

Ten Tips for Your First Year on the Job

1. Learn everything you can about the company.

Although you may have to do it while off the clock, take the time to read the organization's annual reports and company magazines. Also study the organizational chart. The more you know about the organization – what they do and how they do it – the better equipped you will be to fulfill the duties of your role.

2. Ask questions; be an active listener

Do not be afraid to ask questions. Your fellow colleagues and bosses alike understand that you are transitioning from student to professional and will be willing to help you when needed. Asking questions serves a dual purpose: 1) it continues your learning process; and 2) it helps you to create a positive image of a hard-working and motivated employee. When asking questions, always be certain to listen attentively. Although questions are great, asking the same question twice is not.

3. Develop time management skills

Although you may have been able to pull an all-nighter to finish a paper and still get an A in college, you will not be able to continue these habits in the workplace and achieve the same results. Make sure to set deadlines, giving yourself sufficient time to not only complete the task, but complete it well.

4. Seek opportunities for professional and personal development

Many employers offer in-house trainings as well as access to professional development events to further educate their employees. Participating in such activities will show your commitment while also giving you the skills, resources, and competencies to excel and advance in the organization. Professional development events offer the added bonus of allowing you to network with others in your field. It is important to continue developing networking contacts even after you are employed. Professional networking sites like LinkedIn.com are a great way to manage your contacts and grow your network. If you use other social networking resources be sure that they present a consistent, appropriate image of you. Make access to sites like My Space and Facebook private and Google yourself to see what comes up. Keep in mind that current and future employers have access to all of this information.

5. Accept responsibility when appropriate

It is expected that in your first year you will make several mistakes – after all, nobody is perfect. Therefore, it is important that you accept responsibility for your own blunders. This will keep your conscience clear, while also strengthening your reputation for being honest and forthright.

6. Be ready to work extra hours

You will not learn the most efficient ways to complete your tasks and projects overnight. During your first year, you will learn what works, and what doesn't. Unfortunately, you will do this at the expense of working extra hours. Although not ideal, your hard work will be noticed and appreciated by your bosses and colleagues.

7. **Be prepared for meetings**

Meetings are often a forum for your colleagues to get to know you and assess your capabilities. To showcase your talents, rather than highlight any weaknesses, make sure to be well versed in the topic you are discussing, have something to contribute, address your comments to the entire group, and listen to others' questions, comments, and concerns.

8. **Find a mentor**

Seeking out a mentor in an organization is a great way to receive meaningful encouragement, constructive criticism, and feedback. Mentors help you understand the ins and outs of an organization, while simultaneously helping you identify problems and create comprehensive action plans. Mentors also serve as a great resource for networking both inside and outside of the organization.

9. **Be nice and get to know your colleagues**

Avoid office politics and be nice to all staff, ranging from the custodians to the CEO. Getting to know individuals who come from diverse backgrounds will help you form more alliances and have access to more resources and knowledge within the organization. Participating in office social activities also allows you to create relationships. However, always remember that your behavior at social events will reflect the type of employee you are!

10. **Be careful of email communication**

Be aware of the image you present through what you write. Emails should always be written in a professional style with correct grammar and spelling. Avoid using cute abbreviations or symbols and always include a meaningful subject line (not "FYI"). Before you put anything in writing ask yourself whether it would cause a problem if it was posted on the company bulletin board. Be selective about what you forward to others. Off-color jokes and chain emails should never be sent or received at work. Check your company's policy on instant messaging; if there is none, limit IMing to colleagues and work-related matters. Be aware that employers can monitor employee computer usage so keep personal communications to a minimum.

Sources:

Available in the Career Services Library:

[Backpack to Briefcase: Steps to a Successful Career](#), A Life After Graduation Publication

[Work 101: Learning the Ropes of the Workplace without Hanging Yourself](#), Elizabeth Freedman

Also recommended:

<http://www.careerramblings.com/2007/05/10/tips-for-a-successful-first-year-on-the-job>

<http://www.jobweb.com/studentarticles.aspx?id=196>