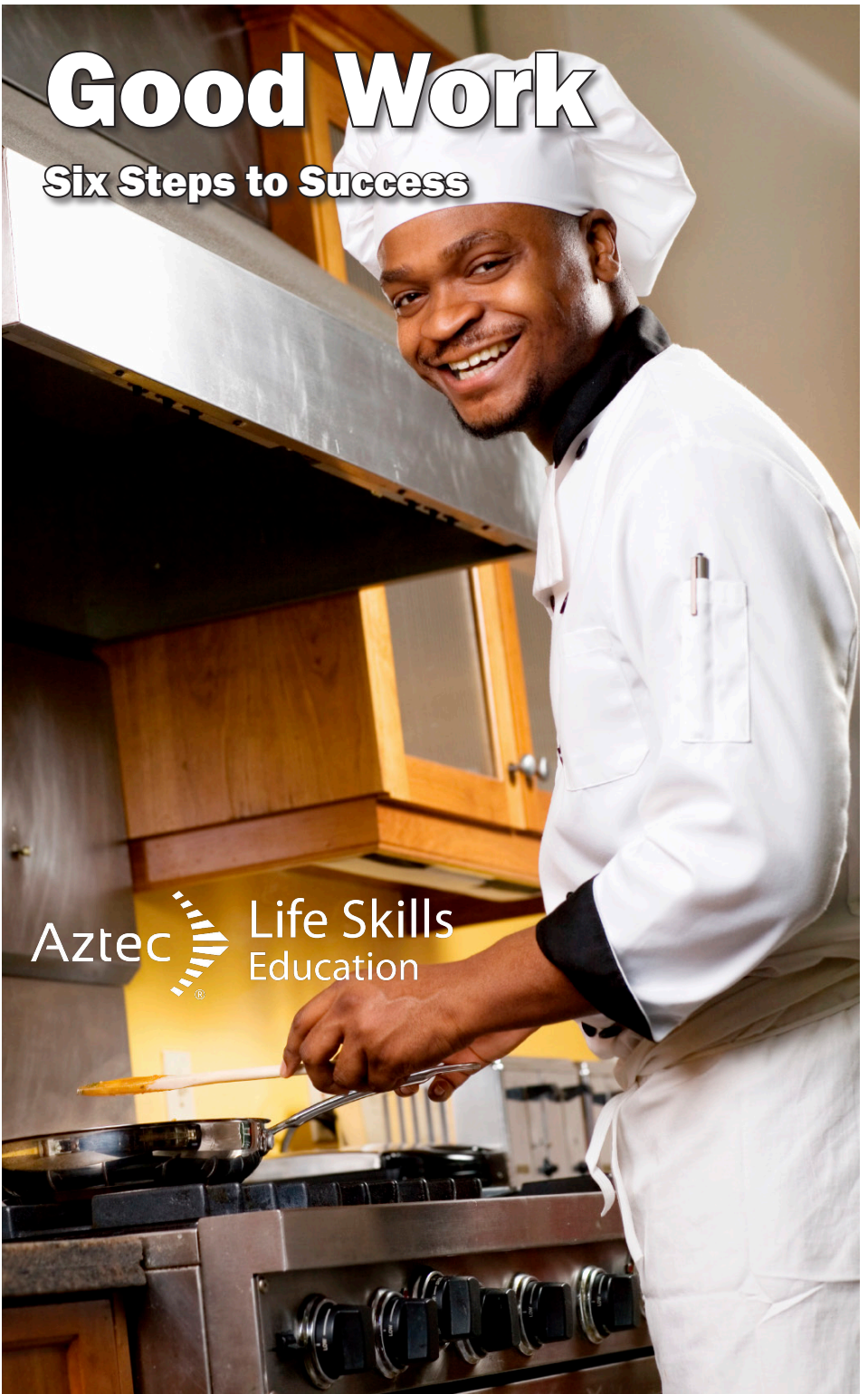


# Good Work

Six Steps to Success

Aztec  Life Skills  
Education



# You've got principles

**Y**ou're starting a new job and you're finding out that there's a lot to learn! Luckily, there are people available to teach you much of what you need to know: your new supervisor and co-workers.

But some of the things that affect how well you do on the job may not be mentioned. Unlike skills such as using a cash register or operating a forklift, these steps to success are not contained in a "how-to" handbook. Many employers just assume that their employees have them, and many employees don't really think about them very much.

However, the principles you use to guide your work life will determine how successful you are in this job and in the jobs that lie ahead of you.



## A principled person ...

A person who has principles is one who knows what he believes and sticks to it.

For instance, one person may say, "If I found a wallet on the sidewalk, I'd call the person it belonged to. It would go against my principles to just take the money and throw the wallet in the nearest dumpster," and another might say, "I would never cheat on my partner. That's just not right."

From these examples, it's easy to see that *principles* are *beliefs that guide our behavior*.

\*"He" and "she" will be used interchangeably throughout this booklet to represent both males and females.

## ... and a principled worker

Having principles at work is no different from having them somewhere else. But, at work, your principles are also tied to your *employer's expectations* of you. There's no mystery about those expectations; employers generally agree on what these important workplace principles are (the steps you need to take in order to be a success on the job):

- ★ a positive *attitude*;
- ★ attention to *timeliness*;
- ★ satisfactory *performance*;
- ★ *dependability*;
- ★ *professionalism*;
- ★ and, *consistency*.

These principles apply to secretaries, construction workers, nurses, bankers, and everyone else who has a job. And, while some people manage to succeed despite their lack of “principled behavior,” most people are more successful — and happier — when they “do the right thing.”

Let's look at these principles one by one to see why they are so important to employers — and why successful employees recognize them as the steps to success.

# 1. Positive attitude

**Y**ou've probably heard before about the importance of attitude; but when it comes to work, a good attitude is not just a nice extra — it's a basic part of job success.

Why? Because we're human! *You* try to avoid people who bring you down, put you down, or give you a hard time. *Your employer and co-workers (and customers!) feel the same way.* Most of us prefer people who are *upbeat* and *energetic*.

# The positive view

An employee who has a positive attitude is one who makes the most of her time on the job.

A *positive* person is much more likely to:

- ★ keep on trying when problems arise;
- ★ expect to be successful;
- ★ compete;
- ★ work in a way that helps her get along with others.

And the way you *show* a good attitude at work is by talking and behaving as though

- ★ the job matters;
- ★ you like the job;
- ★ you want the company to succeed;
- ★ you want to *know* more about the company and the job (you ask questions);
- ★ and, you want to *do* more on the job (you volunteer and/or make yourself available).

Having a positive attitude benefits *you*. You're more likely to be enthusiastic, which gives you more energy; it makes you more willing and able to solve problems and come up with good ideas; it makes the most of your personality, so that you seem more interesting and appealing to others.

The right attitude even makes the most of your looks:

a positive person has better posture, a more “alive” appearance, and a more relaxed and friendly facial expression.



# How's your attitude?

Here's a self-check designed by the U.S. Department of Labor for those who are new to a job. Rate yourself by putting a circle around the number that best describes your attitude today. A "10" means that your attitude is tops in this area; a "1" means it's really poor.

1. If I were to guess, my feeling is that my boss would currently rate my attitude as a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
2. I think my co-workers and family would rate my attitude toward work as a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
3. Thinking about the way I work on most days, I would rate my current attitude as a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
4. In working cooperatively with others, I think I'd be a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
5. When it comes to being creative, I'd say I'm a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
6. If there were a meter that could measure my sense of humor, it would read about a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
7. In patience and sensitivity to others, I'm a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
8. When it comes to not letting little things bother me, I deserve a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
9. Based on the number of compliments I have received on the job lately, I deserve a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
10. My enthusiasm toward my job and life lately rate a:  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

If your total score is above 85, you are probably doing really well in presenting a positive attitude at work. But if not, take another look at this test to help you determine where you might begin making some changes.

# Attitude adjustment

It's one thing to know how important attitude is; it's another to actually help yourself *achieve* the right attitude. It's not always easy to be cheerful and enthusiastic, no question. But you *can* do it, and it will help you both at work and at home.

Some important tips on developing the right attitude:

- ✓ **Start by being positive about yourself:** “I may be new at this, but I’m going to be good at it.”
- ✓ **Be courteous and smile;** you will soon start feeling positive about yourself and your job.

It may feel phony at first, but you’ll be surprised how people respond — and the fact *they* are friendly will help your smile seem more natural.

It’s a spiral: the friendlier you are to others, the friendlier they are to you.

- ✓ **Be not only willing but eager to learn:** everyone expects a new employee to have questions, so ask.
- ✓ **Set little, private goals for yourself** and work toward them at your own pace: “By Friday, I’ll learn how to get jammed paper out of the copier.”
- ✓ **Keep a *sense of humor*** — especially about yourself! Your own work will seem lighter and less tense.



## 2. Timeliness

**E**very worker learns sooner or later that *employers are fanatics about timeliness!* Even those employers who are

willing to overlook a slip now and then won't tolerate regular tardiness or absences.

They have good reason for being so strict about the clock. They know that a worker who doesn't *work* for his whole shift is a drain on the company. Customers have to wait, other employees have to pick up the slack, and the manager worries that the time-wasting "virus" will spread to other workers.



## What is timeliness?

Here's what your employer means when she wants you to work in a *timely* manner:

- **You arrive at work a few minutes before you're due to start;** you don't use the first 10 or 15 minutes to put your coat away, get a cup of coffee, or greet co-workers. If you're going to be late, you call in as soon as you can to let your supervisor know when you'll be able to get there.
- **You go to lunch or break when it's your turn;** you come back to your workspace exactly when you're due; you show that you know there's work to be done and that there may be other people waiting for *their* turn.
- **You work while you're at work.** You don't make personal calls, read your email, or update Facebook.
- **You spend the expected amount of time** on each task.
- **You leave work at the scheduled end of your shift,** not before. If you have to stay late, you ask your supervisor if you can work overtime *before* you do it.

You can help yourself get to work on time by taking some simple but important steps:

- ✓ If you take public transportation to work, **know the schedule** and keep a copy of it handy.
- ✓ If you drive, **keep your car well maintained**; learn more than one route to work in case there's an accident or roadwork that would delay you.
- ✓ If you have children, **make sure your childcare arrangements are solid** and that you have a backup plan. You need to know *in advance* what you will do if your regular arrangements aren't going to work out on any given day.

Again, timeliness benefits *you*: it lets you get your work done so that you don't have to worry about it when you go home; it makes you a true member of the team, since you're helping to keep up the regular flow of work; and it leads your boss and co-workers to trust and respect you.

## 3. Performance

It stands to reason that doing your job well — maintaining good *performance* — is essential in the workplace. Just as you expect your bus driver and doctor and car mechanic to be good at their jobs, your employer (and co-workers, and customers) expect the same thing of you.

### The job contract

In some jobs, you receive and sign a job description. In other jobs, someone simply tells you what you will be expected to do and then shows you how to do it.

In each of these cases, you are *entering into a job contract*. The employer is stating what he expects you to do, and you are agreeing to do it. Your job is based on this:





*There is work to be done, and both you and the employer have agreed that you are the person who will do it.*

## Do you know what you're doing?

Your job description tells you *what* tasks you're expected to perform. You may also receive performance standards, which tell you exactly *how much* you're supposed to do and/or explain how your work will be evaluated — which in turn determines your raise and/or promotion.

If you haven't been given a copy of your job description or performance standards, ask for one. Read it carefully, and think about each item: *How am I doing in that area? How would somebody rate my performance in this part?* Keep in mind that somebody *will* be rating your performance, and you need to know how you're doing — where you're strong, and where you need to improve.

## When should you be “up to speed”?

How are you going to deliver good performance if you've just started your job? The fact is, nobody expects you to be an expert at your work right away. This is why most companies offer a “probation period” — usually three months — so that you can learn and practice your job activities.

During these first weeks and months on the job, you should be very alert, attentive, and full of questions. In the beginning, you should be able to go home *every day* having learned something new — and go back the next day to practice it. Your employer may give you some time



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