

# Succeed

Career Coaching and Advice



## Ensuring Initial Success in a New Position

You've landed that exciting, new position that you've sought for the past months. Tomorrow is the first day on your new job. What can you do to ensure that

you will be successful? Here are three tips to help you become a successful and valued employee:

- Make a positive first impression.
- Understand your priorities.
- Work to fit in with the culture.

### Positive First Impressions

The initial impression that you give people affects their assessment of your knowledge and skills. To ensure that their first impression of you is positive always be on time or slightly early to meetings and appointments. Also, prepare ahead and organize your thoughts and notes so that you demonstrate your ability to manage your resources and tasks. Being late and fumbling to find information erodes other people's confidence in your abilities.

In the initial tasks that you are assigned, show your self-motivation and self-direction as much as you can. Granted, there will be situations early in your employment when you will need to check with your supervisor or a colleague to verify your understanding of

company procedures or standards, but be aware of how often you seek assistance and try to minimize any interruptions. Perhaps it would be convenient to schedule your requests for assistance so that they are less disruptive.

Of course, the primary measure of any employee's success is the degree to which tasks are completed correctly and on time. Build your supervisor's and colleagues' first impression of your work on your competence and habit of consistently following through on your assignments. Double check your work for errors. Plan enough time in your schedule to allow you to review your writing or calculations before submitting them to your supervisor.

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Throughout your employment maintain a high energy level and a positive attitude about your work and environment. This is especially important while you are learning the details of your responsibilities and the work ethic and processes of your new company and department. You are the one who will need to learn and adapt to a new way of working. Don't enter a new position with the initial impression that you can dictate changes

to match your expectations or previous experience. Even a well-seasoned top executive first surveys the current situation before implementing changes.

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## Understanding Your Priorities

You may find it helpful to organize your tasks into categories that indicate their importance. For example, you can list tasks by time periods (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly), or by level (e.g., individual, work group, departmental, corporate), or by importance (e.g., vital, very important, somewhat important, background). The purpose of listing your tasks is to help you understand your priorities and ensure that you accomplish your highest priority tasks on time.

When you have composed your list, review it with your manager. This is important to two reasons: first, you avoid returning to your manager to ask what your priorities should be whenever you identify a task; and second, you show your manager your progress in understanding your job duties.

## Fitting In

The first and foremost aspect of your fit with your new company is whether you are contributing to the company's success. This information needs to come to you from your manager in the form of feedback on your job performance. If you are noted for doing excellent work on time, then you are well on your way to realizing success within your first 90 days on the job. The other aspects of your work are less important than your manager's assessment of your performance. If your manager doesn't arrange feedback sessions with you, then request to have them on a regular basis – for instance, at the end of the first week, after two weeks, at the end of the first month, and then at the end of the third month. Be sensitive to your manager's availability, but show your manager that you believe job performance feedback is essential to your success. When you do meet with your manager, ask her to comment on your job performance, and then listen carefully and take notes. Do not

interrupt or attempt to explain or argue. Your manager's assessment of your efforts is critical. When she has assessed your performance, ask for some specific advice on improving your performance. Listen and take notes. Convert your notes to an action plan and a checklist for your next meeting with your manager.

Perhaps in your meetings with your manager or in your daily responsibilities you have encountered areas in which your knowledge or skill level is lacking. In this case, you should investigate the resources available to you to increase your knowledge and hone your skills. Your company may have a training department or an online resource that you can use to learn more about your job. Confirm with your manager the importance of the knowledge or skill you've identified. Show your initiative in addressing your

own learning needs and present a plan to meet those needs. Other available resources could include online courses, extra reading, orientation sessions, or traditional courses. The goal is to improve your knowledge and skill so that you easily fit into the professional culture of your company. ■

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Another aspect of your fit with your new company involves your working relationships with your co-workers. In your first three months on the job, seek opportunities to meet informally with others in the company. Learn the company's history and each person's role in the history. Focus initially on your immediate co-workers and then gradually branch out to include colleagues in other departments or work groups. By networking with your colleagues you can better understand your role in the organization by learning their perspective of your position. ■