality is "behavior patterns that tend to be expressed in a wide variety of situations" (p. 23). The personality of an individual is made up of five broad factors with three other personality

factors important for human relations; refer to the textbook reading for this unit for details. As you recall and identify with the specifics of the eight personality factors relating to interpersonal skills in your assigned reading, you will be able to identify your own personality through completing the assessment on pages 25-27. Upon completing the quizzes, you will be able to identify ways to enhance your personality and better deal with the behaviors of others. Examples of how to effectively interact with different personality types can be found on pages 32-33 of the textbook.

When you are able to identify with your own personality type and factors, you are able to understand your way of operating on a day-to-day basis as well as relate to the differences of others and better interact according to the various type factors. As you assess the various types, you can learn patterns of actions and thoughts of individuals, which helps with better interactions among all.

Personality types and traits influence how you will approach problems. Measuring your personality type can be conducted with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI): the best known method in measuring that is comprised of a self-report questionnaire (DuBrin, 2015). In the measuring process, four dichotomies are used to assess the perception and judgment of the individual. See Figure 1:

Extraversion vs. Introversion	Thinking vs. Feeling
Sensing vs. Intuition	Judging vs. Perceiving

Figure 1: The four dichotomies
(DuBrin, 2015)

Cognitive Ability

Cognitive ability is otherwise known as a person's mental ability or intelligence and can influence job performance and behavior (DuBrin, 2015). "Understanding the nature of intelligence contributes to effective interpersonal relations in the workplace" (DuBrin, 2015, p. 33).

We are all made uniquely, which has an effect on how we function, process, and apply the art of communication and interaction.

References

Abbot, L., Ignatova, M., & Schnidman, A. (2016). *Guide to screening candidates: 30 essential behavioral interview questions.* Retrieved from https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/talent-solutions/resources/pdfs/guide-to-screening-candidates-30-essential-behavioral-interview-questions-to-ask-ebook-smb.pdf

Anderson, L. E., & Bolt, S. B. (2013). *Professionalism: Skills for workplace success* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson.

DuBrin, A. J. (2015). *Human relations: Interpersonal job-oriented skills* (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Suggested Reading

In order to access the following resource, click the link below:

The following article identifies skills candidates need to learn for a job. You are encouraged to review this information.

Emam, D. A. (2016, June 4). Jordanians learn 'soft skills' at Toastmasters clubs in Amman. *TCA Regionals News.* Retrieved from https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/docview/1793814050?accountid=33337

Review the PowerPoint presentations on Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 to supplement the textbook reading and lesson content.

Chapter 1: A Framework for Interpersonal Skill Development

Click here to access the Chapter 1 PowerPoint presentation.

Click here for the PDF version.

Chapter 2: Understanding Individual Differences

Click here to access the Chapter 2 PowerPoint presentation.

Click here for the PDF version.

Learning Activities (Nongraded)

Nongraded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.

You may complete one or both activities.

1. Read the Interpersonal Relations Case 1.1 or Case 1.2 on pp. 19-20, and answer the case questions.

2. Read the Interpersonal Relations Case 2.1 or Case 1.2 on pp. 48-49, and answer the case questions.

3. Click here to access the Unit I Flashcard PowerPoint

4. Click here for a PDF version.