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## *a MESSAGE from SYLVIA*

### **Professionalism: What It Really Means**

People who hold an undergraduate and/or a graduate degree from an accredited college/university or some kind of certification typically regard themselves as professionals. If you look up the word *professional* in Webster's dictionary and online, you find these definitions: Someone engaged in an activity requiring specialized knowledge; a person formally certified by a professional body after completing a prescribed course of study; someone who follows an occupation as a means of livelihood. Interesting, isn't it? In my opinion, the meanings offered by so called experts only scratch the surface.

After decades in the work force I have concluded that most of us *professionals* think and act like professionals only part of the time. For some folks this is true because they don't really



understand all of the layers associated with the word. For others it is the result of

a conscious or unconscious choice. I am going to give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that YOU may be in the dark to some extent about all that professionalism encompasses. Be sure to read my feature article below to dig deeper into this commonly used word that has almost become trite.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### 10 Ingredients of True Professionalism

True professionals express certain qualities, practice appropriate conduct, and live by agreed upon standards in the workplace. While all of these may vary a bit among companies, the following list provides you with a template that can serve you well just about anywhere:

**Integrity:** This functions as the foundation for professionalism regardless of industry or job title. It refers to adhering to a code of internal values that direct and guide everything you say and do.

**Respect:** People with integrity naturally demonstrate reasonable or high regard for those around them. They operate from the assumption that each individual is worthy of fair and humane treatment.

**Knowledge:** True professionals possess the basic knowledge platform they need to approach their work responsibilities. Typically this information is gained through a structured course of study.

**Competence:** This refers to a range of skills, acquired ability, and plenty of experience that allows you to do your job well. It also includes oral and written communication proficiency.

**Organization:** From establishing priorities to managing time real professionals systematically plan their days and activities. They arrange files, avoid clutter, and set up their work space to facilitate efficiency.

**Performance standards:** The organization's metrics for measuring job success are never far from a true professional's mind. Professionals care about meeting necessary established standards, fully understanding that what they do and how they do it will be evaluated against them.

**Responsiveness:** This relates to taking appropriate action on a timely basis. Real professionals don't procrastinate or pretend that

something important doesn't need to get done.

**Big picture awareness and focus:** While many folks must immerse themselves in day to day details, they make sure that all tasks and projects support the company's mission. In addition, they take steps to grow to stay relevant heading into the future.

**Reliability:** No matter how impressive your natural gifts, credentials, and skills, if people can't depend on you, you don't deserve to consider yourself a true professional. Trustworthy trumps talent, creativity, and longevity every time.

**Ownership:** This is the one that may pinch. Genuine professionals hold themselves accountable for their beliefs, attitudes, decisions, behaviors, and actions 24/7. They don't take vacations from accepting responsibility for the quality of their relationships and job performance.

Still not quite sure if you're a true professional? Using a scale of one to five (with five representing the highest score and three being average), rate yourself on each of the above ingredients. Okay. How did things turn out?

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## What Clients Say

*My work life was a mess by the time I first talked with Sylvia. Disorganized doesn't even begin to describe it. On most mornings I arrived at the office half an hour late. Then I couldn't find some of the client files I needed for my appointments. When colleagues would ask me for important information they knew I had somewhere on my desk, I went into a frenzy until I could locate it. This happened constantly. The worst was my addiction to checking emails twenty times a day. If I hadn't hired Sylvia to straighten me out, I think I would have gone insane. Three months later I was at a much better place with a lot less stress. The cool thing was that my boss seemed to respect me more. Getting organized helped me to feel like a true professional!*

- Tom W., Wealth Management, Mechanicsburg, PA

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## Offers and Opportunities

## Pointers to Greater Professionalism

Feeling like you need to bump up your level of professionalism but not quite sure how to do it? Has your boss told you it's a must? Have others given you a few hints? No worries. **On Thursday, June 23, 2016 between 12:00 and 1:00 PM Eastern** Sylvia will be sitting by the phone to take your call. First come, first served—and totally FREE. Don't miss out on this opportunity. Just dial 717-761-5457 during that hour to get the pointers you seek.

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## RESOURCES

### Ideal for Young People

In a cut to the chase, no nonsense style Jonathan R. Key's *Journey Towards Professionalism: Straight Talk for Today's Generation* provides simple, basic guidance to Millennials in particular about how to perform as true professionals in today's workplace. Published in 2012, this book is an answer to many people's requests. The paperback edition is available on Amazon.com for \$14.

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## TIP

Did anybody ever tell you—or imply—that you were unprofessional in a certain situation? That happened to me many years ago. When two women in the community wrote notes to my boss and told her they found my bright lipstick in public to be offensive and inappropriate for someone in a highly visible community position, I was floored. The word *embarrassed* doesn't begin to cover what I felt.

If this has happened to YOU in the past (or is happening right now), what do you think the person means? With which of the ingredients named in my feature article above are you coming up short? Before you can do anything about it, you must have the courage to identify the problem area. You may also consider showing the list to your boss and asking him/her to pick out the quality, characteristic, or skill he/she thinks is your best indicator of professionalism. Then ask for the one you could work on a little more. Be sure to request examples of why that particular ingredient jumps out.

When even just one person questions your professionalism, your reputation suffers. You've got to take this matter seriously.

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## Where in the World is SYLVIA?

On June 20, 2016 Sylvia travels to Chicago to participate in the Food Management Institute's annual conference for managers and executives in the retail food industry across America. The next day at the McCormick Place she will present a 75 minute breakout session entitled "How to Initiate and Manage Necessary Conversations at Work" to approximately 300-400 attendees. This is Sylvia's first opportunity to speak at a national conference!

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*Join Sylvia on these social networks!*

## About This Ezine

The purpose of this Ezine is to: 1) Provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to personal and professional growth as well as overall career development; and 2) Invite readers to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

Back issues are [available here](#). Send an email by [clicking here](#) to manage your free subscription. Sharing content with attribution is encouraged as is forwarding the Ezine email. Include launchinglives.biz in your list of safe senders or friends, depending upon your email software, to be sure you receive the monthly emailed issues.

Launching Lives Ezine is dedicated to "building people ... building businesses." ©2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014

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## About SYLVIA

**Sylvia Hepler**, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC, specializes in career development for both corporate and nonprofit executives and managers. Based in South Central PA, she specifically supports clients as they upgrade their current job performance, seek a promotion, or plan/navigate a career transition.

What makes her services unique is that Sylvia helps people to cope with change, loss, and grief as they work on developing their careers. Her professional background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, nonprofit community health program start-up, program evaluation, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A certified executive coach through The Rescue Institute in Golden, Colorado and Quantum Endeavors in Chicago, Illinois (plus a participant in extensive continuing education opportunities with several coaches of national notoriety), Sylvia offers individual and group coaching, assessments, teleseminars, workshops, keynote speeches, and retreats. She also has created tangible and downloadable products that augment her coaching and speaking services.

**For more information** and to connect with Sylvia try:

[Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

Reach Sylvia by phone at **717-761-5457**

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## ***Launching Lives SERVICES***

**Launching Lives, LLC** is a full service career development company for managers and executives located in South Central PA. Utilizing a holistic approach to service provision, Launching Lives focuses on supporting clients as they create the platinum level career they desire by upgrading their job performance, seeking a promotion, or planning/navigating a career transition

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I

develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching may be the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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