

# The Unwritten Rules of the Workplace

Sometimes the ways that culture influences how we do things isn't immediately obvious (culture being the ways in which we've learned to interpret and interact with the world). However, these unwritten rules can have a profound impact on how well someone adjusts to a new work environment and perform their job. This document is intended to spark discussion in your meetings with your mentee or mentor around what some of these unwritten rules might be.

## ▶▶▶ Suggested Instructions:

With your mentor or mentee, read over some of the questions below and discuss some the unwritten rules or assumptions for places you've each worked in the past. Are there similarities? Are there any differences you didn't expect?

Keep in mind that cultural differences go beyond those that one might encounter when working in various parts of the world; it also refers to how different organizations may do things as well as differences between sectors and professions

## ▶▶▶ Boardroom

When in a team meeting, how should people show respect and interest?

In a team meeting, should people openly disagree with one another?

Is it okay to admit when you don't know something?

When meeting with colleagues or clients, to what degree is it okay to show how you feel (angry, annoyed, happy, or excited)?

Are some emotions more acceptable to show than others?

## ▶▶▶ Kitchen and Break Room

When making small talk, what kinds of topics are okay to discuss?

How much personal information is acceptable to share at work?

Is socializing during break times important for working with others?

Do you socialize with people from across the organization?

How important is joining social committees or attending social events at work?



## Offices (Managers)

How involved should a manager be in directing their staff's work every day?

What does it mean for a manager to collaborate with another manager? To what extent should resources be shared?

How much should a manager know about the lives of their staff outside of work? How much should staff know about their manager's personal life?



## Cubicles (Reporting Staff)

Within an office space, what things or spaces are shared and what belongs to a specific person?

What does being a supportive colleague look like?

What do you need to know about your colleagues to work well with them?

When collaborating with a colleague, how often should you consult with them?

From your point of view, how rigid are the boundaries between your role and those of your team members?



## Reception

When greeting someone for the first time, what should you do to make a positive impression?

When establishing a relationship with a new client, how important is it to connect with that client outside of a formal context?

When waiting for a meeting, how should one interact with the receptionist? What should one do while waiting?

These questions were taken from the Culture and Workplace Interactions eLearning module on the TRIEC Campus. To find out more about this topic, you can check out this module at

<http://trieccampus.ca/elm/One.aspx?objectId=1997916&contextId=1277124&catalogId=2905069&categoryId=2905124>

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