



Workin' It Out

Soft Skills Training for Today's Workforce

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PROGRAM INFORMATION

THE PROBLEM

In today's service-centered economy, people skills are vital for workplace success. Employers complain that many new workers "lack a good work ethic." These workers fail to show up on time, and ask for frequent time off to deal with personal problems. They create issues with coworkers, and argue with supervisors over simple requests. They often leave jobs with little notice after only a few months, before the employer has had any return on their investment in recruitment and training.

Employment and training centers are flooded with inexperienced, immigrant, or dislocated workers needing good jobs. Some of these individuals have basic job search or vocational skills, but may be lacking in what employers want most: soft skills, the basic interpersonal skills necessary to succeed in the social environment of today's workplace.

In part, this is because our increasingly diverse workforce brings varying beliefs and customs regarding appropriate behavior at work. The common-sense expectations many employers hold may be foreign to those with little experience in the workplace

THE SOLUTION

Our goal with job-seekers like these is not simply to find them jobs, but to help them stay on those jobs long enough to advance to a living wage and discover the value of work.

The "Workin' It Out" (WIO) curriculum helps new employees find success in the first 3-6 months of work, when turnover is often highest, by offering them the insights and skills needed to adjust to the social environment of work. Specifically, WIO uses cognitive behavioral instructional techniques to help customers develop:

- (1) Insight into personal beliefs which drive behaviors in their social lives;
- (2) Awareness of employers' unspoken expectations;
- (3) Self-control skills for managing strong emotions;
- (4) Communication skills for dealing with difficult social interactions; and
- (5) Problem solving skills for logically resolving interpersonal workplace issues.

THE DETAILS

"Workin' It Out" is a 10-lesson cognitive-behavioral program which targets inexperienced or dislocated workers starting a new job, or preparing to do so.

Through realistic stories, interactive role-plays, and thought-provoking activities, WIO participants come to better understand the unspoken rules of the workplace. They also learn and practice simple but useful skills for communicating and resolving common work-related problems.

The WIO program works best when delivered to groups of 8-16 participants by 1-2 trained instructors over the course of 2-4 weeks. It is designed to complement other programs which teach job search and interviewing skills.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

“Workin’ It Out” consists of ten 90-minute lessons. The curriculum is divided into three parts, each focused on a different set of insights and skills needed to adjust successfully to the culture of the workplace.

Part 1: Building Self-Awareness

- Lesson 1 Understanding Conflict
- Lesson 2 Power of Personal Beliefs
- Lesson 3 Unspoken Rules of Work

Part 1 focuses on self-awareness. It helps customers become aware of the underlying process by which beliefs, attitudes and perceptions drive behavioral choices (and the consequences which follow). It examines in detail those personal beliefs which apply to social and family situations, then goes on to explain how the same beliefs and behaviors that seem appropriate in one’s personal life can backfire in the world of work. Skills and insights are applied to work-related situations.

Part 2: Building Communication Skills

- Lesson 4 Stop & Think
- Lesson 5 Expressing Your Feelings
- Lesson 6 Dealing with Complaints

Part 2 focuses on communication skills. It teaches participants step-by-step strategies for keeping strong emotions in check, expressing complaints in a professional manner, and dealing effectively with criticism from customers, coworkers or supervisors. Skills and insights are dramatically role-played in specific work-related situations.

Part 3: Building Problem Solving Skills

- Lesson 7 Problem & Goal
- Lesson 8 Information & Insight
- Lesson 9 Choices & Consequences
- Lesson 10 Closing

Part 3 focuses on rational problem solving. It first helps participants simplify overwhelming situations by identifying useful, objective problem and goal statements. It then teaches them to avoid making false assumptions, and to analyze all possible choices before making an impulsive decision. Skills and insights are applied to specific work-related situations.

More information about this program, including samples of the workbook and trainer’s manual, may be downloaded from www.WorkinItOut.com. Contact the author, Dr. Steve Parese, at SBParese@aol.com.