

Worth The Stretch

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More and more in tax administration, accounting, and management we hear the word "professionalism." And, more and more we all need to think about the "stretch" for and meaning of professionalism.

Qualifications, conduct, aims, characteristics, qualities, and avowed purposes are the ingredients of professionalism. These distinguish it from mediocrity, amateurism, and apathy. These ingredients are rather significant and far-reaching in their nature. Naturally standards therein need first be established and communicated. Then, individual performance needs to be diligently directed toward these standards. But standards of professionalism are not easy to establish—and they're much more difficult to reach. They take more than a mere utterance, a hope or wish, an occasional act, or just time, to come by.

As each of us examines in our conscience our achievements toward increasing professionalism, regardless of our activity or educational discipline, we might well question ourselves on a few bench marks of a professional. For instance: Are we proud of our affiliation and our cooperation with our organizational colleagues, regardless of their activity? Do we have a clear avowal of purpose to which we are dedicated? Do we maintain high standards of personal performance coupled with a willingness to meet expectations? Are we helping our profession to grow and to better contribute its part for society's benefit? Are

we continuously seeking to become better informed?

And then, too: Are we striving to select and helping to develop better newcomers for the continuity and advancement of our calling? Are we eager to share our know-how with others? Do we generate and accept constructive innovation, change, and challenge? Are we aware of our personal deficiencies and the abilities that lie within others? Are we purposefully dedicated to our commitments and responsive to the obligations and requests made upon us? Are we ethical in and conscious of both our employment and public trust? Are we considerate of and cooperative in the many problems that our leadership must bear? If the answer to most of these bench marks is a conscientious "Yes!", we should feel rather proud. For then we are approaching professionalism.

But, aren't approaching and achieving professionalism entirely different? True professionalism, as mature individuals are aware, is something that even a lifetime of individual effort will not quite fully achieve. True professionalism, indeed, has something of an endless quest, a never-ending elusiveness about it, that remains a continuing lifetime challenge for many. More than often this challenge remains without final conquest. But, among those who are responding to the challenge of professionalism, regardless of their individual calling, most will quickly agree—it is fully "worth the stretch!"