

Making the Transition

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GRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COLLEGE AND WORK

It's hard to fully understand the changes that come with transitioning from college life to the working world. Not only are you transitioning into a much different routine from college, but you are also adjusting to a new social life and a new set of expectations. The pages that follow help to break down some of the daily expectations that will change when entering the workforce and will also help to set you up for success in your job and in your personal life. Embracing the change in your new life will help lead you to an exciting new adventure!

College	Work
Highly structured curriculum and programs with lots of direction	Highly unstructured environment and tasks with few directions
Frequent, quick, concrete feedback	Infrequent and less precise
Personally supportive environment	Less personal support
Few significant changes	Frequent and unexpected changes
Flexible schedule	Structured schedule
Flexible breaks and time off	Limited time off
Personal control over time, classes and interests	Responding to others' directions and interests
Intellectual challenge	Organizational and people challenges
Choose your performance level	A-level work required all the time
Focus on development and growth	Focus on getting results for the organization
Create and explore knowledge	Get results with your knowledge
Individual effort	Team effort
"Right" answers	Few "right" answers
Independence of ideas and thinking	Do it the organization's way
Less initiative required	Lots of initiative required
Professors	Bosses



"Learn as much as possible and be curious. Find a role model in your organization and learn industry best practices. Join industry organizations and stay on top of all new trends. Be willing to take on responsibilities beyond your job description while also being flexible in your work/life balance. Be willing to say yes and responsible enough to say NO. Study, learn, take notes, practice, learn from your mistakes, be patient, and be persistent and I guarantee that you will be successful."

—Jordan Wiener, Alumni 2011

Adapted from Holton, E. in Gardner, et al. (1998). The Senior Year Experience: Facilitating Integration, Reflection, Closure, and Transition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 102.

The First Year

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YOUR FIRST YEAR ON THE JOB: TOP 10 TIPS

Watch and learn.

Enthusiasm in a staff member is great, but be careful not to become the office know-it-all. Spend time listening to others and master the art of perfect timing for your ideas to come to life!

Find a mentor.

Find someone in the office you admire and feel comfortable around. This person can give you insights into the office and might also provide you with tips on how to succeed in the office and beyond.

Get feedback.

Most supervisors have some type of end of the year review; however, if this is not currently in place, seek out feedback from your supervisor directly. It's difficult to improve when you're not sure what's going wrong. Getting feedback shows that you care about your professional development and contributing to the office.

Rethink how you use social media.

In college, social media may have revolved around your social life. Keep in mind that in the workplace, you can use social media to network professionally. From Twitter, Facebook, to LinkedIn- use these mediums to your advantage! And don't forget to keep it professional.

Learn to write a professional email and business correspondence.

The working world is full of meetings, committees, and projects that require communication through email.

With that said, make sure that all email correspondence is professional, brief, and free of grammatical errors. Also, be careful in using emoticons, exclamation points, and all caps. Professional is the key word here.



Say "Yes" to opportunities.

Saying yes to new opportunities can do amazing things for your career. It can help you interact with new people and build upon your existing skill set as well as show your boss that you like to take initiative and are ready for new tasks. While saying yes can make you stand out in the office, be sure not to overcommit. Say yes when you're able.

Develop a career plan.

Where do you see yourself in 2 years? In 5 years? Come up with a few realistic goals for yourself. Do you need additional education to move up? Do you need additional skills? Think about how you can build on those things now.

Manage your tasks through managing your time.

Your calendar is your best friend. Use it to its fullest potential. Not only should you schedule meetings and appointments, but also use your calendar to schedule tasks. Need to send out a well thought out email to your project members or make a phone call to an associate that may last awhile? Schedule time on your calendar. It is much more likely to get done.

Be positive.

Try to avoid office gossip and politics. It's easy to get sucked into that conversation after a tense staff meeting, but be careful. The boss almost always knows what's being said in the office, and you do not want to be tied in with any negativity. Instead, avoid these conversations and be a positive force for the office. It will get you noticed the right way.

Don't give up.

The first year on the job can be challenging at times with a lot of learning, growing, and adapting to change. Keep in mind that your second year on the job will run much smoother, and then it will be someone else's turn as the "newbie" on staff. Till then, keep your head up and don't give up!