

Notes for *Professionalism and Career Networking*

Slide 1

This program is designed for one or two sessions. An optional second chapter activity is designed to ensure greater understanding of the concept of professionalism through career networking.

Slide 2

Professionalism is one of those concepts that is so familiar yet complex that we could each have a different understanding of its meaning.

- Professionalism might mean a “positive feeling and support one has for the vocation s/he has selected.”
- Newkirk (1982) defined it as “the quality of an individual to overtly display characteristics that positively represent the standards of one’s profession and a commitment to advancing the program or activity of the profession.

An understanding of the root word *profession* is required before exploring the behaviors that characterize professionalism.

Three fundamental elements of a profession: (*Adapted from Brown, 1971*)

- **A value orientation to service** for the welfare of society--service orientation--welfare of others is uppermost.
- **Abstract knowledge used adaptably and skillfully** in the area of service--expert knowledge for the service--a theoretical framework.
- **Autonomy in decision-making and action** relative to the service--decisions are made and actions taken based on expertise, knowledge and reason.

These characteristics must be translated by individuals into **patterns of action** that convey the image of a professional person.

Slide 3

Professionalism is a **passion** for personal responsibility, devotion to a life of service, commitment to a mission, and openness to new ideas and alternatives.

In contrast, technicians (or paraprofessionals) define their role narrowly, see no larger purpose, set sights low, know enough about their work without a holistic view of it. Six characteristics of professional style—a professional way of being—is summarized:

1. Ethical - moral standard of conduct.
2. Altruistic - regard for and devotion to the interest of others, unselfish
3. Responsible- accountable, answerable, trustworthy, and able to respond.
4. Theoretical--systematic and abstract principles of professional action.
5. Committed--a lifetime of devotion.
6. Intellectual--feels responsible for continuous development of professional knowledge and skills; learning is not a task but a way of living and being.

Covey in *Principle-Centered Leadership* says, “Some habits of ineffectiveness are rooted in our social conditioning toward quick-fix, short-term thinking. . . . The quick, easy, free, and fun approach won’t work . . . The only thing that endures over time is the law of the farm: I must prepare the ground, put in the seed, cultivate it, weed it, water it, then gradually nurture growth and development to full maturity” (p. 17).

Slide 10

Exhibit the three characteristics of a profession:

- **A value orientation to service** for the welfare of society—service orientation—welfare of others is uppermost.
- **Abstract knowledge used adaptably and skillfully** in the area of service—expert knowledge for the service—a theoretical framework.
- **Autonomy in decision-making and action** relative to the service—decisions are made and actions taken based on expertise, knowledge, and reason.

Participate in a unified professional membership.

- A professional will pay dues out of their own pocket to organizations for the privilege of being a practicing professional.
- Since professionals require autonomy in decision-making, the professional organization, rather than the employer, is the cooperative agency through which the profession is advanced.

Identify and eliminate anti-professional developments.

- Anti-professional developments might include:
uncredentialed workers, anti-professional thinking, legislation adversely affecting families or the profession
- Political activism and increased visibility as professionals will be required to create and sustain positive professional advancement.

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Preprofessionals receiving specialized education designed to develop a theoretical framework, applied skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

- Internal process: absorbing, internalizing, and conforming to their perceptions of what professionals think, do, or say.
- Practice is a mirror image of what they have observed in the world.

Appliers - Experienced college graduates.

- Apply the knowledge gathered and skills developed in a volunteer or paid staff position.
- Discovering the limits imposed by the environment or institutions involved.
- Internal process: challenging the commitment to the profession and will either accept the limits and conform to the setting, becoming stuck at that level OR be stimulated to challenge and question the limitations and move on to another step in the process of development. Some may become discouraged and dropout.

Analysts - Experienced in applying and refining knowledge with new acquisition.

- Analyze self and profession in whole and in parts, question their very existence and purpose, and seek new knowledge to support their practice.
- Internal process: stress; anger; frustration with complex issues, limits, and slow process of change.

Integrators - Holistic thinkers—having examined themselves and the profession and broken the wholes into parts, they've begun to put the parts together again, to create, organize, and design something different.

- Selective about causes and issues in which they become involved.
- Internal process: philosophical, coherent between actions and beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Slide 12

Following the presentation of the first eleven slides, conduct the reflection activity. Dyads should discuss the questions: “What have I learned that I can put to immediate use?”

Share in large group.

Distribute the Reflection and Action Planning Worksheet.

Creating a plan of action to develop a higher degree of professionalism is a part of the intellectual and theoretical professional style.

Invite participants to commit to focusing on one element of style development during the next week. Their commitment should include:

- Notice your own actions and those of others that exhibit that element of, or lack of, professionalism.
- Carefully evaluate your own actions and how they relate to your internal beliefs and assumptions.
- Challenge whether the belief or assumption is valid.
- Create an action plan to work on bringing more coherence between actions and beliefs, creating greater integrity and authenticity.

Slide 13

Optional Follow-up Activity

This activity requires a second chapter meeting on the topic of professionalism to share interviews with professionals. Although optional, two meetings will have greater impact because it involves participation in exploring the concept of professionalism.

References

- Brown, M. M. (1971). Significant goals for graduate education in home economics education. *Journal of Home Economics*, 63, 583.
- Covey, S. R. (1990). *Principle-centered leadership*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Meszaros, P., & Braun, B. (1980, Fall). And by their practices they shall be known. *Distaff of Kappa Omicron Phi*, 47(1), 7-8.
- Newkirk, G. (1982, Spring). The home economics professional and professionalism. *Distaff of Kappa Omicron Phi*, 48(2), 1, 4, 8.

Reflection and Action Planning Worksheet

What have I learned that I can put to immediate use?

Observed Actions (Mine and Others)	Evaluation How does it reflect the characteristics of professional style?

What do I want to do in the future to improve my professional style?—Ethical, Altruistic, Responsible, Theoretical, Committed, Intellectual

Goal:

Action Steps (What, How)	Who	When

How will achievement of the plan be evaluated?