

DESIGNING YOUR SUCCESS: FIRST YEAR ON THE JOB

Your first year on the job is a great opportunity to learn more about yourself, assess your strengths and weaknesses, and start devising a long-term career path.

It seems like a lot to accomplish in 12 short months, but as any seasoned employee will tell you, the first year is one of the most crucial for both personal and professional growth, so it is important to get as much as you can from it.

KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED

It is critical that you understand your job, your supervisor's expectations, and how you fit into the larger picture of the company.

- Ask as many questions as you need to do your job well and learn about the organization and its culture. Do not worry about looking foolish; it is more foolish to pretend you know something (and risk getting it wrong) than to admit up front you do not.
- Find out about your organization's performance review process and terminology—such as “meets expectations” and “exceeds expectations.” You cannot meet or exceed expectations if you do not know what they are!

MASTER THE BASICS

As a new hire, it is natural for you to want to dazzle your boss with your knowledge, revolutionary ideas, and unwavering team spirit. These are all important, but your first job is to demonstrate that you have mastered the basics: Show up on time every day, ready and willing to work, and dressed appropriately. Your first job in your new job is to demonstrate your reliability, trustworthiness, and enthusiasm.

- Recognize that you need to know how an organization works before you can attempt to make it work better. You can only make positive changes when you have established yourself within the organization.
- Be accountable for your actions – Acknowledge when you have made a mistake and accept responsibility for it. Handle constructive criticism appropriately.

During your first year (and beyond) it is important to have a Long term, a mentor can help you reach your career goals, but initially, your mentor's main role is to help you navigate the



- Be willing to go the extra mile - You want to be seen as someone who is willing to work hard and do what is needed to get things done. Arrive early and stay until the work is complete.
- Build effective working relationships – It is crucial to develop good interpersonal skills and get along well with others in your organization.
- Be flexible – Your duties and responsibilities may frequently change, as you complete assignments and project needs change. You must be able to adapt to new situations and be open to new ideas.
- Believe in yourself – Imposter syndrome is a typical feeling in your first job or a new job. Remember that you were hired because your employer saw in you the skills, talents and abilities to perform the duties of the job.

CONTINUE LEARNING & DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

Conduct a listening and observation tour during your first 90 days. Listen to and observe your co-workers before jumping into a discussion. Colleagues in senior positions or who have worked in the organization for several years have critical organizational and operational knowledge.

Pay attention. Not only will you gain information that is relevant to your job, but also you will learn about your company's culture and your co-workers' distinctive personalities. You will also learn quickly that the working world is very different from the insular life on campus.

During your first year (and beyond) it is important to have a mentor. A mentor can help you navigate the unwritten rules of your organization, coach and counsel you, give you feedback and insight, and help you get on—and stay on—the right path.

Most businesses rely on a team of people to get work accomplished, and you may be asked to work with someone whom you would not interact with or become friends with in a social environment. The following tips can help you develop effective working relationships:

- Learn as much as you can about the organization – how it has structured and managed how decisions are made, how people communicate, and the corporate culture.
- Determine what other people and departments do in the organization and how it will impact and affect your work.
- When you begin meeting your peers, be friendly and open to working with everyone
- Treat everyone with respect. Remember, administrative support is essential to any organization, and it is critical to have positive working relationships with your support staff.
- Learn to communicate and work well with all types of people. Learn how to negotiate differences, avoid or manage conflict and see others' perspectives.

FIND A MENTOR

Many organizations have formal mentor programs: If yours does, be sure to take advantage. If there is no formal program, seek out an informal mentor or mentors. A good mentor:

- Can help you acclimate into the organization and help you chart your career path.
- Is someone whom you admire and has a good reputation in the organization or field.
- Provides objective, outside perspective, and is ideally not someone in your department.

Schedule regular times to meet with your mentor, and write down topics and questions so you are prepared for your meetings. This will allow you the opportunity to listen and learn about various aspects of your new job, company, new trends and technologies, corporate culture, industry, while also making efficient use of both you and your mentor's time. Additional topics to discuss are your progress, what you have learned, what you would like to learn, your career goals, your mistakes, and your successes.

WORKING WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

Remember, your supervisor is not like your college professor or your best friend.

- Your supervisor often wants you to have or get information and does not give you a syllabus with an outline of expectations or timelines

- Supervisors expect you to think critically and problem solve. They expect solutions to problems, not an explanation of the problem with no possible solutions.
- Unlike your professor, supervisors do not invite debate, if asked to complete a task; the expectation is that the task is completed.

It is your supervisor's role to make sure you contribute to the organization's goals. It is in your best interest to make your supervisor look good

- Complete work on time and with excellent quality
- Act like a professional at all times, and maintain a positive attitude

To make your working relationship with your supervisor a positive one, determine your supervisor's style.

- How do they manage projects and make decisions?
- Which communication method does they prefer: email, memos or meeting in person?
- How do they let you know expectations or feedback?
- Be open to feedback, and seek out constructive feedback periodically, this will help you correct mistakes or improve your processes quickly, as well ensure there are no surprises during formal evaluations.

If problems arise, communicate your concerns to your supervisor, and offer potential solutions. Meet at your supervisors convenience and ask respectfully how you can work together to remedy the situation.

CLOSING OUT THE YEAR

New hires in virtually every industry can expect a yearly performance review, and some employers require them at the end of the 90-day probationary period, or after the new hire's first six months of employment.

- Use your performance review to your professional advantage.
- Build on your supervisor's comments to assess your work style and improve your performance. Your review can help you get to the next step in your career.

With the right combination of a strong work ethic, the willingness to learn and improve, and the ability to accept constructive feedback, this year can be an amazing learning opportunity, and can help you lay the foundation for later career success.

*Information courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers and adapted from Scripps College website.



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