

FGSR Professional Development Professional Practice Module



Integration

As a graduate student, integrating other resources and perspectives into your research has probably become a familiar process. This skill will prove useful in developing your knowledge in professional practice.

A crucial part of integration is the ability to view others, and their ideas-no matter how different- as normal.

Tips for Interpersonal Integration

1. Integrate differences

In your daily practice, you will encounter persons with different physical appearances ranging from manner of dressing to physical disability. Your response to perceived differences should be appreciation and respect. In other words, because dissimilarities among persons are a certain part of life, a professional learns to see difference, no matter how unusual, as normal.

2. Be aware of what works

Take note of other's reactions to your comments, sense of humour and regular habits. Where reactions are regularly indifferent or negative, be sure to make the changes necessary to make you and those around you comfortable. But also, be sure to identify those attitudes that regularly produce more positive results and replicate them in your practice. For more on what works when addressing others, see the communications module.

3. Build a rapport with others.

Ensure that your encounter with others is aimed at building trust. You do not have to build friendships with everyone. In fact this will be impossible. Attributes that can build a rapport with others can also be achieved by improving your communicative and behavioural skills.

4. Be Patient

For example, If English is not your first language, communicating what you feel may be difficult. With time, your English language skills and vocabulary are likely to improve.

5. Have a sense of humor

Humour has a healing effect especially in situations that could be awkward. Laugh at yourself and the situation, but avoid laughing at others.

Tips for Knowledge Integration

1. Incorporate other perspectives into your repertoire of knowledge.

The art of professionalism involves the ability to integrate other perspectives into your practice, including those in direct opposition to what you believe. Learning other perspectives is useful to better inform and improve your practice. This is especially true in positions that involve contact with the public.

For example: A salesman, taking note of her competitor's cheaper product and services, instead of feeling threatened, could take advantage of the situation. She could inform her customers of the competitor's prices while explaining why her products and services remain superior.

2. Regularly update your knowledge and skills

Due to renewed findings in research, knowledge and skill are constantly subject to change. Thus it is necessary to make a conscious effort to update your knowledge or expertise in the field. In some careers, this is an integral part of the job and the employer would often arrange for regular upgrading. Where employers do not provide the opportunity for training and upgrading, self-guided research and training on a regular basis is necessary for sustaining professionalism.

3. Seek out people who are experts

Ask them questions: what is new in the field? What are the current challenges etc? Answers to such questions could enrich and update your knowledge. Experts can also provide feedback on your knowledge in ways that may help you objectively re-assess your position.

Activities to Do On Your Own

Knowledge Integration

- Join a professional association in your field.
- Attend conferences in your field.
- Build a network of persons in your field or area of interest.
- Visit our networking section for more information.

Interpersonal Integration

- Attend intercultural events.
- Visit www.stirfryseminars.com and learn from critically acclaimed, Lee Mun Wah, an expert trainer on anti-racism, anti-sexism and inter-cultural practices at the workplace.
- Travel whenever you can to interact with people from different cultures.
- In your community, ask people from other cultures to share their observations about how our culture is different. See if there are any ways you can make the other person feel more at ease. (The University of Alberta is an excellent opportunity to meet people from other cultures and to observe how they communicate).
- See section on Disability for tips and activity in this area.

Other Resources

- Business Town.com LLC. Presentations. Retrieved on November, 12, 2006 from the Business Town website: <http://www.businesstown.com/presentations/present-tone.asp>
- Morem, S., Getting along at work. Retrieved November 15, 2006 from the business know-how website: http://www.careerknowhow.com/ask_sue/getalong.htm
- Soanes, C., Hawker, S., and Elliot, J. (Eds.). (2006). Oxford Dictionary of Current English. (4th Ed). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Definition of Integration. Retrieved November 12, 2006 from the Wikipedia website: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integration>.