

# You're hired! Now what?

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## Tips for success in a new job.

By Julie Wilson

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You amassed an enviable network, perfected your resume, aced the interview and landed the position. You survived the often-dreaded job hunt, but don't get too comfortable yet. Now it's time to prove yourself in your new role.

According to Michael Watkins, transition expert and author of *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels*, during the interview process both job candidates and hiring companies put their best faces forward as they try to sell themselves to each other. But after they make a commitment is when they really get to know each other. "Recruiting is like romance and employment is like marriage," he says.

Even though a new job is a time of celebration, it's also a time of transition—and transitions often come with challenges. "Change is stressful regardless, but changes in your career are more stressful in some ways," says Hallie Crawford, certified career coach and founder of Create Your Career Path. "This is paying our bills, and we don't want to mess it up."

Whether you're going to work at a large corporation or a small business, there are some things you can do to set yourself up for a smooth ride as you go from new hire to seasoned veteran.

### Orient yourself

"Starting a new job is like the adult version of your first day at school," says Lisa Quast, author of *Starting A New Job: What You Need To Know To Succeed* and founder of Career Woman, Inc. That is, you've got to learn the ropes. "You're new, you really don't understand the organization and how it functions, you don't know the politics, you're not wired into the network and you don't understand who the stakeholders are or the culture," says Watkins.

Some companies offer an orientation, but many do not. If your company doesn't, the first step is to meet your co-workers so you can learn what their roles are, what projects they're working on and the key department processes. Quast suggests asking your boss to introduce you to your extended team, including other departments you'll work with. Then, it's time for a tour. "Go exploring with someone from the department and have them walk you around the entire building or campus to show you where each department is located, [along with] the restrooms, the cafeteria, human resources, finance, legal, operations, sales, marketing, etc.," she says.



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Paying close attention will help you get a feel for the culture at your new place of work. "What's crucial is that you have a little framework in your brain for how things get done," Watkins explains. "How do people act in meetings? How do they socialize things? What do they never do in meetings? What are the behavior patterns that people engage in, such that if you don't engage in them, you're likely to get noticed or sanctioned?"

To assimilate quickly, Watkins also suggests dressing similarly to your new colleagues and learning the lexicon, including any commonly used acronyms, so you look and sound like you're part of the team from the get-go.

### Clear the air

During the application and interview process, there's no doubt that you got to know the job description for your position inside and out. But once you get to work, it's important to have an open conversation with your boss to outline his or her expectations of you so there's no room for misunderstanding.

"What is the one-month, three-month, six-month plan or goal for your new role in your department?" offers Crawford. "Understanding expectations will make it smoother so you know, here's my roadmap, and you're not surprised six months later."

This includes gaining a clear understanding of how your performance will be evaluated. "Know how you will be measured—by what criteria and when," she adds. "It would be great if everyone's boss did that up front, but they don't always do that." That's why it's important to ask, if that information isn't offered.

### Open lines of communication

Communication is key to success in any relationship, and that goes for the one you have with your boss, as well. Quast advises being up front with your manager about his or her preferred methods of communication and adjust your style to complement theirs.

"Ask your boss, 'How can we best work together?'" she suggests. "For example, do they want you to meet with them in person every week to provide an update on your projects? Would they prefer you keep a project list document and email it to them to review, with meetings scheduled as needed? Find out the level of interaction your manager prefers and the information they want in updates, as well as their preferred method of communication."



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**Build a support system**

A strong support system at work can help you navigate the politics of a new job, something that will become invaluable as you try to meet and exceed your goals.

"Speak with your manager soon after you've started your new job and ask them to assign a 'go-to' person," recommends Quast. "This is someone you can go to besides your boss to answer questions that might come up in the first few months of your new job."

She also suggests creating a resource list as you're introduced to your new colleagues. "This is a document you use to keep track of all key people, their titles and areas of responsibility along with contact information," she notes. "This way, you've already identified whom you can go to should issues arise or if you need help."

Crawford advises her clients to find a mentor for their new job, someone who has both the willingness and time to help them get integrated into the organization. "You need to be open to learning from others," she says. "And I think it's OK to find a mentor outside your company within the industry. They can show you the ropes, too."

**Manage minefields**

In an ideal world, everyone in the organization would greet you with open arms at the start of a new job. But sometimes that's not the case. Overscheduled supervisors, peers who feel threatened by the new guy or disgruntled employees might make your transition challenging. This shouldn't stop you from asking questions from these co-workers, though.

"Just be mindful of where they are coming from based on where they are in the pecking order and how happy they are in their job. You have to assess [what they're telling you] a little bit," Crawford says. "You're going to start to know over time who you can trust."

Quast agrees with the cautious approach. "If someone doesn't appear truthful or reliable, trust your gut instinct—in most cases your gut feeling is exactly right," she says.

Getting properly oriented can mean the difference between succeeding or stagnating in a new job. "If you create momentum for yourself early," sums up Watkins, "it will propel you a lot." 🐦

**New-job no-nos**

Whatever you do at a new job, don't:

**Gossip**

"Remember, you're always on," cautions career expert Hallie Crawford. "Don't do gossip. Don't do bashing. It could come back to bite you."

**Get too personal**

"You have to be careful what you share," says Crawford. "If you're sharing something that could be misconstrued, give it context afterwards."

**Be timid**

"Ask the questions you need to learn," Crawford says. "Don't be afraid to look stupid."

