

# Role Awareness

*A session from  
the Rx CD System*

# Rx

# Role Awareness:

Your ability to see your role in the world, or within a given environment; your ability to understand the expectations placed on a position and to see clearly how those expectations are to be met.

## Why is this skill important?

People with good Role Awareness will understand what it is that they are doing, what is expected of them, and how they are supposed to be doing it. Having this understanding allows them to utilize their other personal strengths and abilities to fulfill the role they are in.

People with poor Role Awareness, on the other hand, lack understanding of the role they occupy. They are either unclear as to what they feel they should be doing, or they have not been informed adequately as to what the expectations for their role or duties are.

Think about it. Imagine you have just started a new job, and you've been given a desk, a computer, a phone, and all the other office accessories that you need. But no one has given you a job description or met with you to talk about what is expected of you. All you have been told is, "You're hired as a marketing representative (or a sales person, or a medical consultant, or an engineer). I hope you can start Monday."

What would you do? How would you spend your first day? I'm willing to bet that a big part of your day would be spent asking a lot of people, "What should I be working on?" or "How can I help you? I don't know what my assignments are yet." Or worse, if you are a shy or insecure person, you might just sit at your desk looking through materials hoping someone will notice you need something to do!

Odds are, very few people actually start jobs with that little initiation. But the truth is, many people make it through their company's introduction, their boss's welcome and description of the job, and pages and pages of policy and procedure manuals... and they still don't know what they should be doing or how they should be doing it.

If you are in a position like this—one where you know there ARE expectations of you, and there ARE ways things should be done—but don't know how to get to the point of being productive, you've got to get **YOURSELF** the information you need. This requires you to be assertive about what you want, open to new or changing requirements, and perceptive about unspoken requirements or demands on you.

It sounds like a lot to ask of one person. And again, **IDEALLY** your company will have set up clear expectations of you and your position, and involve you in making

those decisions. But since they haven't, you'll have to learn how to take charge of your own destiny!

## What are skills associated with Role Awareness?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Role Awareness:

- Is knowledgeable about and comfortable with duties that are part of his or her job description.
- Is confident enough in his or her role to take decisive action in uncertain situations.
- Is secure enough to ask for clarification of roles and responsibilities if they are unclear.
- Is attentive to both stated and unstated demands and expectations placed upon him or her.
- Is confident that he or she can meet expectations with a clearly defined path toward success.

## How do you develop your own skills in Role Awareness?

- Get familiar with the job description that was effective when you started working at your company.
- Get familiar with your company's mission statement and stated corporate goals.
- Ask your manager to spend some time with you helping you define your role. If he or she doesn't have a clear list of goals for you, work with him or her to define them.
- Talk to your manager about what your department's goals are, and how they relate to corporate missions or strategies.
- Talk to your peers. Learn from them what is expected of you and what the successful model is at your company.
- Be clear about your own personal goals. Make sure you incorporate what YOU need into what your company needs from you.
- Take charge. If no one will tell you what you are supposed to be doing, take your best guess at what will be productive, and do it!
- Define tasks that you think need to be done as you see them—ask others for confirmation that you understand the relevant issues.
- Use your department's and your company's strategies to define your own. Make sure your duties are in alignment with higher-level directives.
- Make sure you establish a timeline for accomplishing any task you take on, and make clear task assignments for yourself and others.
- Define clear expectations and deadlines for any project you take charge of.
- Keep key managers and team members posted on progress you are making on projects you take the lead on.

- Be observant—both about what is being said and what is not being said. There may be expectations you are expected to meet that aren't verbalized.
- Define your expectations of yourself. Sometimes you are your most demanding critic. What is it that you want to accomplish? What do you think you should have been hired to do?
- Help others verbalize their expectations of you. Ask good questions, and be patient when waiting for answers.
- When you think you understand what is expected of you, establish a clear set of guidelines that will help you meet or exceed each expectation.

## Role Awareness Activities

### Activity 1: Combining Collateral

Gather the following materials:

1. Your job description.
2. Company collateral—brochures, annual reports, etc.
3. Any recent department collateral—monthly reports, e-mails from the director, etc.

Based on the job description, what are your four key missions or responsibilities?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Based on the company collateral, what are the company's four key missions or goals?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Based on your department's collateral, what are your department's four key missions or goals?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

- How do the three sets of missions relate to one another? Do they? Should they?
- Are there things you think your department should be doing that it's not?  
What are they?
- Are there things you think you should be doing but you're not? What are they?
- What do you think you should do about revising your goals? Who needs to approve them? With whom do you need to discuss them?

## Activity 2: Charge!

Think carefully about the following questions:

1. Have you ever been in a job or situation where you weren't clear on what your role was supposed to be?
2. How did being unsure of your role make you feel?
3. How did you handle the situation? What action did you take, if any?
4. What did you learn from the situation?
5. How could you have handled the situation more effectively?

## Activity 3: Expectations

Think carefully about both stated and UNSTATED expectations as you answer the following questions:

1. What are five things your manager or supervisor has said he or she expects you to do or accomplish?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are five things your manager or supervisor SEEMS to want you to do or accomplish?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are five things that YOU think you should do or accomplish?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_