

Working a New Job? 10 Essentials That Can Help You Succeed

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My first job after college required few professional skills. It was during the recession; I worked at a greasy dive of a pizza place that catered to intoxicated college students. My main duties were making sure there was always hot pizza and the line didn't get too rowdy. Being the neurotic person I am, always asked myself questions like, "Am I being an asset to the company?" or "Am I being efficient?" I guess this prepared me for when I finally found a job in my chosen field, but it was excessive. What is not excessive is thinking over these questions when you land your first career-track job, whether it be your ideal position or just a great stepping stone.

College educations are notoriously lacking in imparting real-life wisdom. [A 2013](#) study conducted by Chegg's The Student Hub found a huge skill gap in the job market and a "significant disconnect between what hiring managers value and what students believe to be important to land a job in a chosen field," according to the press release. On paper you may be ready to become an essential part of your new company or firm, but there still could be a learning curve.

"Today's student is plugged in and ready to learn, yet they are graduating into an economy that requires more than a traditional degree," Dan Rosensweig, president and CEO of Chegg, noted in the press release. "This is an opportunity – not to mention a responsibility – for educational institutions to add to what they are teaching, to focus more on outcomes, and for businesses to take the lead by investing in training and mentoring programs for young employees and working with our local universities and colleges to develop the entry-level skills so critical to workplace success."

Earlier this year, [the Washington Post reported](#) that many employers are discovering recent college graduates lack key skills like problem solving, decision making, and the ability to prioritize tasks. Based on a 2013-2014 test administered to 32,000 students at 169 colleges and universities, the Council for Aid to Education determined that [40% of college seniors](#) fail to graduate with necessary complex reasoning skills.

Career coach, business consultant, and author of "Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want. Every Time," Lisa Quast has some advice to handle the transition from college to a full-fledged career, which she detailed in a [recent post on Forbes](#).

1. Create a course of action for your first 90 days

Jumping into a new job, with an unfamiliar work flow and work pace, is one of the biggest hurdles facing a new employee. That is why Quast recommends meeting with your manager to create a schedule for the first 90 days. "This document should be broken into 30-day increments and capture what you plan to accomplish," including key tasks, projects, and initiatives you need to complete, she wrote.

2. Understand by what criteria your job performance will be judged

Don't jump in blind; understand what the company requires of you. Don't wait until your performance review to find out the rubric for success. "It's always better to understand this up front than to remain quiet and have misunderstandings occur later on," adds Quast.

3. Ask your boss: "How can we best work together?"

This recommendation may seem over sycophantic. But it doesn't have to be. Just learn your boss's leadership style and inquire as to his or her preferred method of communicating and working. Then adjust your style accordingly.



4. Be professional, on time, and efficient

An obvious maxim this may be, but addressing coworkers respectfully, keeping small-talk work appropriate, and arriving punctually, if not early, shows you are serious about your job. "Stay until the very end of the day when the majority of the employees in the department go home," adds Quast. "It can be helpful to stay late and get to know the employees who are working late, as this is often when you'll learn the really important information."

5. Get to know your coworkers

Why is it important not to stick to yourself? How will you really integrate yourself into the work flow if you aren't on friendly terms with your coworkers? By finding out what projects they're working on or where they have expertise, you can better understand what the company needs. Quast suggests lunchtime as a good place to start, but taking a coworker out for coffee is also an option.

6. Pay attention during meetings

Look away from you smartphone. Shutter your laptop. This isn't college; there aren't strategic times you can tune out because chances are someone will notice. Quast even recommends forgoing multitasking, which prevents you from actively participating in the meeting.

7. Make sure your email correspondence is always professional

Again, this may seem a pretty obvious workplace rule, but the fact Quast mentions it shows how often it is ignored. Just make it a habit to reread your emails before sending them. "Consider the repercussions that could occur if the email you're about to send gets published for anyone in the world to read," she recommended.

8. Make good on your commitments

Don't promise something you cannot deliver – although that can be is easy to do. You want to impress your boss and show you can pull your weight so management won't second-guess hiring you. But be careful. If you realize you cannot finish a task by its deadline, tell your manager as soon as possible. "I jokingly call this 'going ugly early,'" wrote Quast. "No manager likes to be surprised, so make it part of your work practice to notify your boss as soon as you see something is going off-track. By delivering on your commitments and working through issues as soon as they arise, you will build a reputation that you are someone who is honest, trustworthy and accountable."

9. Prove you are an asset to the company

One accolade is not a career made. Sure, sigh in relief after a job well-done, especially if it is your first project. However, you cannot depend on that strong performance in the future. "Every day when you get up and go into work, prove your value to the company," recommends Quast.

10. Become an expert in something

If you want to really prove you are an asset to the company, one place to start is by becoming an expert in at least one area of your organization. It helps your employers, and it benefits you over the long term because you will make yourself more marketable in the future.

