

# Glencoe/McGraw-Hill Podcast

## Title: “Interpersonal Skills” (Marketing Essentials)

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to Glencoe’s podcast series. You’re listening to Work Talk.

KELLY

Hello and welcome to Work Talk, where you get the news and information you need to make the most of your future. I’m Kelly Matthews. Today we’re talking about interpersonal skills in the workplace—what they are, and how you can use them effectively to help you achieve success. We’re joined today by Psychologist Dr. Sheila Chan, along with two newcomers to the workforce—Miguel Jimenez and Janet Simmons, both recent graduates just beginning their careers. Welcome to you all and thanks for being here. I’d like to start with Dr. Chan: Could you please define “interpersonal skills” for us and our audience?

DR. CHAN

Interpersonal skills are the skills that help you communicate with and relate to others. In fact, we are practicing interpersonal skills right now. For example, today is the first time that most of us have met one another, so we are being polite and respectful and courteous. And we’re doing this not only because it’s how we all know people should behave with each other, but also to ensure that the show goes smoothly today—which is our common goal. The same is true in the workplace. When people practice good interpersonal skills, they interact in a healthy and respectful way, which can help any business or organization succeed.

JANET

My boss says that she was promoted because of her interpersonal skills.

DR. CHAN

Yes, if you are a person who possesses strong interpersonal skills, you are far more likely to find success in your career, or any career. Interpersonal skills can help create a work environment where people feel comfortable and respected.

KELLY

And how do you go about developing or polishing those skills, or making sure that you have them to begin with?

DR. CHAN

Many personal traits that are important in your personal life are also important in the workplace. Traits such as a sense of responsibility, self-esteem, self-management—which includes using tact, or saying and doing things in a respectful way. Honesty and integrity are important. Now, not everybody excels in all of these traits, and it’s a good idea to develop or improve the traits you might need to succeed in work and in life.

KELLY

And that’s where self-awareness comes into play, correct?

DR. CHAN

Indeed. Self-awareness is knowing who you are. One way to build self-awareness is to identify and evaluate our strengths and weaknesses, then work to strengthen those weaknesses and achieve a more balanced personality. Having a balanced personality can help you get along with others, resulting in a pleasant workplace.

KELLY

Not to mention more productive.

DR. CHAN

That's absolutely true, and this is why companies sometimes hire people like me to teach their employees the importance of using effective interpersonal skills. It's just good for business.

KELLY

Janet, you look like you have a question.

JANET

I wanted to ask Dr. Chan what interpersonal skills she thinks are most important in being an effective coworker and employee.

DR. CHAN

I think showing respect for others is very important. That's just a general rule that certainly applies to the workplace. I would say that being understanding of your coworkers and having empathy, or the ability to understand situations from others' points of view—is also critical. Showing respect and demonstrating empathy are ways to help you communicate effectively with others. Another way to be an effective communicator is to listen: Listening is as important as speaking.

KELLY

What about a sense of humor?

DR. CHAN

A sense of humor is very important. Remember, though, that having a sense of humor doesn't mean making fun of others or being disrespectful, or even constantly making jokes. What it does mean is being able to see the lighter side of things. And, by the way, that means laughing at yourself at times.

MIGUEL

Dr. Chan, I have a question. I was always taught that being polite is very important. But after a few months in this new job, it seems that not everyone I work with feels the same way.

DR. CHAN

That's a good point, Miguel. It's important to remember that the best way to react to somebody who is rude or impolite is to demonstrate polite behavior yourself. By setting an example, you might make a difference in someone else's behavior without having to lecture them. The worst thing we can do is behave badly in reaction to someone else who behaves badly.

KELLY

But aren't certain rules of etiquette, or good manners, mandatory in the workplace?

DR. CHAN

In general, it's important to be respectful of others. However, it's also important to realize that different kinds of jobs and different companies have different kinds of protocol, or commonly accepted behavior. For instance, in my opinion, yelling should never be acceptable in the workplace, yet it happens in some kinds of jobs. But again, that doesn't mean we use another person's rudeness to justify that same behavior in ourselves. So don't yell back.

KELLY

OK, we won't. What are some other suggestions for getting along with others in the workplace?

DR. CHAN

Be courteous. Say hello to coworkers. Smile. Call people by name. Don't interrupt people while they are speaking. Be on time. These are some simple things you can do to help you get along well with others.

MIGUEL

I have a person on my sales team who is late for work at least a couple times a week, and we are always waiting for him at meetings. It drives me crazy! I think it's disrespectful to us, and we waste time waiting for him.

DR. CHAN

You're right, Miguel. Punctuality is important in the workplace. He might not be aware of how his behavior affects the team. You might try to tactfully talk to him about his behavior, or ask his manager to speak to him about the importance of being on time.

KELLY

Great questions, guys. And speaking of being on time, it's time for us to take a quick break. Stay with us. We'll be right back.

KELLY

We're back, and we're talking with psychologist Dr. Sheila Chan about the importance of healthy interpersonal skills in the workplace. It looked like you had a question before the break, Janet.

JANET

Yes... On the topic of office or workplace etiquette... I share an office with a person who gossips about everybody all the time. I'm not interested, and I don't want others to think I'm participating in this. I try to just ignore him, but that doesn't seem to work. Oh, and he's always reading my e-mails over my shoulder, and reading my faxes. What can I do about it?

DR. CHAN

Avoiding gossip and respecting privacy are both very important rules of etiquette in the workplace. I know it's tempting to just tell him "Mind your own business," but you should try to be tactful. If ignoring him doesn't work, tell him firmly that gossip makes you uncomfortable, and that you would prefer that he not read any documents that are meant for you. If he becomes unpleasant or refuses to change, I would talk to your supervisor.

MIGUEL

Speaking of supervisors, do you have any tips on working with your supervisor?

DR. CHAN

Great question. You should treat your supervisor with the same respect and courtesy you show your coworkers, but you also need to gain your supervisor's approval. So there are a few things to keep in mind: When you are dealing with criticism from your supervisor, be professional and avoid being defensive. Also, don't bother your supervisor with details you are capable of handling yourself. And always offer to help your supervisor when you can. It's a great way to show your interest and support. If you're taking a problem to your supervisor, take a possible solution with you as well.

KELLY

Well, I hate to say it, but we're running out of time. Dr. Chan, Janet, and Miguel, thank you so much for being here. But before we end the program, I want to let Dr. Chan have the last word. What do you think we should keep in mind about interpersonal skills in the workplace?

DR. CHAN

Getting along well with coworkers is the single most important aspect to your long-term career success, and you can do that by developing the kinds of traits and behaviors we've discussed here today. And remember: When it comes to interpersonal skills and etiquette in the workplace, the "Golden Rule" holds true in the office just as it does in life: "Treat others as you would like to be treated."

KELLY

We will. Thank you, Dr. Chan... and thanks to all of you for listening. That's all for today. Please join us next time on Work Talk. I'm Kelly Matthews.