



LEARNING RESOURCES, Inc.

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## **Soft Skills Discussion Resource (Brief)**

This material supports the development of people's soft skills effectiveness when used with AccuVision or other legal, valid and predictive assessment instruments that measure individuals' effective workplace behaviors

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This **Soft Skills Discussion Resource** (Brief) contains pages taken from a Comprehensive Manual of the same name. It provides examples of materials available to educators and trainers concerned with developing the interpersonal skills of people in academic, occupational and other credit and non-credit courses, workshops or on-the-job.

Learning Resources, Inc. (LRI) recognizes that soft skills are developed most effectively when individuals' strengths and developmental needs are identified through pre-assessment, then developed through various interventions and, finally, when attainment is documented through post-assessment. Our soft skills assessment programs have been used to legally, efficiently and predictively measure the skills of over 2,000,000 individuals.

The Comprehensive Manual provides work-related situations that are drawn from several of LRI's assessment programs. All simulations can be easily adapted to meet the particular needs of programs - be they targeted at youth, adults, incumbents, dislocated workers or transitioning prison populations. Simulations address job-clusters and industries found at:

Workforce Readiness Skills

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_10.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_10.cfm)

Workplace Success Skills

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_9.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_9.cfm)

Office Success Skills

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_4.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_4.cfm)

Customer Service Skills

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_2.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_2.cfm)

Retail Sales Skills

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_5.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_5.cfm)

Teller and Financial Services Skills

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_8.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_8.cfm)

For an overview of work-related, employer-validated and video-delivered assessment, See: [http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_0.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_0.cfm)

And, to see what this technology looks like -

[http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram\\_12.cfm](http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_12.cfm) ... enables you to download a brief video clip showing video scenarios from the Workforce Readiness Program.

# Sample Discussion Situations Follow

**INTEGRITY** You know right from wrong and try to do the right thing.

**QUESTION** Assume you are at work and one of your co-workers decides that he wants to leave work 15 minutes early, but does not want the manager to whom you both report to know that he is leaving early. As your co-worker is leaving he explains to you that he is leaving early and asks you to “cover for him” in case your manager comes by and asks where he is. What would you do in this situation?

(Possible probes/additional comments: Assume the Manager comes by and asks you directly where your co-worker is. What would you say? What would you say to the co-worker before he leaves?)

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## SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

- 1. Indicating disagreement with the co-worker’s deceitful actions
- 2. Informing the co-worker he/she will not lie to the manager
- 3. Indicating that he/she will tell the manager the true story

## SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

- 1. Seeing nothing wrong with the co-worker's behavior (e.g., it's not my business)
- 2. Agreeing to “cover” for the co-worker or play dumb if questioned by the manager
- 3. Indicating disagreement with the co-worker’s actions, but a reluctance to state views to the co-worker

**RESPONSIBILITY** You work hard to do your job the best that it can be done; you pay attention to details and concentrate even when doing things you don't like; you always try to be on time for work; you do your work with a positive attitude.

**QUESTION** Assume that you work in a large Department Store and that your manager just told you to take your morning break. Your break is only fifteen minutes long and you need to be back at your workstation in exactly fifteen minutes. You are on your way to the break room when a customer approaches you and asks you where she can find picture frames. You know that picture frames are on the completely opposite side of the store, in the Home Furnishing section, and are pretty difficult to find. How would you deal with this customer?

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**SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Cutting the break short and walking the customer over to the location of the picture frames
2. Attempting to locate a co-worker who can take the customer to the picture frames

**SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Telling the customer you are "on break" and cannot help them right now
2. Simply telling the customer that picture frames are located in the Home Furnishing section of the store and providing no more direction or suggestions

SELF-ESTEEM      You handle feedback and suggestions without becoming defensive, angry or upset; you are not afraid to learn new things.

QUESTION      Assume that you work in a store where you are required to clock into work using a time card. You arrive at work and are on your way to clock in when a customer approaches you and asks for help. After helping the customer for about five minutes, you then go to the time clock to clock into work. Your manager notices that you are a few minutes late clocking into work and politely reminds you that it is important that you get to work on time. How would you deal with your manager?

**IF** the interviewee would explain that he/she was late clocking in only due to the fact that a customer was being helped, follow up your question with the following: *Okay, then suppose that your manager says that helping the customer was good, but that in the future you need to clock in before you perform any work activities. What would you then say or do?*

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**SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Initially explaining why he/she was late clocking in vs. indicating he/she would disagree that he/she was "late", just agreeing with the manager, etc.
2. Seeking additional clarity regarding why clocking in before performing any work activities is important

**SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Indicating an overly aggressive need to "correct" the manager's perception that he/she was "late"
2. Simply agreeing with the manager's initial comments and not explaining the situation (e.g., "whatever", etc.)
3. Asking no questions regarding why clocking in first is important

**SELF-MANAGEMENT**

You are aware of what you can and cannot do and you are not afraid to ask for help when you need it; you try to get better at things that you do not do well.

**QUESTION**

Assume that you work in a company that does commercial printing. Your supervisor asks you to show a new employee how to operate the large hole-punch machine in the shop. You know a little about the hole-punch machine from having seen other employees operate it a few times, but you have never actually operated it yourself. How would you handle the situation with your supervisor?

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**SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Candidly informing the supervisor of your own knowledge and experience with the equipment
2. Asking the supervisor to be trained on the equipment at the same time as the new employee

**SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Accepting the assignment and attempting to simply do “the best you can”
2. Simply suggesting the supervisor have someone else do the training activity, since he/she is not very familiar with the equipment

**SOCIABILITY** You are understanding, friendly, flexible, and polite when you are around co-workers; you participate in whatever is going on instead of trying to be “invisible”; you get along with others; and, you take an interest in what others say and do.

**QUESTION** Assume that one of your co-workers, with whom you are somewhat friendly, is currently undergoing a divorce and often wants to talk with you about personal problems he is having because of the divorce. However, the supervisor that both you and the co-worker report to has told you that he (the supervisor) believes you and the co-worker have tended to spend too much time talking and need to pay more attention to your work. How would you deal with your co-worker?

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**SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Indicating an awareness and potential willingness to use non-work time (i.e., breaks, lunch time, after work hours, etc.) for such discussions
2. Recognizing the need to inform the co-worker of the need to decrease personal conversation time in a sensitive manner

**SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Overreacting – i.e., telling the co-worker “I can’t talk to you any more”, etc.
2. Dealing with the co-worker in an insensitive manner – i.e., your problems are getting me in trouble, etc.
3. Suggesting the supervisor talk to the co-worker directly about the problem – i.e., it’s the co-worker, not me that always wants to talk, etc.

**DECISION  
MAKING**

Makes sound decisions when carrying out company policies and guidelines, develops solutions for customer problems, recognizes the limits of own authority and knows when a customer problem should be referred to others.

**QUESTION**

Assume you are working and a customer comes to you and wants to return a product she purchased from your store three months ago. You know that your store's policy is that all returns must be made within 30 days of purchase unless the product is defective. In situations where the product was purchased more than 30 days ago, but is being returned and it is defective, only a supervisor can approve the return. What would you do and say to this customer?

**LEADER NOTE:** (If the participant says that he/she would ask the customer why he was unhappy with the product, ask the following question.) Suppose the customer says he wants the refund because he just hasn't had as much use for the product as he thought he would. What would you do?

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**SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Questioning the customer to determine the reason for wanting to return the product
2. Attempting to handle the problem without involving the supervisor – the situation is unambiguous
3. Recognizing that accepting the return would be inappropriate
4. Apologizing for any inconvenience caused to the customer

**SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Explaining the return policy to the customer prior to asking why the customer wants to return the product or not asking why the customer wants to return the product
2. Explaining that only a supervisor can approve the return or deferring the matter to a supervisor without attempting to first handle the situation himself/herself
3. Simply telling the customer “no” or “it's against policy” without explaining the policy

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Communicates in a positive manner, especially when handling complaints or conflict; efficiently obtains additional resources as needed to satisfy customer needs.

QUESTION

Assume that you work as a customer service representative for a utility company. A customer calls you and explains that she just received a notice from your company informing her that her monthly payment is two weeks late. She explains that she is absolutely certain she mailed her check for the payment to your company more than two weeks ago. You check your computer and see that the payment has not yet been received, but you also see that she has been a customer for three years and has no other late payments. The customer is concerned that a late payment will hurt her credit rating and wants the situation cleared up as soon as possible. What do you tell her or suggest to her, and why?

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SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Recognizing the customer's excellent past payment record and the fact that she called the company gives some credence to her statement regarding she had mailed payment – she should receive some special consideration
2. Attempting to put the customer at ease regarding the issue of the credit rating – e.g., taking steps to ensure that a late payment does not show up on payment history
3. Suggesting the customer contact her bank to determine if the check has cleared, then call you back with the information, suggesting giving the payment another week to show up and offering to waive any late payment fees, etc.

SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Takes a "tough" position (e.g., it's two weeks late so you need to write another check and your account will now show a late payment) or a "helpless" attitude (e.g., your payment is late and there's nothing I can do)
2. Failing to recognize the relevance of the customer's good payment history to the overall situation

**COMMITMENT  
TO QUALITY**

Works and communicates with clients and customers to satisfy their expectations; actively listens to customers to avoid misunderstandings.

**QUESTION**

Assume that you are a Bank Teller. It is a slow day inside the bank and your manager asks you to close your teller window and work on some paperwork that has accumulated over the past few days. However, the manager also tells you not to worry if you can't finish all of the paperwork today, since it is not due to corporate headquarters for several more days. After a little while, things begin to get pretty busy inside the bank and a long line of customers is waiting to see the tellers. The line is continuing to grow. Unfortunately, the manager has gone to lunch and there are no other tellers available to help. What, if anything, would you do?

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**SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Recognizes from the description that the paperwork is not urgent and can be delayed for a few hours if needed
2. Indicates a willingness and desire to help the co-workers (even if he/she is reluctant to actually change activities without the manager's permission)
3. Takes the initiative to stop working on the administrative task and reopens his/her Teller window in order to assist customers

**SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS**

1. Indicates a lack of concern for the customers' satisfaction – i.e., I'm doing what I was told to do
2. Is reluctant to act without permission

## LISTENING

Comprehending and recalling verbal information. You understand and remember instructions and information others tell you.

No questions are asked for this area. Rather, the participant is evaluated based on behaviors observed during the overall interview session.

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## SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Gave the interviewer his/her full attention when the interviewer was speaking – looked in the eye, avoided fidgeting, etc.
2. Asked for clarification, if necessary
3. Answers reflected a general comprehension of the question being asked
4. Body language indicated alertness and attentiveness throughout the session

## SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Fidgeted, seemed distracted, bored or distracted at various times
2. Answers to questions reflected a basic misunderstanding of the question

ORAL COMMUNICATION Expresses thoughts and ideas in a clear and easy to understand manner.

No questions are asked for this area. Rather, the participant is evaluated based on behaviors observed during the overall interview session.

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SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Expressed comments in a concise manner
2. Enunciated clearly
3. Spoke in a fluid manner
4. Looked at the interviewer when speaking
5. Used gestures to emphasize points
6. Expressed ideas in an easy to understand manner
7. Used proper grammar
8. Used voice inflection to emphasize points

SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Rambled on or was overly wordy
2. Had slurred speech
3. Was overly hesitant or choppy when speaking
4. Failed to maintain eye contact when speaking
5. Expressed ideas in a manner that was difficult to follow and/or understand
6. Made grammatical errors
7. Spoke in a monotone and/or failed to use gestures

INTERPERSONAL    Responding sensitively to the needs and feelings of others.

No questions are asked for this area. Rather, the participant is evaluated based on behaviors observed during the overall interview session.

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#### SAMPLE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. At the start of the session, offered a polite and enthusiastic greeting
2. As appropriate, used amenities such as “please” and “thank you”
3. Maintained a polite, courteous, and enthusiastic demeanor during the session
4. Actively listened to the interviewer’s comments (e.g., maintained eye contact while listening, nodding while listening, etc.)
5. At the close of the session, expressed appreciation of the interviewer's time and consideration

#### SAMPLE INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIORS

1. Asked questions in an abrupt or curt manner
2. Displayed little enthusiasm or politeness

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