



# ***INSPECTOR SKILLS***



# INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome

Class Layout

Backgrounds

Codes, Ordinances and Standards



# INTRODUCTIONS

What does the term “inspector skills” mean to you?

Which one is the most important skill?

What do you want to take away from today?



# KEY QUESTIONS

Do employers recognize the importance of soft skills, especially in public interaction and customer service?

Should “soft skills” be listed in a job description?

Can you “transfer” skills to someone else?



# KEY DEFINITIONS

**Hard Skills** – Specific, teachable technical abilities that can be defined, observed, quantified or measured.

**For an inspector –**

These are the technical skills required to perform your job.

**Soft Skills** – Personal qualities, habits, attitudes, and social graces that enhance an individual's interactions and job performance.

**Purpose of Skills -**

To raise awareness of the importance of soft skills

Provide guidance on recognizing and improving soft skills

Reinforce positive behaviors

Identify some pitfalls



# SKILL FOUNDATION

Starts with –

Solid technical knowledge

Construction methods and materials

Code provisions

Acceptable alternatives

***The code must serve as the core for all decisions and your actions.***



# SOFT SKILLS

They are as important as hard skills

Make good inspectors GREAT!

Accomplish municipal goals

Must have buy-in from everyone



# SUPPORT

## Jurisdiction –

- Builds confidence

- Ability to work independent

- Provides inspectors' feedback

- Worth

- Are they beneficial to the team

## Peers

- Are they fitting in

- Pulling their own weight





# SUPPORT

Adequate training

Internal staff interactions/meetings

Mentoring programs

Positive reinforcement/recognition

Incentive programs

Being engaged in the job



# SUPPORT COMES FROM...

Elected officials – Mayor, Supervisors, Commissioners,  
Councils

Municipal manager

Department directors

Front line supervisor

Shift/team leader



# UNDERSTANDING ALTERNATIVES

Code flexibility

Alternative approval – Are we obligated

Understanding new technology

Different way to do something



# INTERPRETATION

What is our responsibility and/or authority

Do we understand the “performance provisions” of the code

Could there be a different or multiple solutions

What happens if we are at an impasse and a conflict arises

Do we know the true meaning and/or intent

May need to use critical thinking

Use your problem-solving skills

***When in doubt, get **HELP!!!*****



# ATTITUDE

Must be positive

Respect, courtesy and/or diplomacy

Keep your personal feelings to yourself

Always be professional – Keep the bar high

Know who you are talking to

Know who they know

Keep your image high and the image of your municipality

Make everyone's life easier

***“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference! – Winston Churchill***



# ATTITUDES

They govern our thoughts

Controls our actions

Becomes our habits

Shapes our character

Determines our DESTINY!!



# WHAT'S YOUR APPROACH

Attitude

Behaviors

Methods

Actions

Body language

Facial expressions



# WHAT ROLE DO WE PLAY

Teacher

Municipal ambassador

Educator

Facilitator

Mediator

***What's your strongest? How can you get better at the others?***





# A FACILITATOR....

Tries to change the public's perception

Does not regulate

Shows they are a resource and not an adversary

Always working to find the solution

Is more than a code enforcer/regulator



# AN EDUCATOR.....

Is committed to everyone's education

Always looking to do outreach

Provide positive information – handouts, guides

Provides input in the office and the jobsite

Always looking to make someone better



# AN AMBASSADOR.....

Is the first point of contact

Gains trust and support from the public

Code compliance is a top priority

Can make or break the deal

The first impression is the most important impression



# A TEACHER.....

Provides positive instruction

Always facilitating

Provide positive assessments

Is a support and mentor



# A MEDIATOR.....

Tries to remain neutral

Facilitates discussions and guidance

Keeps things clear and everyone on track

Guides everyone to solve the problem



# REMEMBER OUR PERSPECTIVE

## Flexibility

Know there may be alternatives

What is the true intent of the code

Do they meet the minimum standards – code or ordinance

Do not have a narrow viewpoint



# REMEMBER OUR PERSPECTIVE

What are our boundaries

Understand what is required

Where does the code end and our personal opinion take over

Are we asking for too much – more than what is required



# REMEMBER OUR PERSPECTIVE

How much precision will we accept

What level is acceptable or allowable

May not be an exact science

Should use everyday language

Workmanship V craftsmanship

How much variation will you allow





# REMEMBER OUR PERSPECTIVE

Consistency is everything

- Be fair and consistent

- Understand someone's behavior or habits

- Must use logic

- Be free from contradictions

- Maintain credibility



# ARE WE GOOD DECISION MAKERS

Good decisions are made using.....

Clear thinking

Gather information beforehand

Critical analysis – pro V cons

Does not get emotional

Maintains ethics

Timely decisions

Is adaptable



# ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL....

Professionalism –

- Not easy to define

- Outside appearance is only a small part

- Should not be offensive or standoffish

- Know your role, duties, responsibilities

- May be different depending on your location

- Remember the first impression



# MANAGING TIME

How do you manage your time.....

Turnoff notifications – computer and phone

Take care of daily tasks

What roadblocks do you encounter.....

Procrastination

Indecision

Processes



# CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG.....

Generally, we get it correct

Unintentionally and unknowingly, we tend to create barriers

- Our actions

- What we say

- How we say it

- Talk V text – Texting your spouse



# GETTING ALONG.....

Must be respectful

Try to be helpful

Go into with an open mind

Always be fair

Try some empathy

Empathy – Ability to understand and be sensitive to someone's feelings

Sympathy – Understand someone's perspective



# STAY AWAY FROM

Negative remarks – “you can try that, but I want it done my way”

Discouraging messages – “you don’t have the skill set needed to...”

Correct actions – give positive instructions and be helpful – remain objective

Stick to the facts – recite the code

“That’s the way we want it done”

Keep your personal preferences to yourself

Require only what the code requires



## MORE TO AVOID.....

We don't do it that way in my area

Let's not play games

Mess around and find out what I can do

Try to avoid using, I, me, my or anything singular – We or us or the Township/city/borough

Stay away from – “I don't write the code; I just enforce them”

Be respectful and try to encourage a positive working relationship





# COMMUNICATIONS

## Written

Emails, text, letters, notes, memo

## Verbal

In person, over the phone, Zoom

## Non-verbal – 55% of the message

Body language

Facial expressions



# COMMUNICATIONS

Understand your objectives

Know and understand your audience

Plan what you are going to communicate

- Write out your thoughts

- Have someone else read over them

- Make sure you're talking their language

- 3 Sides to every conversation – Sender – receiver – message

- Be open to feedback



# CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS

What are you saying and why

How is the other party going to react

Are you talking their language

Be sensitive – control your emotions

Stick to the details

How do they like to receive information

Answer and ask questions

Be honest



# TELEPHONE TIPS - SENDER

You're making the call

Be prepared

Have everything at your fingertips – files, plans, code/ordinance book

Always introduce yourself first

Give them the reason you called

Focus – Stay on point – be brief



# TELEPHONE TIPS - RECEIVER

Answer the phone – if able

Friendly and professional

Stay focus on the call

Be helpful and patient

Stay on track – clear message

Verify the caller understands the message

Keep voicemail message up to date

**RETURN PHONE MESSAGES REGULARLY!!**



## **LEAVE A MESSAGE AFTER THE BEEP...**

### Leaving a voicemail message

Stay on point

Don't ramble

Slow and clear voice

Make sure you leave your contact information

Leave a short description of why you're calling

Leave your name and phone number again at the end of the message



# WRITTEN REPORTS

## Preparation

- Think about what you want to say

- Write everything down

- Look at your notes

## Draft

- Write everything out

- Take your time

## Revisions

- Have someone look it

- Use your resources – Chat, AI



# WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

Keep a respectful tone

Be helpful

Keep the message clear and concise

Know your audience

Correspondence will be different to different audiences

Part of the public record

Proper word choice – Grammarly, Chat, AI





# POINTS TO REMEMBER

Use proper names – pronunciation and spelling

Be efficient

Keep it focused on the topic – leave out anything that can be challenged

Be complete and concise

Do not generalize

Stay away from slang, acronyms, code terms

Be professional



# NOTICE OF VIOLATION

Stick to the code requirements

Provide clear instructions for required actions and follow-up

Try not to be critical

Provide all necessary forms, contact names, contact information

Outline all deficiencies and how they are to be corrected.

Be fair with your “time limit for compliance”

Form letter – have legal review and approve – district justice approval



# EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Able to provide the same message to a large group of people

Reduce USPS fees

People receiving the message can respond with convenient

May reinforce instructions given in the field or meeting

Able to distribute multiple documents to a group

May provide more detailed instruction

Wait to fill in the “TO” box until the end

May need to follow-up with face to face or phone call



# STAY AWAY FROM.....

All capital letters

All small case letters

Emoji's 🙄 🚒

Strange color text

Distracting fonts

Distracting backgrounds



# BODY LANGUAGE

## Informal Feedback

Defensiveness

Agreement

Lack of understanding

No interest

Lack of engagement

Being truthful – “to be honest” – “to be 100% truthful with you”.....



## MESSAGE RECEIVING – IN PERSON

Look at the message sender

Pay attention to their body language

Acknowledgement when they make a point – nod and/or smile

Let them speak and pay attention – even if you don't agree with them

Do not interrupt or tune them out – stay engaged – don't lose interest

Do not get angry, upset, jump to conclusions, narrow minded

***STAY FOCUSED ON THE CONVERSATION!***



# IN PERSON – NON-VERBAL CUES

## Negative –

Rubbing with eyes closed

Hands on hips → shows aggression, looking for a confrontation

Touching and rubbing nose and/or face → shows doubt, lying, rejection

Head resting on hand → shows you are bored, lack of interest

Biting nails/fingers → shows you are nervous, unsure

Hands clasp behind head → show you are frustrated, angry, not interested

Arms crossed on chest → show you are on the defensive or not interested



# HAVING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Be prepared –

- Know what you're going to say

- Script out your thoughts – may want to write it out before

Stay focused – provide clear instructions

Seek comments – provide answers – don't lie

Listen to the senders' messages – listen to your message

Thank the other party for listening

Start and finish on a positive tone





# CONVERSATIONS WITH DIFFICULT PERSONS

Defuse and don't escalate

Stay clam – no arguing – no blame games

Listen and hear what is being said – try not to interrupt

Let them vent

Speak in a soft tone and try to be calming

Be objective

Remain positive – don't take thing personally



# COMMON COMMENTS

“I’ve been doing it this way for ever!”

“Why doesn’t my neighbor have to the same thing you’re asking me to do?”

“Do not come on my land! You’re not welcome”

“You just want me to spend more money.”

“I move from a municipality that had too many rules! I thought this place was different!”



# REMEMBER WHO ARE CUSTOMERS ARE

3<sup>rd</sup> Party agencies

Technicians, designers

Property owners – Taxpayers - tenants

Contractors, installers, homebuilders, tradesman

Coworkers – in and out of your department

Municipal leaders – other department heads



# PROVIDE GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

Remember first impressions

What are their expectations

Are you listening to them

Be careful of what you say - who you say it to - where you say it

Handle and address ALL complaints

Honesty is the best policy



# WHO'S COMPLAINING

Be an active listener

Listener is listening 25% of the time – Thinking 75% of the time

Keep a positive attitude

Be open and understanding to suggestions

Put yourself in their shoes

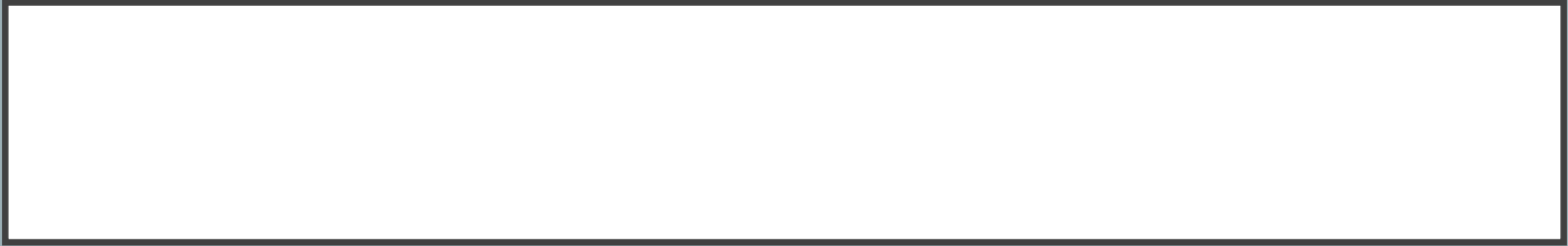
Repeat what the complaint was – clarity

Don't argue

Find a resolution

Stop the conversation when it's done being productive

Document – document – document – If it's not documented, it didn't happen!





# DO IT RIGHT!

Our jobs are scrutinized by the public everyday

We should welcome scrutiny – to what point

Keep your actions ethical, honest and lawful

We are here for the great good

Apply rules fairly, honestly, objectively

Keep your personal interest out of it



# FINAL THOUGHTS.....

Always keep the public in mind – trust and acceptance

We always promote the code and ordinances of our municipality

We want the public to be safe and secure

Always be professional