

Healthy Workplace Assertiveness

Denise M Barrera, MPH

Workplace politics can often times become daunting for individuals who have low self-esteem or have a tendency to try to be a perfectionist in all they do. Knowing your workplace role and having clear expectations should be established within the first week of new employment or taking on a new role at your current employer. Without the establishment of workplace boundaries one runs the risk of trying to please everyone who asks something of you which can become increasingly challenging if you are not clear on your role in the workplace.

Find your voice! If you are feeling overwhelmed and have a sense of losing yourself, you could run the risk of not progressing to the level and expectation of your supervisor in the tasks that are expected for your particular role. There is bureaucracy in most workplace environments and with this will be those individuals who will ask others to take on some of their duties in which they feel might be menial. In some cases, the last man hired will bear the brunt of others “menial” duties’. If this is the case, the employee should request a meeting with their supervisor and discretely discuss. As a supervisor, it is important to hear when these sorts of things are taking place so the effort can be made to rectify the problem. At the end of the day you, as the employee, are going to be evaluated on your progress and efficiency, don’t forget to keep that in mind before agreeing to take on additional duties of others.

Self-Sabotage can sneak up on you if you say yes to others when you really mean no. Being accommodating is not always in your professional best interest. It is ok to say no in a manner in which is both polite and professionally acceptable. “While I wish I had some extra time to help out, I am working under a deadline this week and will not have any extra time to get to your request”. The requestor will usually respect the fact that you were upfront and honest as opposed to taking on the request and not being able to get to it timely or get it completed in an efficient manner.

It is our job as responsible employees to ensure our voice is heard and we are not taking on more than we can successfully handle.