

# ABCs for Success

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“The ABC’s are attitude, behavior and communication skills.”

- Gerald Chertavian

Identifying the foundational elements of success for internal audit professionals was a personal and managerial interest of mine during my career as an audit practitioner and leader. This interest has continued into my current editorial role, which includes all things relevant to healthcare internal auditing.

Much has been written about the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be “highly successful” or “highly effective.” However, the lists always seem to include an excessive variety of soft and technical skills, and they lack logical categorization and prioritization. These lists were not intellectually satisfying to me. Consequently, I was left to consider what small number of categories would appropriately capture and summarize a myriad of attributes and characteristics.

Then the quote noted above surfaced in my research on the topic. The categories immediately resonated with me. My holy grail of attributes arrived as *attitude, behavior and communication skills*.

## Attitude

A positive attitude goes a long way toward facilitating your success in the workplace. Attitude may not be something that an individual is aware of, but co-workers and supervisors feel it. Relationship building, teamwork and collaboration are more effective with a good attitude.

While enthusiasm, commitment and passion are not considered soft or technical skills, they are the catalysts that can drive you to obtain or improve necessary skills. The effect on performance will not go unnoticed.

People with positive thoughts seem to be the ones who always receive promotions, exceptional pay raises and special recognition. Feeling left behind? Start to be more aware of your thoughts, words and actions. Reach out to others to get feedback and coaching.

## Behavior

Behavior involves respect, ethics and civility. Examples include applying customer service practices when providing audit services, meeting commitments, responding quickly to requests, and providing constructive audit recommendations.

Poor personal appearance, sloppiness, vulgar language, sexist behavior and gossiping are major annoyances. Also, taking credit for another’s work and using a phone in meetings for texting or conversing are disrespectful. Even if others do not say anything about bad behavior, they are unlikely to forget.

## Communication skills

Your audit work needs to be based on factual evidence, provide actionable information and effect positive change. However, you cannot work in a vacuum to achieve these objectives.

Each of these objectives requires good communication skills. Requesting relevant information during your audit, developing reasonable recommendations, and convincing your clients of the need for change depend on the effectiveness of your communications.

Master good communication skills. Speak and write with clarity, conciseness and positivity. Since communication is about exchange, be a good listener by focusing and asking questions for clarification. Lastly, be careful with emails by proofreading every message, replying to messages as soon as possible and minimizing the use of “reply all.”

## Summary

While not a foolproof predictor, these three attributes provide a foundation for a successful career. Of course, aptitude and interest in an occupation or profession also count. But rest assured, not only internal auditors but the best in any profession also have the right attitude, behavior and communication skills. 