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Workplace_Myths_Slide_01

The "Rules" Have Changed

"I always arrive late at the office, but I make up for it by leaving early." Life in the workplace would be so much easier if we all followed English essayist Charles Lamb's lead, wouldn't it? Instead, many of us still believe that we have to arrive before and leave after our boss to get ahead. But, in fact, following career rules like these could actually be sabotaging our success. Find out what experts have to say about this and other common [workplace myths](#) — and what you really need to do to get ahead. (Hint: It doesn't involve you bringing your laptop on vacation.)

You Can't Survive A Bad Performance Evaluation

Once you get a less-than-stellar review, you should update your résumé and start applying for new jobs because there's no coming back from that, right? Not necessarily. "You can survive. It just takes some strategic maneuvering," says Lisa Orbé-Austin, a psychologist and executive coach. "You have to exceed expectations and correct issues, and improve relationships with your superior and coworkers." Get clear on where you boss thinks you've fallen short and what you can do to fix it. And, don't start sending out résumés in the meantime: It's worth trying to improve your standing in the company before you jump ship. That way you can preserve good relationships (and future references) and take your time scouting out the best opportunity instead of just jumping right into another job.

On the other hand, there's plenty you should be doing before your annual review. "There should never be a time when you walk into a review and don't know what they're going to say," says Lisa Quast, a certified executive coach and former Fortune 500 executive vice president. Schedule monthly sit-downs with your boss to go over all your projects and deadlines so you can make sure (s)he is aware of the scope of your work — and your value to the company — and so that you are aware of any concerns (s)he has and can address them well before your regular review.

You Must Arrive Before And Leave After Your Boss

There's a lingering belief that the only way to prove your dedication and work ethic is to be in the office. All. The. Time. Fortunately, for the sake of your sanity and social life, that's no longer the case. "In general, it's not about the long hours you put in, it's about the quality of the work you do and the relationships you develop in the office. It's about the value you add over the time you're there," Orbé-Austin says. "When you're at work, you should be seen as productive to the right people," Quast says. However, they note that some managers are still clockwatchers, so pay attention to your company's culture. "When I coach managers, I say, 'Don't rate employees by how much or how often you see them in the office,'" Quast says. "Performance measure should be based not on hours in the office but on your productivity and results achieved at work." **You**



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Shouldn't Use All Your Vacation Days

Whether they're afraid of not being seen as a hard worker or they just don't want to deal with a massive email backlog upon return, many worry that taking time off will be detrimental to their careers. "I used to be one of those people, and it took me a long time to get over that," Quast says. However, her thinking changed as she advanced professionally. "When I became a manager, I wanted employees to take all their vacation days so that they would come back refreshed." True, in some work environments, taking time off is still frowned upon. But, as Orbé-Austin says, "Work-life balance is very important." If your employer doesn't value anything else but work, she says it might be time to start looking for a new job.

You Should Always Speak Up During A Meeting

Some people believe that the key to getting noticed at work is to make your voice heard. Literally. But, speaking up even when you don't have anything important to contribute can backfire. "Most



people hate long meetings, so if you're lengthening that meeting, you won't be popular," Orbé-Austin says. "You can end up shooting yourself in the foot by being that annoying person who always needs to say something." However, she suggests that you do focus on finding something to say that moves the conversation forward. "It's important that you make contributions."



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Dress Up For Success

This commandment implies that the road to success starts in your closet, but that's not necessarily the case. "Don't overshoot," Orbé-Austin says. That is, if you're an entry-level employee working in a relatively casual office, you can hold off on the C-suite power suits for now and instead **dress one or two levels up**. (Plus, you don't want to aim so high that you blow all your budget on a big-ticket wardrobe you can't actually afford on your current salary.)

"You have to pay attention to the culture of your workplace," Orbé-Austin says. "Are they always casual? Or, does it change based on when a client comes in the office?" Your wardrobe is still important in certain environments. "In a more traditional, hierarchical industry, that can be a way to get noticed." However, even if you work at a tech company where hoodies and jeans are de rigeur, you can step it up. Quast suggests a "polished casual" look, like well-fitting dark jeans, a nice blouse, jacket, and a statement necklace.

Always Be Available

A marker of success is to be regarded as indispensable to an organization. But, indispensability is not synonymous with availability. In fact, being too available could sabotage your success. "When I train new managers or work with executives, that's an area I always look at," Quast says. "Those managers who think they should always be available — they're the ones who are running themselves ragged." She said that when people are completely filling their schedule, they're not being strategic with their time, and are thus angering their superiors when important tasks aren't getting done first. "They're not doing their best work."

Orbé-Austin says the level of required availability can be very career specific. "In general, if you're not an executive or an attorney, you want to be clear about when you're available and when you're not," she says. "It's important to have uninterrupted time when you can be with family and friends and build relationships."

