

Professionalism
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In our industry and many others, the word profession and professional are used to describe a variable host of things. Both words have legal and non-legal definitions

What is a profession? It is simply an occupation, practice or vocation requiring mastery of a complex set of knowledge and skills through formal education and/or practical experience. Farriery is a profession by general definition.

Legally, what is a profession? It is a state licensed occupation authorizing you to practice that occupation in that state. Farriery is not a legally licensed occupation.

What is a professional? It is a person engaged in a profession and conforming to the standards of a profession (professional behavior) who is formally certified by a professional body of belonging to that profession by virtue of having completed a required course of studies, certification, license and/or practice. It has nothing to do with how hard one works, whether you act and dress professionally, or where you work. Some farriers are professional; some are not.

Legally, what is a licensed professional? It is a person who is in a licensed occupation who conforms to the rules and regulations of state board of regents. Licensing is a non-voluntary process by which an agency of government regulates a profession. It grants permission to an individual to engage in an occupation if it finds that the applicant has attained the degree of competency required to ensure the public health, safety, and welfare will be reasonably protected. Licensing is always based on the action of a legislative body. Once a licensing law has been passed it becomes illegal for anyone to engage in that occupation unless a person has a license. **The original professions were the law, the ministry, and medicine.** Farriers are not licensed professionals.

Legally, what is a non-licensed professional (not someone performing a licensed profession illegally rather a person in a non-licensed occupation)? There really isn't any specific definition and is determined case-by-case and court-by-court. Characteristics or elements generally looked at to help determine if a person is a professional are as follows: is the person competent; does the person know their limitations; is the person discreet and respect confidentiality; does the person stick to promises and agreements; is the person loyal and honest towards colleagues; is the person strongly motivated by ethical values; is the person willing to be held accountable and to explain their actions; is the person willing to share knowledge and skills; and does the person foster professionalism in others, wherever they find it.

The term *professional* is thrown around quite a bit these days, perhaps too much. What exactly does it mean to be a professional? There is roughly ten universal tenants that are used to describe a professional.

1. Put customer satisfaction first by understanding and satisfying your customer's needs which are the cornerstones of a successful business.
2. Make expertise your specialty. The very word *professional* implies that you are an expert. Technical competence is essential in IT.

3. Do more than expected. Professionals are expected to produce results and meet or exceed expectations whenever possible.
4. Do what you say and say what you can do. Professionals deliver on promises made.
5. Communicate effectively. Effective communication is ultimately your responsibility — not your customer's. Whether verbal or written, professionals communicate clearly, concisely, thoroughly, and accurately.
6. Follow exceptional guiding principles. Appreciate and support those you work with. Practice good manners and proper etiquette. Have high ethical and moral standards. Be honest and fair in all of your dealings with others. Obey the law.
7. Praise your peers not yourself. Respect and acknowledge the talents of your peers. There is nothing more unprofessional and self-serving than telling others how wonderful you are. Professionals are humble and generous in their praise of others.
8. Share your knowledge. Professionals help their peers and are respected for doing so.
9. Say thank you. Professionals thank others in a meaningful way that most benefits the recipient.
10. Keep a smile on your face and the right attitude in your heart. It's not dishonest to be pleasant when you are having a lousy day. It is in fact thoughtful to care about how your attitude affects those you interact with. "Share the misery" is not the mark of a professional. Professionals are pleasant even during trying times.

Working with professionals is a pleasure, and I have been fortunate to work with some truly exemplary ones both in and out of the farrier profession. There *have* been a few who liked to be treated as professionals without having to work and act like one.