

Types of Professionalism

Professionalism As Ideology

Executing legal documents definitely calls for professionalism. Professionalism and ethics are needed in all lines of work – it is not occupation specific. Still, professionalism is particularly important and discussed frequently in relation to education, law and medicine because, as Mark Frankel explains, a tension exists between the professions' pursuit of autonomy and the public's demand for accountability. Author Michael Eraut tells us that "like all effective ideologies, the ideology of professionalism embodies appealing values, in this case those of service, trustworthiness, integrity, autonomy and high standards." This means that your ideology and work habits will reflect your professionalism. For example, if you work in a law office, you will protect the privacy of your clients by not discussing their confidential information outside the office. Or, if you work in a doctor's office, your professional ideology means that you put your patients first by being attentive, helpful and timely.

Professionalism As Knowledge

Learning about medical diagnosis is different from actually diagnosing a medical condition. When you meet someone that you view as a consummate professional, you are confident that the individual is extremely skilled and accomplished and has exhibited a supreme mastery of a subject or field. This is professionalism as it relates to knowledge beyond that obtained from academic studies at an institution of higher learning. Author Eraut reminds us that "learning takes place during use, and the transformation of knowledge into a situationally appropriate form means that it is no longer the same knowledge as it was prior to it first being used." Professionalism in this context refers not just to education, but also to experience and the knowledge acquired from working. The phrase "professional development" refers to educational events engaged in after obtaining a degree and career, allowing professionals to increase their knowledge, improve their skills and stay current in their fields.

Professionalism As Behavior

A professional has the ability to get along with many different people. Professionalism revealed through behavior translates into having basic good manners. This means that you possess good communication skills (speaking politely, writing accurately), are considerate of others and show attentiveness when working with workers or clients. Someone with professionalism will have good problem-solving skills, get along with everyone and put forth his best effort to produce quality work. When you act professionally, you use behaviors that encourage human response, says author M. Kay DuPont. You are more likely to get positive results, earn cooperation and support, get commitments, gain clients and keep peace. You are more likely to succeed when you put that something extra into your way of doing business.