

STARTING YOUR NEW JOB THE RIGHT WAY

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The months of *contacting companies, distributing resumes, responding to countless ads, and networking with everyone in sight* have paid off. **You have a new job!** The salary is acceptable and the job looks promising. How can you ensure you will get off on the right foot and maximize this career opportunity? Here are a few time-tested recommendations to help you do just that...

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE "SETTLING-IN-PERIOD". Don't feel you have to knock'em dead the first week. Every reputable company expects new employees to take time settling in. Depending on the company and your position, you will have 30 to 60 days before you are considered a fully contributing member of the team. Use this time wisely. Get to know the company and the people. *Producing long-term results is more important than making an immediate impact.*

PROJECT A POSITIVE CHEERFUL ATTITUDE. Let's face it...curmudgeons and grouches are funny only on TV. When you have to work with them on a daily basis, they are simply a pain. Be positive, cheerful, and smile. A cheerful "Good Morning" does wonders for you and the people with whom you work. Friendly, outgoing people with an upbeat disposition make good team members. Their attitude is contagious.

LEARN THE CORPORATE CULTURE. Take time to learn the politics. Each company has its own style and its own way of doing things. Learn the nuances of how things get done in your company. Watch the managers and executives, identify those who get things done, and learn from them.

BE A CLASS ACT. Always conduct yourself in an ethical, well-mannered, professional manner. Speak well of others and stay away from office gossip. You must be trustworthy and able to keep confidences if you are to be taken seriously. Leave street language in the street. Don't forget to say "thank you". Always give subordinates and colleagues credit when they come up with a good idea. It's not only the right thing to do...it's the smart thing to do.

CHOOSE YOUR BUSINESS "FRIENDS" CAREFULLY. Get to know as many people in the company as you can. But avoid forming relationships until you get to know who's who. Some of your co-workers are viewed favorably by top management, others are not. You don't know who fits into which category. The people you associate with will have a significant impact on how you are perceived.

BLEND IN. Pay attention to how your co-workers dress and blend in. If you must adjust your wardrobe, then adjust your wardrobe. It's an investment because it helps you quickly shed the "new guy / new gal" label. Once you are established, you can gradually return to your style preferences.

DO THE JOB YOU WERE HIRED TO DO. One of your most important tasks is to become a valued employee. Learn your job. Get an understanding of your industry and your company. Learn how your job and your boss's job fit into the scheme of things.

Get organized. Keep a concise calendar so you know what needs to be done and when. Ensure your boss agrees with the priorities you establish. Focus on those issues that are most important. During the first 60 days, defer to your boss's judgment on what is important. After you have gained your boss's confidence, then you can make recommendations.

Keep your boss informed. Tell him/her what is happening and the course of action you intend to pursue. In particular, ensure your boss always hears bad news from you.

Ask questions when you don't understand. During the first few weeks there are no dumb questions only dumb actions.

During the first two months, don't criticize methods, people, or departments. Gain the trust and confidence of your boss before you begin criticizing or changing things.

GET FEEDBACK FROM YOUR BOSS. It is imperative that you are on the same wavelength as your boss from day one.

Arrange a series of *short* meetings with your boss. On the first day, I suggest that you say something like, "*During the first month, I'd like the opportunity to meet with you three times a week for 15 minutes. I want to ensure that you know where I am and I know that I'm working on the right things that support your agenda. Would mornings or afternoons be better for you?*"

When you go to those meetings, be prepared and don't socialize. Identify your objectives and problems, state what you intend to do and ask if those actions support his/her objectives. Finish and get out within 15 minutes.

PLAN FUTURE ACTIONS...QUIETLY. Inevitably, there are things that you will want to change and improvements you will want to make. Don't make changes during your "settling in" period if it can be avoided. Instead make notes about the changes that are needed. *Don't discuss these ideas with anyone* and don't leave notes on your desk or on your computer about future actions. Premature disclosure can create problems.

Once you have established the necessary rapport and gained the confidence of your boss, schedule a meeting with him/her to discuss the changes you want to implement.

At that meeting, explain what changes you want to implement, why the change should be made, what the approximate costs would be, what benefits would accrue, and when you plan to implement each change. Do this in a professional manner and don't get emotionally involved.

Once you get approval, brief those who work for you in the same manner and implement the changes quickly. Inform your boss as each change is implemented.

PLAN FOR YOUR FIRST REVIEW. Most people take a passive attitude towards reviews. I recommend that you take an active attitude and "help" your reviewer write the best review possible for your performance. Here's how you go about it.

As you are given assignments and undertake projects, begin tracking them immediately. Use the SAR technique. SAR is an acronym for **S**ituation, **A**ction, **R**esults. Write a summary of the situation that existed when you began the assignment. As you progress in the assignment, write a summary of the actions you took. Finally, write a summary of the results you achieved.

Retain these SAR stories. About six weeks before your review is due, take them out, reread them and then summarize them by function, something like this:

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT. In 1997, before I arrived, we had an average raw materials inventory of \$8 million in value with a 2.5 inventory turn. Since I implemented the JIT program, we have decreased the average raw materials inventory by 25%, reducing our inventory investment by \$2 million annually and increasing our inventory turns to 4.4.

Take this functional summary (no more than 2 pages) to your boss with the comment, "My review is due December 1st. I thought you might like to see what I consider to be my most significant accomplishments in this position."

Use these SAR stories to update your resume twice a year.

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