

## Strategies for Succeeding at your First Job

Congratulations on landing your job! You have impressed the interviewers and earned a spot on their team. Read below for common work expectations and situations, and tips on how to handle these situations and excel at your new position.

### Advice from Recent Alumni:



*Arrive early, be open to help with anything, and be ready to network. Arriving early is easy, it doesn't cost anything and it goes a long way. Although it may not seem like it, your managers/supervisors notice the people that show up early and leave late. **You should aim to arrive at least 15-30 minutes before your start time - every day.** Be open to help with anything. Remember, as a new hire out of college there is no task above or below your level of skill. Completing tasks efficiently and with a good attitude will make people remember your work ethic. On the opposite end of the spectrum, **never be afraid that you aren't supposed to be in the room, or talking to the people you are talking to.** If you find yourself in that situation it is most likely because people believe in you and you belong there as much as the next person. My final tip is probably the most important - **NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK. No matter how big or small your company, your network is your most important tool.** Networking with your peers will earn you respect and workplace friends- important so that when opportunities come up people will think of **you**. You should network with management for obvious reasons and also network with people that are not on your team or even in your company. People will gladly take 15 minutes out of their day to chat with you or grab a coffee - so take this opportunity to get career/personal advice from people you look up to.*

Harrison Lempriere '16 Finance/Economics  
Analytics Consultant at Deloitte

*I would say **the most helpful thing for me has been finding a mentor at work** (whether that be a coworker or boss) who can not only help you do your job better, but is a great person to brainstorm with when thinking about a new project. They can also help to really spark a passion and enthusiasm for your job. Plus, they'll appreciate collaborating with someone who is so new to their field, as a different perspective is often refreshing. I would also recommend attending as many out-of-work events as you can (networking, social events, happy hours, etc.). I've found that **building that relationships with your managers and coworkers is almost as important as the regular 9-5 day you spend with them.** Relationships are so important in business, not only with your clients, but with the people you work with every day as well.*

Megan McAndrews '16 Economics/Marketing  
Account Executive at WDSU Channel 6



*Introduce yourself to all the members of the leadership team. Make sure you get to know their names and engage with them on what their focused area of expertise is. Make your name and face known. **Challenge yourself by offering to complete tasks that aren't in your comfort zone.** Challenge the status quo by offering innovative solutions. See something that could be improved? Let it be known. Don't hold back. After the first 6 months, ask for a raise/promotion! In the first year you'll want to do everything, but remember work-life balance is important to your health and long-term career. You'll meet so many people with different backgrounds and skills - leverage their expertise to build your skill sets. Everything will seem very hectic and confusing because the workplace isn't structured like your school syllabus, and **my advice is to just roll with the punches and learn to adapt.** You must adapt in order to survive your first year. Be self-driven and self-motivated.*

Lily Wang '16 Management/Marketing  
ICAgile Professional and SAP Specialist at IBM

## During the First Week

<i>What to Expect</i>	<i>How to Succeed</i>
<b>Your first impression goes a long way.</b>	Arrive early, dress appropriately, and introduce yourself to new colleagues to break down the “newbie” stigma. Think about what reputation you want to cultivate, and act on it.
<b>Your computer may not be ready...you may not even have a computer or desk set up. Your new colleagues may be swamped – which is why they hired you!</b>	Be prepared to go with the flow. Check with your supervisor regarding getting situated. Stay positive, and use any down time to read organizational material.
<b>Your job description may be set, or it may change, especially if you are in a newly created position or in a new team or division.</b>	Develop a list of written, measurable goals before you start of what you would like to learn and contribute, but realize that your position may shift.
<b>Since others are busy, you may receive a formal tour and orientation, or you could be expected to learn the ropes as you go.</b>	If there is a company handbook, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with all policies listed and adhering to those policies. If there is no formal orientation, keep a running list of questions that you can ask during a 1:1 meeting.
<b>Most people are happy to answer any questions you have...the first, and maybe second, time you ask.</b>	No one remembers everything, but try to write down the important answers you receive, so that you don’t ask people to repeat themselves.
<b>New jobs are often overwhelming. Colleagues use terms and reference projects that are unfamiliar. Each workplace has its own culture, some of which is unspoken and subtle.</b>	Listen, observe, and soak up information when you start. Is the culture cutting edge or traditional, team- oriented or individualistic, supportive or confrontational? You got a sense during the interview, but not at this level. Research industry terminology.
<b>Your supervisors and colleagues will have expectations and preferences regarding communication style, meetings, and duties.</b>	Follow their lead, especially at first. Do they prefer face-to-face check ins, phone calls, or email? Do they communicate in a straight-to-the-point manner or prefer to shoot the breeze first? How does your boss prefer to be updated on your work? You can ask about expectations, and adjust accordingly. Think back to your Business Communications class – target your message and timing to your audience.
<b>The culture at each company is different, and your willingness to adapt can influence your opportunities.</b>	If you want to move up, be aware of whether you are seen as a “team player.” Observe whether most people eat at their desk or with colleagues. Are you expected to stay until 7:00 p.m. every night?
<b>Working full-time can be tiring and may require long hours.</b>	Be sure to take care of yourself and balance outside activities. Get rest, eat well, and exercise.
<b>Social media policies and access can vary widely. You may use social media in your job, or your company may block certain web sites.</b>	Observe colleagues, or ask about the policy if necessary.

## During the First 90 Days

<i>What to Expect</i>	<i>How to Succeed</i>
<b>You will be expected to attend formal and informal meetings, where you will be assigned projects, contribute, and to provide updates.</b>	Bring a notepad with you and a planner to check on dates, jot down notes and plan upcoming events and projects. Bring any project updates as well. Speak up and share your ideas.
<b>Oral and written communication skills are a critical component of any job. Unfortunately, many employers believe that recent graduates communicate poorly.</b>	Speak and write concisely and directly. Use proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Add a signature to your email.
<b>It is great if your employer provides graduate school tuition assistance or professional development training, but you are always responsible for your own continued learning.</b>	Read relevant articles and books, and attend professional development conferences when possible.
<b>Supervisors and colleagues appreciate people who take initiative and meet your deadlines. It is good to volunteer for projects, as long as you don't get a reputation for taking on more than you can handle.</b>	As you get a sense of how long projects take, map out your own project timelines. Learn to prioritize tasks, so that you deliver quality work on time.
<b>Treating colleagues and clients well is part of your job. It is the "little things" that can make a big difference.</b>	Say thank you or write a note if someone has gone above and beyond. Share contacts or resources. Be collegial and polite to everyone, including the support staff who are responsible for keeping the office running.
<b>If this is your first exposure to negative office politics, you maybe surprised by the favoritism, self-interest, and duplicity that may exist in your workplace. Sometimes people lose control of their emotions, and you may face pettiness or gossip.</b>	Avoid negativity and gossip, or you may earn a reputation for drama. A good rule of thumb to follow is to focus on your work and treat others well. If you face a conflict, calm down first, listen carefully, and state your position. It is good to document your position via a paper or email trail.

## During the First 6-12 Months and Beyond

<i>What to Expect</i>	<i>How to Succeed</i>
<b>No one cares about your career more than you. Keeping your head down, plowing through your work, and expecting recognition is not enough. People are busy, so it is different from school where good work translated into higher grades.</b>	Track your accomplishments and goals. Create a portfolio of your work. Your list will benefit you in a performance review or a future job interview. Also, track your mistakes to learn from them.
<b>Everyone has different expectations about socializing at work. Some people want to keep their work and personal lives separate; others seek to develop friendships with their colleagues.</b>	Think about what you are comfortable with, and use your best judgment. Your company may have rules about dating co-workers, so definitely proceed with caution.
<b>People appreciate a problem solver, not a complainer.</b>	If you see an issue or think something can be done more efficiently, brainstorm some potential solutions. Do your research, in order to support your proposal.
<b>Realize that no job is perfect. You will have ups and downs, but hopefully you have identified a field and position that you enjoy for now, and the good outweighs the bad.</b>	Keep a positive attitude, and assess yourself honestly. What skills are required to stay current and advance in your career? Thinking about your career goals is smart, but if you start to become a frequent job-hopper, consider whether you may be better investing in your position or company and growing roots there.
<b>Feedback on your job performance is a big part of your potential to succeed.</b>	You may receive a 30, 60 or 90 day review when you begin at a company. Listen carefully to the feedback you receive and use that feedback to enhance your performance moving forward.