

Starting A New Job

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You've done it! The steps of interview, negotiation, acceptance, and resignation are now completed, and you are excited and ready to begin your new job. All your worries are over, or are they?

How you approach your new colleagues and your attitude and behavior during the first few weeks on the job will set the tone for your whole career, so be mindful of some good business etiquette, and proceed cautiously until you determine the "culture" of the office, and the behaviors of your peers, superiors and subordinates.

Whatever your position, for the first few weeks there is usually a "honeymoon" period during which you can settle in and become familiar with the corporate structure and the key players. It is best to follow the old adage, and listen much more than you speak during this time. Do not criticize or compare. Many people fall into the trap of constantly saying, "In my old job we did it this way" before they fully understand the new company's procedures. It is usually better to settle in quietly and fully learn everything you can before offering too much advice, and you will find that new ideas are more readily accepted after you have been absorbed into the mainstream.

A cardinal rule in a new position is not to take sides or be absorbed into different "camps." Never criticize anyone or listen to office gossip, since there is often someone only too eager to descend on a new employee and tell them all the good and bad, which usually means "bad" according to their view. Watch and "learn by walking around" until you have a clear picture of the structure and players.

If you are a replacement hire, you may be faced with some negative attitudes, particularly if you have replaced someone who was well liked. Prior to beginning work, you should ask during your orientation interview if there are any special problems you may encounter or anything in particular to be aware of. Remember that a smile and a genuinely sincere attitude will go a long way to win friends.

During your training and orientation, be sure and take notes. If you don't understand something, **ask**, don't assume. You are not expected to understand everything during the first few days. During this time, take the time to study your supervisors, and their methods of communication. Do they give instruction verbally, or write copious memos?

Are they formal and detailed, or very sketchy with details? Learn, or ask, how they like to receive information. Nothing is worse than to burden someone with copious reports when they prefer a mere action outline. On the other hand, a meticulous boss might be very impressed by those same detailed notes! Ask questions often, and remember the answers. Learn the parameters of the position early in the game.

After you have been on the job for thirty days, take time to personally evaluate your progress, how you feel about your grasp of the position, where you need help, if any, and how you feel your knowledge and experience might be used to improve or add to the position. Outline your plan for growth, and learning.

It's not a bad idea to schedule an appointment with your supervisor to discuss your progress, in order to fully understand how you are settling in and if the company is satisfied with what you are doing. If there are any minor problems, now is the time to correct them before they become big ones!

Beginning any new career step is sometimes a little daunting, and very few people enjoy the settling in period, but there are very few problems which cannot be overcome by open communication. Do **not** procrastinate if you need help or have problems, seek out someone who can help you find the solution. Work doubly hard during these first few weeks to learn as much about the company and your position as you possibly can, even though much is new. After a while it will suddenly become familiar.

Remember that you chose this position to learn new ideas and face new challenges, to increase your knowledge and further your career goals. Resolve to make every experience a learning one, even the unpleasant moments, and you cannot help but succeed.

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