

Take the Workforce by Storm and Keep Your Job Skills Current

No matter what stage you are at in the job search process, it is important to think about the impact you will make on the workforce. Keeping up to date with changes in the workforce and an evolving skillset are some of the most guaranteed ways you will be able to advance your career. This handout covers topics such as successfully transitioning into a new job, relocating because of a position, etiquette in different business functions, keeping your transferable skills up to date, and the benefits of mentorship. Also see the other Career Services Center handouts for additional information on career planning tips, writing resumes, cover letters, and other professional correspondence, preparing for interviews, effectively job searching, and what to do once you've entered the workforce.

TRANSITIONING INTO A NEW POSITION

By Heather Huhman, BusinessInsider.com

- *Stay positive.* Transitioning into a new position is likely to come with a few obstacles. Whatever the case may be, it's important to keep your chin up and endure the change with a positive attitude. Showcasing your enthusiasm will likely draw in your co-workers and make initial interactions a bit smoother.
- *Find your routine.* Actively attempting to build and manage a routine will allow you to increase your efficiency and effectiveness, as well as create a sense of normality.
- *Immerse yourself in company culture.* Fitting in at a new job often means observing the overall culture of the company and adapting. Embrace the culture of your new company by making the office norms your new habits.
- *Take notes.* Take both physical and mental notes on what goes on around you. How does your boss react to certain things? What are problems you can provide solutions to? Take a "fly on the wall" mentality while you're settling in to see how the company functions.
- *Set goals.* Within the first few weeks on the job, make a point to establish some beneficial goals. Ask yourself what you must accomplish in your first three months, what you want to accomplish in the future, and how you plan to continually improve your efficiency. Goal-setting techniques are important in every stage of your career.
- *Build relationships.* The relationships you have with the people you work with can easily make or break your experience. Immediately forging relationships with your co-workers will also help you transition more smoothly. Step out of your comfort zone and attempt to interact with everyone you work with. These are the individuals who are likely to be your networking connections for years to come.
- *Increase your participation.* While you might still be nailing down your own duties, it's also important to extend a hand when possible. If you know a co-worker could use your help tying up a few loose ends on a project, offer your services. This will provide you with a chance to work with someone new, as well as showcase your willingness and ability to work on a team.
- *Seek out mentorship.* Sometimes the best way to familiarize yourself with your new position, as well as a company, is to seek out a mentor. After observing daily operations for a while, reach out to someone you admire within the company. Shoot them an email or stop by their office and share your interest in learning about — and from — their experiences. *See the section in this handout on mentorship.*

RELOCATING TO A NEW POSITION

Adapted from College Central Network Resources

Starting a new job in a new place can be exciting. However, moving can be stressful. Consider the following tips to limit the bumps along the way.

- *Get it in writing.* A formal letter will secure the purpose of the move. Get all moving quotes in writing. Have an apartment lease in hand guaranteeing you and your belongings a new residence.
- *Create a budget.* Can you afford the move? Distance and amount of property will affect transportation costs, as will shipping materials, food, utilities, security deposits, parking, travel, and personal expenses. Don't forget other ongoing monthly expenses like student loan repayments, credit card charges, or medical insurance. In some cases, moving expenses may be tax deductible. Some employers will cover the cost of your move by paying ahead or reimbursing you later. Once you have secured the job, inquire if this is an option.

- *Close up shop.* Terminate all services and utilities.
- *Update information.* Notify family and friends, and contact the following with your change of address: bank or financial institution, credit card company, insurance company, magazine and catalog subscriptions, group memberships and organizations. You will need to change your driver's license and voter registration. Notify employers where to send your W-2 forms. Give the post office 10 days' notice and have them forward any mail that is delivered to your old address.
- *Keep these close:* important papers, check book, inventory, insurance forms, moving contract, ID, passport, cash

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Adapted from College Central Network Resources

How do you turn previous experiences into viable selling points that are relevant to a job opportunity, even if unrelated? Focus on your transferable skills. Transferable skills are part of your life experience; they are versatile skills and qualities acquired through upbringing, education, networking, work, mentoring, training, social interaction, etc. They include:

- Communication skills – both written and oral, body language
- Interpersonal skills – listening, relating, cooperating, managing, guiding
- Leadership skills – motivation, assessment of situations, decision-making, goal-setting, resourcefulness, creativity, teamwork, taking initiative
- Analytical skills – handling data, research, interpreting information, handling numbers, applying logic, detecting patterns
- Organizational skills – time management, prioritization, management of resources
- Technical skills – practical application of knowledge and hands-on proficiency with equipment, software, and techniques
- Personal Qualities – Integrity, resilience, self-awareness, self-discipline, control, punctuality, reliability, patience, responsibility, positivity, fairness

For employers, candidates with transferable skills are more prepared to solve problems, generate ideas, and meet customer needs. You may be new to a job and its tasks, but these other traits and qualities will help you bridge the gap. Remember to step back and realize that the core of what you are learning is going to help you succeed in many different career and life situations, whether you are waiting tables at a restaurant, caring for your little brother, or applying for the CEO position at a major corporation. If you're currently looking for a new job or you would just like to keep your transferable skills sharp, start with these suggestions:

- Start a side project – Try to imagine some of the work you would be doing on the job and repeat those on a personal project at your convenience.
- Read – Pick up a book at your local library on a specific field that interests you and learn as much about it as you can. Reading will help grow your vocabulary, improve memory, ease stress, etc.
- Online learning – There are several websites that offer free learning courses, but you can also sign up for a university course online and keep skills sharp and learn the newest research on topics that interest you.
- Join a committee and work with different styles of people to make sure you are able to connect and communicate to all types of people. Any sort of volunteer work is always appreciated by the community, too!

WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE

By Joseph Cohen, SmallBusiness.Chron.com

- *Everyone Has a Role.* When dealing with your own employees, remember that every person in the company can affect every other person. All employees' jobs are interconnected, and the person you may be dismissive of today could have information that is relevant to you tomorrow.
- *Make Meetings Useful.* When a meeting is necessary, be mindful of other attendees' schedules, and ensure that you are prepared with any materials or information needed for the meeting topic. A meeting that requires no action to be taken is a meeting that wasn't necessary in the first place.
- *Prompt Communication.* When you receive a phone call or email, whether internally or from a client, be sure to respond to it in a timely manner.
- *Respect Others' Time.* When you need to interrupt someone, try to do it unobtrusively. Be polite and get to the point quickly, to allow him to get back to his work in progress. Avoid interrupting meetings.

- *Dress for Success.* Even in a casual environment, one should err on the side of caution. A sloppy appearance can imply to clients and coworkers that the situation, company or people involved aren't worth the effort to present yourself respectably. If the dress code is uncertain, it is always safer to be overdressed than underdressed.
- *Keep Your Boss Informed.* Don't overdo compliments and agreements regarding your boss. Primarily, you should treat all your coworkers with respect, but also behaving differently towards a superior can easily appear to be brown-nosing. You should provide your boss with more information, since he is responsible for performance.
- *Respect Other Cultures.* If your company does work internationally, always respect the other cultures. An attempt to learn at least a portion of a language can demonstrate a strong desire for cooperation. Other cultural differences such as holidays and table manners should be studied before any international meeting.
- *Timeliness.* When there is a time factor in anything business related, don't be late. It implies that you have things more pressing than your coworkers or clients, and more worthy of your attention.
- *Remember the Basics.* Above all else, remember the simplest manners you were taught as a child. "Please," "thank you" and "you're welcome" are some of the most basic spoken manners, and yet some of the most forgotten. Avoid raising your voice and offensive language.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Adapted from College Central Network Resources

With email, you have to rely on words, spelling, and grammar instead of voice and visual body language to convey a professional attitude, tone, and message. Above all be polite and respectful, using titles and last names unless otherwise indicated. Personalize the email to address the contact. Avoid slang and NEVER use offensive language. Choose your words wisely and PROOFREAD your email for incorrect spelling of names, improper grammar, and other small mistakes. Be concise, as people are busy and long emails may go unread. For ease of reading, keep sentences short and paragraphs brief with spaces between. Don't ramble; be relevant. When considering how to leave your employers, advisors, and other professionals with a good impression, remember that old fashioned manners, timeliness, and consideration of others still apply when it comes to internet etiquette.

- First, realize that everything you send on company premises using business facilities legally belongs to the employer. Confirm if there is a company email policy. Limit personal emails so that 1) private matters don't become public; 2) network traffic and bandwidth don't get bogged down; and 3) you don't risk personal and company liability.
- Your name should display in the "From" field. Include a brief signature with crucial contact info: name, company, phone, fax, email, and the company disclaimer if provided.
- Avoid overusing the High Priority setting and punctuation like "!" ; it will lose its effectiveness.
- Use simple fonts and colors. Avoid using all caps or all lowercase, and do not include emoticons or acronyms.
- You may want to send yourself a version of an important email to make sure everything displays properly before emailing a final copy to your contact.
- Don't forward emails intended only for you without getting permission first from the originator; it's unprofessional and undermines trust.
- Don't hit Send when you're upset. Cool off first, or you might regret your message later. Don't criticize third parties; printed emails could come back to bite you.
- Cc: keeps people in the loop publicly, Bcc: privately. Use "Reply All" in moderation. DON'T Reply all if you are Bcc:ed! Avoid return receipts (RR).
- When sending a mass email, use Bcc: to avoid sharing everyone's email with spammers.
- Check Trash and Junk folders; sometimes vital emails end up there. To keep your emails out of the trash, use a clear, appropriate Subject.
- Jumping ship? Don't saw off the branch you're sitting on by using your company email to job search. Create a new account.

WORKPLACE DINING AND HOLIDAY PARTY ETIQUETTE*Adapted from College Central Network Resources*

When invited to dine with co-workers or to a holiday office party, it is appropriate to remember the following:

- Be a team player and try to attend the function, especially the annual holiday party. Companies host events for many reasons, to thank employees, celebrate the season, emphasize teamwork, etc. so be sure to show your support! If the invite does not include guests, do not ask to bring your significant other.
- Wear proper business attire. Check the invite or ask your supervisor what would be an appropriate, professional outfit to wear.
- TURN OFF YOUR CELLPHONE, especially at a working lunch or dinner function. If you are waiting for an important call, discreetly tell the person that invited you to the function and excuse yourself from the table or room when you take the call so as not to distract others from their conversation.
- Greet or introduce yourself to others at the table and engage in pleasant conversation. Interact and socialize!
- Don't order messy meals that risk dripping, spattering, or dissecting, and don't order the most expensive dish
- Generally, follow the employer's/host's lead for when to sit, when to eat, etc.
- If you are over 21 and choose to have alcohol, limit yourself to one drink. If underage, do not drink alcohol.
- Be conscious of your body language: chew quietly, sit up straight, elbows off the table, swallow before you speak, make eye contact. Remember your basic manners when communicating even in a more relaxed setting.

MENTORSHIP*Adapted from College Central Network Resources*

Few can advance your job search or career like a mentor. Best defined as wise, trusted advisors and teachers, mentors inspire by example. Often professionals in their field, these role models help expand your knowledge base, nurture your growth, and define your direction. Mentors can be alumni, professors, community leaders, even friends and family. As a mentee, you absorb and grow by watching and listening, discussing and applying. Mentors help identify your strengths and weaknesses through constructive criticism and objective feedback. Mentorships are based on one-on-one, often close personal relationships that develop over time. Whether formal or informal, compatibility and commitment are required by both parties. When seeking a mentor, know their contributions and understand what makes them tick. As a mentee:

- Be receptive, listen, and process; don't be argumentative. Mentors demand your best!
- Establish a personal relationship built on trust and honest communication.
- Expect to be challenged
- Commit your time and meet regularly
- Willingly apply what you learn
- Be grateful and respectful; mentors volunteer and invest their personal time and energy because they believe in you. Be sure to express your thanks frequently in writing.

Take the initiative in seeking out a mentor. Your willingness to learn and be better prepared will make you a more confident, knowledgeable, and marketable employee.

Once you have some experience in your field, if you enjoy ongoing learning and sharing your insight and expertise to help others succeed, consider becoming a mentor. Perhaps you're a successful executive or a healthcare professional interested in providing career guidance. By volunteering your time, know-how, and resources formally or informally, you can help others learn the ropes, do their jobs better, improve their teamwork skills, expand their knowledge base, and better define their direction and purpose in life. Encourage self-confidence and foster strategic thinking to enable a job seeker to better transition into and contribute to the workforce. As an effective mentor, consider the following:

- Establish clear goals and objectives, but be flexible; focus on the mentee's needs.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses, offer constructive criticism, discuss and communicate clearly.
- Empathize and encourage, be positive, enthusiastic, and objective.
- Guide and present possibilities, rather than dole out tasks.
- Avoid simply providing answers; motivate the mentee to process and discover solutions.
- Share experiences of successes and failures and provide networking and job shadowing opportunities.
- Keep an open mind to gain new perspectives and insight for your own development.
- Be committed and patient. With time, good mentors establish personal relationships with trust and dialogue.