


Keeping On Track

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6 Tips on How to Get Ahead Once You Landed Your First Job

It's a huge accomplishment to land your first job out of college, all of the hours of resume building, interviewing and networking finally resulted in an offer letter. So now that you have that job and are getting into the swing of a 9 to 5 office schedule, below are some tips to keep in mind to help you get ahead in your career path.

1 Take a menial task and do it exceptionally well

My first job out of college I was asked to help the training department arrange the meals for their monthly training workshops. When I looked at what they were spending per meal per person it was easy to see that there were a ton of less expensive catering options available. I quickly got prices from local restaurants and saved their department \$20,000 annually. If you are just starting out at work, odds are people are going to assign you a lot of tasks that they don't feel like doing. These assignments probably won't be as intellectually stimulating as the work you did in college, but you should take the time to do them to the best of your ability.

2 Avoid too much water cooler talk

Usually every office has one or two people who seem to spend more time talking with other co-workers about their personal lives than doing actual work. It is never appropriate for anyone other than the boss to address this behavior, so you shouldn't mention that you didn't graduate top of your class by loafing around kitchen all day. However, you should be careful to balance being polite to these people and not getting pulled into never ending conversations about their home upgrades.

3 Offer to help a co-worker who seems to be a bit overwhelmed

Once you have your bearings at work, look around to see if someone else is struggling to keep their head above water. This person should be someone you look up to and has a reputation around the office for being a workhorse. It's a good idea to forge strong relationships with people who might have some say in your next promotion.

4 Don't be the last to arrive or the first to leave

Usually offices have expectations of when people get in and when they leave that are pretty standard. However, people tend to notice the person who always arrives late and then sprints out the door at 5pm. To be honest it's pretty hard to miss because you are working with these people day in, day out, so you pick up on their habits. Granted there might be a day when your alarm doesn't go off and you are just inevitably a little late. As long as it's an exception to the rule and not a rule, it's typically fine.

5 Observe the office culture and adapt to it

Every office has their own specific office culture. As the new person walking in, it's your responsibility to figure it out quickly and to adapt to it. Not to scare you, but there are ways to walk into landmines that you had no idea were planted there. When you are new to the office it's best to be overly cautious to not step on anyone's toes.

6 Avoid toxic people in the workforce

Some offices have people in the workforce who are just toxic. They love throwing people under the bus or they just love making you uncomfortable. That's why it's important to do things like come in a little early and leave a little later, help out other co-workers and come up with creative ways to save the company money. It's sort of like having a form of "career insurance" for if and when a toxic co-workers decides to test you.

For example, one day at my first job I got a new suit for my birthday and decided to dress up more than I usually would. When my toxic co-worker saw me she immediately said that I looked really nice and loudly asked if I was interviewing somewhere else. I was floored, said no and walked away. What I believe she knew was that my boss had extreme anxiety about people on his team leaving if he heard her question he would immediately get worried. So, I made a point of making a joke to him that my mom had bought me this suit for my birthday and I wore it to thank her for the nice gift; I didn't mean to worry Colleen that I was interviewing somewhere else and next year would maybe just ask for a Netflix subscription.

