

Chapter 1: Your Wake-Up Call

Objectives

- Understanding that the workplace is always changing—and that you must adjust to it.
- Dealing with personal needs and barriers.
- Preparing for labeling and complaints.
- Deciding what type of worker you want to be.

Working Vocabulary

- **Effect:** An effect is the result of an action.
- **Barrier:** A barrier is anything that stops you from doing something or going somewhere.
- **Multicultural:** A multicultural setting combines many different ideas, people, backgrounds, behaviors, and customs.

For Discussion

Now more than ever, due to the shrinking job market, it is important that you are able to survive on your job by choice. The words “wake up” immediately alert you to the fact that the workplace contains surprises. Most of these surprises can be eliminated if you recognize the real workplace as it *is*, not as you *want* it to be. You need to wake up.

If you are new to the workplace or have not been in the workplace for long, you are not prepared for the unexpected stuff you have to deal with. You are concerned only about your job duties. You are not prepared for the changing workplace environment, the complaints and labeling by co-workers, and how your different needs affect your ability to keep the job.

Everyone has concerns in the workplace. But not everyone has an added need or barrier to overcome in the workplace. It does not matter where you are coming from. If you are taking a first job, returning to work after a long absence, or having trouble keeping a job, then you have a different job need than the average worker.

People who have not worked for some time or who have different needs do not lose their jobs because they cannot do the job. They lose their jobs because they cannot adjust to the working environment.

Wake up! You are being challenged. You are being challenged to prove you can do the job. Can you accept the challenge? Or do you think you should not have to prove yourself? Remember: You must fit into the workplace. The workplace will not fit around you.

Presentation Suggestions

Use with Pages 2–4

As you begin the course, direct attention to the chapter objectives. Explain that the objectives will be presented prior to each class session. Present the Chapter 1 objectives and then ask students to come up with one word that links all the objectives together. (Answer: change.) Write it on the board or overhead.

Introduce the working vocabulary and discuss the definitions. Present these prior to the beginning of each chapter. Be brief. Although students may be familiar with some of the vocabulary, it is important to review.

Using the list on workbook page 2, have students read around the room. Each student should read one word, describing the effect of the change and the emotions that accompanied the change.

Example: Dress code. **Effect:** People in many companies can dress less formally for work. **Emotion:** People can feel more comfortable at work and are happy about not buying as many dressier clothes.

After completing this exercise, have students complete the Stop and Think exercises on pages 2–4. Then, if there is time, have them complete the “**Ch-Ch-Change**” activity.

Use with Pages 5–12

It is important that your students recognize the changing demographics of the workforce. Consider bringing in current statistics about the cultural makeup of the labor pool and compare it to the national workforce twenty or fifty years ago.

Once your students recognize the need to accept differences in others, encourage them to also accept the differences within themselves. Most importantly, they need to recognize the specific barriers they have to job survival. The activities on pages 7–8 can help them to confront those barriers. Feel free to discuss how some of the more common needs can be addressed (without assigning specific needs to specific students).

This discussion can then segue to the issue of labeling in the workplace. Feel free to use the activity “**Not So Soup-er Labels**” as you work through pages 10–12.

Use with Pages 12–17

Print the words “LISTEN” and “BREATHE” in bold letters on the board. Print the word “COMPLAINT” above it. Invite a student to read aloud the three paragraphs under “You Must Deal with Complaints About You” on pages 13–14. Every time the word “complaint” is read, direct students to pause and repeat the words “listen” and “breathe.” When the reading is complete, ask students, “Why did you repeat those words over and over? Can you think of when those words might help you in a future work situation?” Then have students complete the Stop and Think on page 14.

Invite a student volunteer to read aloud the two paragraphs on pages 14–15 under “Understand Your Feelings About Co-workers.” Then have students complete the Stop and Think on pages 15–16.

Using the list of labels on pages 15–16, ask each student to choose four words that describe someone with whom they work. Explain that these words must also describe the type of worker they would like to be. If you have not yet done so, pass out a yellow folder to each student. Ask students to write the four words they chose neatly on the outside of the folder. Remind the class of the following point: *If you practice the behaviors that you want from co-workers, chances are good that they will also behave that way. Be the model—demonstrate good workplace behavior yourself!*

Ask students to complete the Stop and Think on pages 16–17 in small groups. Explain that they should be able to use some words that they wrote on their folders.

Until Next Time

Have you ever heard the saying, “All my ducks are in a row”? That statement has to do with *priorities*. All people have a set of priorities. Some people’s priorities never change, while others’ priorities change from day to day. There is a happy medium between those two. Before the next class, think about your life. Are all your ducks in a row, or are some of them having trouble staying afloat?