

Camo to Career

The Veteran's Guide to Career Success

First Edition



VETERAN
TRANSITION
PUBLISHING

By Dr Dustin D. Lange, Dr. Nicholas J. Osborne, Terry Arndt & Kirrin Coleman

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✓ **Here are ten things you can do
today to boost your career:**

- ☐ Connect with colleagues.
- ☐ Become a member of a professional organization in your field.
- ☐ Google yourself. If potentially embarrassing information or images come up, delete or bury them. (See Chapter 18)
- ☐ Set up or update your LinkedIn, Twitter, or other relevant social media accounts with your professional goals in mind.
- ☐ Set 5 short-term, 5 mid-range, and 5 long-range professional goals.
- ☐ Check out your college's Career Services and Alumni Office websites to see what resources are available to you.
- ☐ Take the initiative on a project at work.
- ☐ Review your paystub.
- ☐ Create a file to keep track of your professional accomplishments.
- ☐ Identify a mentor in your organization or in your field.

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YOUR NEXT MISSION: YOUR NEW CAREER

*Choose a job you love, and you will
never have to work a day in your life.*

Confucius

Each year over 200,000 service members transition from the military and subsequently become *veterans*. Most veterans have little exposure to the private sector prior to joining the military. Additionally, with a few exceptions, the only schools and education they've experienced have been directly tied to their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or their unit's training requirements. The resulting lack of civilian work experience and limited postsecondary education creates one of the largest obstacles for veterans during their transition out of the military.

As a student you might be so busy managing your academic commitments that the idea of preparing for a job after graduation seems ambitious to say the least. And it is ambitious. However, after you've settled into your routine as a student, set aside some time to learn about ways of getting "relevant experience" while you're in college.

Educational employment can help you gain experience while you're pursuing your degree. The most common kind of educational employment is the internship, but there are many other options available, including part-time jobs, co-ops, volunteering, externships, and work study. All educational employment is valuable: it adds to your experience and confidence, bolsters your resume, and positions you to find a job right out of school. In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, students with internships are more likely to be offered a job upon graduation and more likely to be offered a higher salary than their counterparts who did not do internships.

As a veteran, you already possess invaluable practical experience, discipline and “real world” knowledge. Being reliable and putting in long hours to get the job done are second nature to you. Building on these strengths and highlighting your gifts to a civilian audience is part of your mission as a student as is locating the resources and allies that will play an integral role in the process. To support you with this endeavor, this chapter will

- Provide an overview of the different types of educational employment available
- Recommend ways to find educational employment opportunities
- Discuss the benefits of networking
- Give tips on finding a good fit with educational employment
- Highlight veteran-specific resources

Research careers of interest

Pop quiz. What does being a student and looking for a job have in common? Answer: They both require extensive research and strategy. Throughout your years in college, part of your research should include forecasting the job market to see which fields are in high demand and which ones are saturated. Ask yourself if a passion is best suited as a hobby or if there is potential for this to be your career. To support your investigation, consider starting with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics. Its Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ooh/) provides comprehensive information concerning the projected needs of various occupations as well as required training and median pay. Knowing the requirements of and anticipated openings in your field of interest will assist with strategically mapping out things like internships, certificates, workshops, and other career-related endeavors.

In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower



Types of educational employment

Sure, you want to have an impressive resume when you hit the workforce as a veteran and new graduate. But educational employment is about more than adding bullet points to the “relevant experience” section of those job applications. It’s also about learning what interests you and what your strengths and weaknesses are. The most valuable aspect of some internships is that they teach you the ins and outs of a particular field – and sometimes you learn that you *don’t* actually want a future in that field. You can get some amazing hands-on experience while you’re in school. Here are some options:

Internships. Internships are short-term employment assignments during which you receive valuable hands-on training and experience in a particular career field. Some internships last a college term, while others may be a year long or take place during summer break. Many colleges actually coordinate internships for students, placing them with a particular company or organization and awarding college credit for the completed internship. Usually you have to pay tuition for this kind of internship and you may have to complete a project at the end of the

experience. Other internships are an agreement between the organization and the student. Students do not receive any college credit for these kinds of internships and do not have to pay any tuition. Some internships are paid positions.

Cooperative education. Similar to internships, cooperative education programs give students a chance to apply their college learning by working in their chosen field. The student, college, and company or organization agree on the scope of the work the student will do. Often, students get paid for their cooperative education work. They also have coursework and classes associated with their work experience.

Externship. An externship is a mini-internship. During an externship a student spends a brief period of time, perhaps a day or a week, following an employee of a business or organization through his or her workday. Externships give students a quick view of a career and the types of tasks and challenges one encounters on a daily basis in that career. An example is a “ride along” with a police department. Many college students complete externships during school breaks.

Volunteering. As a veteran, you’re not a stranger to serving others. While many college students volunteer because they enjoy it and they are committed to supporting a worthy cause, volunteering can also be a great way to get hands-on experience in the field of your choice. For example, if you are interested in working in education, you might volunteer for an after-school program or as a tutor. If you are interested in pursuing a medical career, volunteering at a hospital or medical clinic would be fulfilling and give you valuable real-world training.

Summer and part-time jobs. Most college students work at some point during the year, so it makes sense to choose jobs that give you experience in your chosen field. Lifeguarding may be fun and active, but working for a local law firm would be more valuable for a student interested in pursuing a law degree.

Work study and veteran status. You may be able to find valuable work experience without ever leaving campus. Many colleges offer work study programs in which students work in order to subsidize their tuition and other expenses. Talk with your advisor and your school’s employment office to see if there are opportunities that would be relevant to your career choice.

Also, be sure to check with your school’s Veterans Certifying Official as there may be positions available to work with veterans on campus, such as through Financial Aid or the Veterans Office. For more information on the Department of Veterans Affairs Work Study program and for an application, see www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22-8691-ARE.pdf

Finding educational employment opportunities

Your college probably offers all sorts of educational employment opportunities, both on campus and with companies and organizations that have developed relationships with the college. However, such positions can be quite competitive and hard to come by. Oftentimes, to secure the perfect educational employment, you will have to do your own legwork. Here’s how:

Get to know your instructors. College instructors are a wellspring of information and often have excellent advice about internships and other opportunities to further your career. Also, they typically have established relationships with industry leaders. Make an appointment during office hours and see what kinds of opportunities they would recommend.

Visit the career center. This is the “go-to office” on campus for everything career-related. It’s a good idea to visit the career center early in your college career, as it will have resources available to help you map out your major and career plans. Career centers are an instrumental resource for discovering the various types of internships, events, workshops, career fairs, and employer information sessions available on your campus. Many career centers also provide mock interviews along with guidance on how to write an effective cover letter and resume.

Check the alumni center. Your college alumni center probably maintains a database of alumni with information about their professions. See if your alumni center will furnish you with a list of alumni who work in your desired career and who might be willing to speak with you about opportunities. Even if the alumni you talk with don’t end up knowing of an appropriate educational employment opportunity for you, they would probably be willing to give you helpful recommendations and advice.

Pick up the phone. Find local businesses and organizations relevant to your career choice. Research the ones that most interest you, then call their human resources department to ask if there are any educational employment opportunities available.

Check professional and trade associations. Professional associations and clubs often help their member businesses and organizations find quality candidates for internships, volunteer positions, and part-time work listings. Even if the association does not currently have a lead on an educational employment opportunity, it might give you contact information for a company that does.

Check the veterans office. Recognizing what excellent employees veterans make, many large-scale companies now have a designated veterans recruiter. Many employers looking to hire veterans or offer internship opportunities will contact both the Career Center and Veterans Office. Some job announcements may also be posted in a Veterans Lounge or on a school’s Student Veterans of America (SVA) Facebook page. Check with your school’s Veterans Certifying Official and SVA chapter for more information.

Network. As is the case with post-college employment, networking is essential to finding a position. According to the Department of Labor, organizations tend to hire people they know or who are referred to them by people they trust. You should talk with family, friends, and community organizations such as the Rotary and American Legion who might have a connection – or who might know someone who has a connection – to the industry or organization you’re trying to get into.

More on networking

The role of networking can't be overstated when we talk about locating opportunities and jobs. At this point in your life you don't necessarily need a lot of high-powered contacts. Just take time to connect with people – instructors, other students, community members, and people you served with. Your network is simply all the people you know. In college, you will probably expand your network exponentially. Connecting with others will make your college years more interesting and fulfilling.

Social media

As you begin transitioning toward a career, it is now a good time to reflect on your use of social media, which can be a great way to network – or lead to complete disaster. Assume that professors and potential employers will be able to see everything on your Facebook or LinkedIn account. Even “privacy” settings do not guarantee privacy, and plenty of people have found out the hard way that employers can gain access. Make sure the image you're projecting online isn't detrimental to your current reputation or future job prospects. Refer to Chapter 18, Your Career and the Internet, for more advice on social media strategies.

Finding a good fit

Your time is at a premium and the last thing you want to do is to commit to something that ends up being a worthless experience. Sure, you can expect some growing pains while in an internship or cooperative education job, but it should also help you hone your skills and expand your understanding of the field. Before you accept an educational employment position, ask yourself these questions:

- Will this position help me develop the skills and experience I will need to land the job I want when I graduate?
- Do I fully understand the job description and expectations? Can I fulfill them?
- What kinds of projects will I be working on? What have previous students worked on and what were their results?
- What kind of compensation will I be receiving? If it's not financial, will I be receiving educational credit or valuable work experience?
- What kind of expenses might I incur if I accept this position? Will I need to pay for transportation costs? Will I need to get a new wardrobe?
- Will my status as a veteran provide me with a recruitment advantage or accelerated promotional opportunities?

Veterans' preference

According to the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over others in hiring for virtually all federal government jobs. And as a bonus, many state and county jobs also award veterans' preference! Naturally, there are a few forms to fill out in order to apply for this preference, and you may need to

gather a few documents first, so if you plan to apply for Veterans' preference, don't wait until the last minute to complete these steps.

Check out this brochure for more information:

www.dol.gov/vets/Education%20and%20Outreach/Program%20Brochures/PREFERENCE.pdf

Veteran-specific resources

An added benefit of being a veteran is that there are many county, state and federal offices in addition to community-based organizations such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) that want to see you succeed. Although this list is not exhaustive, it provides several starting points to assist with your job search and networking. The many resources available are free of charge. Should anything pop up in your career search that requires a fee, be sure to inspect it closely. Also, be sure to check with your Veterans Office and other student veterans for more recommendations on resources.

CareerOneStop

www.careeronestop.org

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and a partner of the American Job Center network, CareerOneStop provides support with identifying employment that matches your skills and interests, information on salary ranges for specific careers, and a robust job search engine.



Each state maintains a designated office for veterans. To locate the

VA office in your state, visit:
www.va.gov/statedva.htm

Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)

www.dol.gov/vets

VETS is a comprehensive resource that administers programs to meet the employment and training needs of veterans and eligible spouses. Here you can explore career options, translate your military experiences into civilian language, and receive specialized guidance on searching for a rewarding career.

Department of Veterans Affairs, MyCareer@VA

www.mycareeratva.va.gov

Do you want to give back and continue your service by helping veterans? If so, MyCareer@VA is a program from the VA Learning University that helps you build the career you want at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA also offers competitive internships for current students and recent graduates.

Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Employment Center (VEC)

www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs

The VEC is the federal government's single authoritative internet source for connecting transitioning service members, veterans and their families to meaningful career opportunities.

Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.

**General of the Armies
George Washington**



Department of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment

www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab

For veterans with a disability rating, this is an excellent program that provides personalized counseling and support to help with career choice, benefits coaching, and job search.

Disabled Veterans of America (Veterans Job Search)

www.dav.org/veterans/veterans-job-search/

The DAV offers free assistance from specially trained National Service Officers to link service-injured or ill veterans to job training and job assistance programs.

G.I. Jobs: Jobs for Veterans

www.gijobs.com

This site provides an updated list of “hot jobs for veterans” in addition to highlighting strategies for identifying careers of interest and coordinating a job search.

Hire Veterans

www.hireveterans.com

The name says it all. This active job board connects veterans to industry leaders. Job seekers can also post their resumé and access a collection of career-based resources.

Military.com

www.military.com

This expansive site is a go-to for finding resources for job searches, skills translation, résumé building, career advice, job fairs, transition support and employers looking to hire veterans.

Military-Friendly

www.militaryfriendly.com

A division of Victory Media, this helpful site provides an exhaustive list of schools and employers designated as “military-friendly”

Military One Source

www.militaryonesource.mil

This comprehensive site is a hub of information on a variety of topics that support active duty service members, veterans, and their families. Their Education and Employment link provides specific assistance for employment matters.

MilitaryHire: Jobs for Veterans and Transitioning Military

www.militaryhire.com

This site has been developed and is maintained by a team of military veterans and corporate hiring authorities.

National Resource Directory

www.nrd.gov

The NRD is a comprehensive directory that provides access to thousands of services and resources at the national, state and local levels. Service members, veterans, family members and caregivers can find information on key topics such as healthcare, employment, education, and counseling. Their handy search engine allows you to locate resources by state and zip code.

Stars and Stripes Veteran Job Center

www.veteranjobs.stripes.com

This special website has an assortment of career and employment resources specifically for veterans, including a search engine and active job board.

TAKE ACTION NOW

Get your career started today by taking these steps:

- 1. Go to your school's Veterans Office and Career Center webpage. Identify the types of services and resources they provide and make a list of the items that interest you most. Make an appointment and visit each office in person.**
- 2. Discuss educational employment opportunities with your advisor or Career Counselor. What types of placements have other students received? What kinds of positions would he/she recommend for you? What kinds of prerequisites are there for getting the types of placements you would like?**
- 3. Research businesses or organizations in your community that you might be able to volunteer for or intern with in the future. Make a phone call and find out about potential opportunities and their requirements.**



LEVERAGING YOUR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

I think a lot of folks have a very difficult time translating their military experience into language and terms that are commonly used in the civilian workforce.

Rear Admiral Michael White

Veterans make up one of the most valuable human resource talent groups entering America's workforce. Transitioning veterans enter the civilian workforce with unique qualifications. They have been ingrained with a military culture of hard work, dedication, teamwork, and a true understanding of an organization's hierarchy. Because of their years of military experience, they already possess the various soft skills, vocational skills, diverse real world experiences and resiliency necessary to thrive in the global economy. Veterans can be a driving force to help companies reach and surpass financial goals, improve innovation and expand into new and creative horizons.

According to the National Association of Veteran Serving Organizations (NAVSO), employers struggle with human capital management more than any other challenge. Employers cite lack of soft skills—the character traits and interpersonal skills that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people—as even more problematic than a lack of certification or education. For this reason, employers are increasingly listing soft skills as a critical component of their job descriptions.

As a veteran, you already possess these critical soft skills and the unique traits that industry leaders value. Your mission now is to translate your military experience in your resume, cover letters, and interviews in a way that focuses on your career readiness.

To support you with this endeavor, this chapter will

- Discuss important skills and attributes that employers seek
- Highlight a list of various soft skills you likely acquired through your military service
- Guide you on how to translate military training effectively for a civilian employer

Soft skills and attributes employers seek

The overarching purpose of this chapter is to get you to think about your own experiences from the military and then describe those experiences in civilian terms through the soft skills you have attained. At the same time, we want you to be familiar with the talents and characteristics that employers are seeking.

The following two lists comprise the top 10 skills employers seek and the top 10 attributes employers are looking for on a candidate's résumé according to a 2015 Job Outlook report from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Top 10 skills employers seek

(In order of importance)

1. Ability to work in a team structure
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems (tie)
3. Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
4. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell to and influence others

Top 10 attributes employers seek on a candidate's résumé

(In order of importance)

1. Leadership
2. Ability to work in a team
3. Communication skills (written)
4. Problem-solving skills
5. Strong work ethic
6. Analytical/quantitative skills
7. Technical skills
8. Communication skills (verbal)
9. Initiative
10. Computer skills

After reading through the two lists, you will probably agree that you possess at least some, and maybe even the majority, of these skills and characteristics from your service. If so, congratulations! You have what employers are looking for in new hires. The next step is to craft a resume that highlights those talents.

Highlight soft skills developed in the military

Veterans have an abundance of skills to offer to potential civilian employers--especially soft skills, such as self-discipline, leadership, decision making, and communication skills. However, translating these experiences to civilian employers can be challenging because the cultures and languages can seem like polar opposites. The purpose of the list below is threefold. First, we'll point out some of the key soft skills you likely acquired during your time in the service. Second, we'll provide a vocabulary you can use that relates to the language employers are familiar with. And, third, we'll give you examples of how you can write and discuss your soft skills in resumes, cover letters, and during interviews.

10 Key soft skills service members likely acquired during their military service

1. Leadership

Related vocabulary: direct, motivate, inspire, mentor, encourage, develop, manage, supervise, guide

Examples: Builds and sustains diverse teams that successfully meet the requirements of the organization; fosters motivation and enhances morale; effectively manages staff from diverse backgrounds; enhances performance through constructive supervision; encourages initiative and candor among staff.

2. Verbal communication

Related vocabulary: speaking, public speaking, persuasive speaking, two-way communication, train, teach

Example: Clearly articulates thoughts and ideas; communicates with clarity and verve; researches and understands audience and purpose.

3. Written communication

Related vocabulary: write, compose, edit, craft, report, document

Example: Writing is clear and precise; carefully crafts written documents; articulates ideas well in writing.

4. Teamwork

Related vocabulary: team player, cooperation, collaboration

Example: Works well with others from diverse backgrounds to perform team tasks; establishes productive relationships with other team members; identifies with the team and its goals.

5. Resilience

Related vocabulary: triumph over adversity, productive stress management

Example: Consistently demonstrates mental agility and willpower during periods of adversity; maintains balance and perspective in stressful situations.

6. Setting the example

Related vocabulary: accountable, follows set guidelines, reliable, dependable

Examples: Is reliable, responsible, and dependable in fulfilling obligations; diligently follows through on commitments and consistently meets deadlines; displays integrity and honesty in all workplace interactions.

7. Conscientiousness & attention to detail

Related vocabulary: respect for procedures, discipline, autonomy, productive

Examples: Is accountable, self-directed and diligent; meticulously checks work to ensure that all essential details have been considered.

8. Project planning

Related vocabulary: project management, strategic planning, organize, coordinate, plan, schedule, delegate

Examples: Identifies resources; prioritizes various competing tasks and activities so that work is completed effectively and efficiently; finds new and innovative ways of organizing work areas or planning to accomplish work more efficiently.

9. Decision making

Related vocabulary: implement, identify, evaluate, assess

Examples: Chooses the best solution or option in a timely and decisive manner, even in ambiguous situations and without assistance when appropriate; analytical abilities enhanced by experience, education, and intuition.

10. Critical thinking

Related vocabulary: evaluate, analytical thinking, reason, interpret, problem solve

Examples: Demonstrates mental agility and the ability to reason; anticipates obstacles and identifies problems; locates, gathers, and organizes relevant information; generates alternatives; evaluates and analyzes information and applies what is learned.

This list is not exhaustive and you have probably developed additional soft skills through your specific military training, professional development courses, and on-the-job experiences beyond those listed. For example, you might be conscientious, have courage, demonstrate initiative, show good judgment, and manage

the work of others well. You might also have great interpersonal skills, or be safety conscious, or demonstrate careful attention to detail. You should think of this list only as a starting point. Once you have translated your skills and experience from military jargon into terms the civilian workforce can relate to, you'll be ready to write a convincing résumé or cover letter and to speak with confidence in an interview.

Tip: When writing about the soft skills you have developed, use specifics whenever possible. For example, "Responsible for the training and managing of (36) individuals in the organization."

Translate your military experience into civilian language

Served as an 11B team leader and completed two deployments in support of OEF and OIF. Supervised and drafted EERs for seven E4s and two E3s. Conducted monthly PMCS on 5 vehicles worth an estimated 700K. Honorable discharge.

This all sounds good, right? Well, that depends on your audience.

As a veteran the use of acronyms is second nature. However, to a potential employer this type of resume will need to be accompanied with a manual to decipher the code and figure out what exactly it is you're talking about. To ensure that all your hard work in the military is accounted for, it is imperative that you keep your prospective employer in mind when writing your resume. Keep the language simple and approach it from a civilian's perspective. Thankfully, with more veterans returning to school, many career centers have a designated staff or at least an employee who has received specialized training and is familiar with veterans' unique experiences. This person can also provide a fresh pair of eyes to ensure that you effectively capture your strengths in ways that are easy to understand. Also, the Veterans Skills Translator is another indispensable resource to support your career efforts.

MILITARY.COM VETERANS SKILLS TRANSLATOR:



This handy tool translates your military experience into civilian skills!

www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator

Use your military records

The U.S. military is renowned for its organizational structure and the professional development of its employees. When you first start preparing to write a resume you should dust off that old footlocker with all of your military documents you strategically kept organized during your service and think about how you can highlight these strengths. For example, Fitness Reports, Counseling Reports, Rater and Self Rater Evaluations, and Letters of Reference are excellent resources for your career pursuits and clearly document the softs skills you attained over the years. As the old adage goes, "don't reinvent the wheel." Chances are you have all of this helpful information available; review it and use it for your next step.

Military schools and previous professional development

You'll also want to leverage your experiences in military schools and professional development trainings when you're building your civilian resume. If you served in the infantry or combat related fields, you may feel like you have few skills employers are looking for. However, basic training, boot camp, non-commissioned officer courses, candidate school and many others are built around training exactly the skills employers want. For example, the Army's Warrior Leadership Course, formerly known as Primary Leadership Development Course, is a month- long course focused on the art of leading small teams. During the course, soldiers learn critical management techniques, as well as the crafts of technical writing and giving effective oral presentations. These are all in-demand soft skills civilian organizations need, especially in mid- to senior-level jobs.

Army's Warrior Leadership Course	
Military Skills	Civilian Relevance
Leading & managing subordinates	Staff supervision, evaluation, task direction
Technical writing	Written communication
Drill & ceremony	Attention to detail
Conduct military briefs	Clear & concise communication
Tactical leadership	Leading in diverse environments

Military Training Received		Skills Employers Want	
Marine Corps Sergeant's Course (Seven Week Course)		Mid-to-senior-level civilian job skills	
Gives impromptu speeches	➡	Oral Communication	
Develops plan of action despite uncertainty	➡	Decision making/decisiveness	
Gains buy-in from peers	➡	Leads, motivates, and inspires others	
Debates, considers, and reconsiders positions	➡	Critical thinking	
Writes and revises analytical essays	➡	Clear written communication	
Learns how to create long-range, annual, and quarterly training plans	➡	Experience training others	

BOOTS ON THE GROUND EXERCISES

1. Draft a resume. Take the content from this chapter and highlight your military background, education, soft skills and other pertinent information. For examples of resume formats and structure, go back to the resources section in the first chapter. Several of the resources listed have excellent content available to guide you on the mechanics of writing an effective resume and cover letter.

2. Take your first draft to your college's Veterans Office.

Request a fresh set of eyes to look it over and provide feedback. Are you using language that a civilian employer will understand? Are you trying to include too much or too little information? Are there typos? After updating your resume, take it to your college's Career Center and repeat the process.

3. Now that you've got a polished resume it's time to pilot it.

Reach out to a community-based veterans organization or a local Rotary chapter in your area. Many Rotaries consist of local business leaders who look at resumes on a regular basis. See if there is a volunteer available to proofread your résumé.

Attention Readers

The remaining chapters of this book have been condensed. To receive a full version of the book, or to place your order, please contact us today.



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MAKING A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION

Ten seconds. That's about how much time you have to make a lasting first impression. (It's actually a little less time than that, but we'll round it up to simplify things.) Whether you're on a date, at an interview, or on day one of a new job, those first ten seconds have to be good. No biggie, right? Just enroll in some acting classes, hire a vocal coach, work out like a fiend, and convince some cheery talk show host to treat you to a total wardrobe makeover.

Here's the part where your blood pressure skyrockets while we tell you why humans are wired to make snap judgments and how it's really a good thing, a survival tactic we carry with us from the cave to the cubicle. Imagine, after all, the poor caveman who carefully deliberated, weighing the pros and cons of taking action when confronted by a charging bear. There are benefits to the quick appraisal: It saves time and energy. Also, our instincts are pretty reliable. We have inherent expertise that tells us, "Shifty eyes plus muttering plus clenched fists: bad. Nice eyes plus clear voice plus smile: very, very good." We don't have to take a body language seminar to know who's a potential threat and who's a potential mate.

Great, you say. Love the snap judgment when appraising, but it's a little nerve wracking to be the appraised. Plus, all this talk of bears and clenched fists raises the anxiety level a few notches. OK, relax. Because here's the part where we tell you what you can do to ensure you do make a great first impression on your new bosses and coworkers. And it doesn't involve a vocal coach or a total wardrobe makeover.

It does, however, mean debunking some favorite sayings, such as "Looks aren't everything" and "It's what's inside that counts." Yes, yes, but...the truth is that people judge on appearances first, then on personality and performance. So we have to pay attention to how we look and the impression we create.

Grooming and dress

You may have just spent several years or decades wearing a uniform, which made deciding what to wear an easy choice in the morning. But now as you transition into civilian employment, how you dress can directly impact the impression you make on others. Grooming and dress are the first things people notice about you, long before they know anything about your work ethic or crystalline brilliance. Luckily, it's fairly easy to manage this aspect of your image and it doesn't necessarily have to cost a year's salary.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANIZATION

The robots of this world can judge how good a work situation is with hard, quantitative data: Add salary (X) to benefits (Y) and advancement potential (Z), then divide by commute time (C). That's it. The job is good if it pays well, offers a fancy title, and doesn't take two hours and three trains to reach. But experienced professionals will tell you that the feel of the company is critical to job satisfaction. Yep, the feel. Or, in office speak, the company culture.

Do you remember reporting to your first duty station? After going through your check-ins with all the different departments and meeting the XO and CO you probably began to grasp the distinctive culture of the unit. Similarly, each company has a unique personality, composed of its values, structures, and behaviors. When you first get the job and begin to develop the skills and procedures that relate to your position, you'll also start to figure out the organization's culture. More importantly, you'll begin to understand how you interact with this culture.

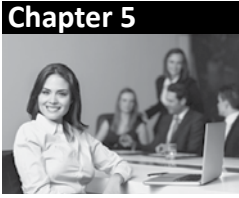
It's kind of like moving to a new country: Some of the traditions and expressions will seem familiar immediately, while others become clear with time and translation. Because job satisfaction directly relates to how well the organization's personality meshes with your own, you'll want to get the lay of the land early on. Consider this chapter your guide to understanding your organization. We'll provide a thorough definition of organizational culture, map out how you can assess your organization's personality, and offer tips on how to work with it.

Two ears, one mouth

There's an old saying that we have two ears and one mouth because we're meant to listen twice as much as we speak. While in boot camp, this maxim was ever so important to prevent unwanted attention from your drill instructors. Keep that saying in mind as you navigate the first weeks and months of your new job. Interviews are meant for showcasing your achievements, impressing everyone with your knowledge, and just plain selling yourself. But after the interview is over it's time to show how well you adapt, which means more watching and listening and less talking.

Here's how to start out right:

Watch. Observe body language and how people in the company interact. Where do people gather? Who are the leaders? How much space do employees give each other? Is it a heads-down environment—everyone working quietly



You've heard of sticker shock and culture shock, but here's a new condition you should know about: Reality shock. Reality shock is the state many recent graduates find themselves in a week or so into their first job, when their expectations for the job collide head-on with the reality of the organization's expectations of them. So if your eyes ache from the blur of entering data, and you become an expert user of the copier machine, know this: Everyone starts somewhere.

Open up a copy of Forbes or Fortune and scan the pages. All those high-powered executives? You can bet that almost every one of them put in their time filing, copying, entering data, and doing all the tasks considered, well, boring. The vast majority of professionals paid their dues in the early years of their career, just like you in your military career.

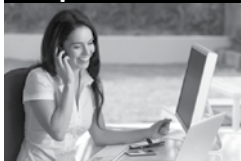
However, articles and stories that celebrate successful people often gloss over the boring stuff and head straight for the critical plays, breakthroughs, and stellar accomplishments. We want to hear about someone collating and three-hole punching about as much as we want to hear Uncle Dave's "when I was a kid I walked three miles each way to school" stories. And when most of what we know about the working world is based on television or magazine profiles, social media, or even textbooks, it's not surprising that most of us suffer from at least a little reality shock.

We hope this chapter will help you set realistic expectations for yourself, understand the most common causes of reality shock, and see what you're doing now as one step in a successful career.

The importance of having realistic expectations

Did you ever get so excited for a gathering or a big trip that when the actual event came it was anticlimactic? Not that it was bad, but it just wasn't what you imagined somehow. That gap between anticipated excitement and reality can be a let down. And even if you are generally an optimistic and motivated person, it's not uncommon to get so excited by the job search and hiring process that when you start the daily work it seems, well, just like work. Contributing to this feeling is the great sense of accomplishment you get when you graduate: Here I am, World! Qualified! Degreed! Skilled! Energetic! Master of my field! Experienced Military Professional! And then someone asks you to change the toner.

If you feel this reality shock you are by no means alone. In fact, the most common complaint of new hires after two weeks on the job is that it isn't what



In business good communication skills are critical to your success. As a strong communicator, you're more marketable and more competitive. You have a better chance of getting the job and at excelling in your profession.

Lucky for you, you have lots of chances to practice your communication skills. Every email you send, voice mail you leave, memo you write, and video conference you attend is another opportunity to make a connection with colleagues, supervisors, and clients. Of course, there's also the risk of miscommunicating. The stories of accidental "Reply Alls," wrong recipients, and inadvertently offensive emails could fill a book. It's important to understand that communication is quick, but what you say, what you write—and how you communicate it—will have a lasting impression. In short, while you can always make amends for a bad communication, you'll be better off if you get it right the first time.

This chapter covers the most common forms of professional communication and how to use them to your advantage.

Telephone communication

The phone is an essential tool of modern business life. Make your telephone communications as professional and effective as possible by following these tips and suggestions:

Answer calls with a professional and friendly greeting. Your greeting should include your company's name and your name. For example, "Good morning, this is Joe Smith at Organization Such and Such, how may I help you?"

Smile during calls. Smiling actually affects the way you speak and the tone of your voice. It will help you sound friendlier, even over the phone lines.

Ask the caller his/her name. Doing so—and using his or her name throughout the conversation—indicates that you are interested in him or her.

Speak clearly and slowly.

Avoid chewing gum or eating while on the phone.

Avoid multitasking (typing or reading, for instance) while on the phone. Your caller will be able to hear the distraction in your voice and/or hear the clicking sounds of your keyboard.



Being courteous, caring and thoughtful to your colleagues isn't just polite – it's good for your career. And while our families might have taught most of us the basics (don't talk with your mouth full, say please and thank you, don't leave the front door open), workplace etiquette can be a little more complex. The problem is that some of the rules are unspoken, so sometimes we don't even realize we've messed up until a colleague shoots us a look or we find a sticky note on our lunch bags. Not to worry, however. This chapter will give you the low down on workplace etiquette.

Using office resources

Working in an office means using shared resources, including copiers, telephone systems, printers, and the office supply closet. Every office has different protocols regarding these resources—some, for example, have entire IT departments to handle maintenance and repairs on all computer systems and accessories, while others call repair services only as needed—and you should familiarize yourself with these protocols as soon as possible. During your first week at your new job, ask someone to demonstrate how to use all office machines and the best ways to access resources. Also, find out to whom you should report low supplies, repair or maintenance needs, and problems. Some other things to keep in mind:

Leave it like you found it. Leave paper trays full, work areas neat, supplies on the right shelf, and fax machines cleared of all numbers.

Take initiative to address problems as they come up. If you notice the “Low Toner” light is blinking while using the copier, don't ignore it. Replace it or alert the person who can replace it. It may take a few extra minutes and a little bit of hassle, but you'll be happy you did it when someone does the same for you.

Don't hoard resources. Few things are more frustrating than trying to locate the paper cutter, stapler, or other supplies only to find out a colleague has stashed them in his/her workspace.

If you break it, own up to it. If you jam the copier, short out the fax machine, or topple a stack of office supplies in the closet, admit it, then try to remedy the situation. If it's beyond your capabilities – the copy repair service needs to be called, for example – let the proper person know about the problem so it can be addressed immediately.

Use the fair warning system. If you know you are about to receive a 40-page fax, or need to print a 200-page document on the shared printer, let everyone know



TIPS FOR BUSINESS-RELATED FUNCTIONS

One benefit of being a veteran is that you likely saw parts of the world and interacted with diverse populations during your service. This familiarity with other cultures and customs gives you an advantage. For example, never put the napkin in your lap (in Latvia). Lower your eyes when introduced to someone who is older or has more status than you (in Nigeria). Use both hands to present your business card (in Sri Lanka). Keep your elbows on the table. Keep your elbows off the table. Slurp your soup. Never slurp your soup. International etiquette can just about give a person whiplash. In some countries, you're expected to enter a conference room in order of status. In others, you don't talk about business at all during the first meeting.

Why are meetings, meals, and other business-related functions so highly ritualized in many countries? Even though the rules vary—from country to country and even from organization to organization—they all allow a way to show respect. In this chapter we'll cover the etiquette of business-related functions in the United States.

Business meetings

In many organizations, when you're not in a meeting you're planning for the next one. According to a study by the Wharton Center for Applied Research, some U.S. workers spend as much as 23 hours a week in meetings. What's more, most managers say that only 56 percent of meetings are productive! Get the most out of meetings by following these tips:

If you are leading the meeting...

First, ask yourself if a meeting is the best way to accomplish your objectives. If the purpose is simply to share information or provoke a discussion on a single topic, email or wiki might be more efficient.

Set an agenda and send it to everyone who will attend the meeting ahead of time. Consult with meeting participants to see if there are items they would like to add to the agenda.

Notify participants as early as possible so the meeting won't inordinately interrupt their day.

Ensure all presenters and contributors know about their role in the meeting in advance.

Select a meeting room big enough to accommodate everyone and make sure there is enough seating.



WORKPLACE CHALLENGES AND SITUATIONS

Experience and failure are great teachers, and you don't even need to take out a student loan to benefit from their lessons. No matter how prepared or skilled, no matter how good our intentions, we're bound to make mistakes or deal with work-related mental or emotional challenges. Will you fail occasionally? Yep. Will you say the wrong thing at the wrong time to the wrong person? Probably. Will you feel stressed and overwhelmed? Likely. There are some things you can do to prevent these issues, but there will be times when you, well, are presented with the opportunity to learn from your mistakes.

This chapter covers tips that can help you gracefully tackle the challenges you may face in your career, from making mistakes to feeling burned out.

Making mistakes

The question is not, "Will I make mistakes?" but rather, "How can I deal with mistakes once I've made them?" Successful people learn from their missteps and bounce back. A professional who handles his or her mistakes well will learn resilience and gain valuable experience. Here's how to fail well:

Be accountable. Own up to your mistakes immediately. Don't hope that no one will notice or that it will somehow go away if you ignore it. The longer you wait to accept responsibility, the worse the situation is likely to get.

Apologize, but don't make excuses. A sincere apology is necessary, but a litany of why the mistake was made or why it wasn't your fault will make a bad impression.

Learn from the mistake. Evaluate what you did wrong, how you handled the situation, and what you can do differently next time to avoid the same snafu.

Avoid careless mistakes. You are going to make mistakes no matter how hard you try not to, so take care to avoid making careless ones.

Don't beat yourself up. You've made a mistake, you've dealt with it the best you can – now forgive yourself and move on. There's nothing to be gained by dwelling on your mistake or becoming angry. Remember that at some point the mistake will be five days ago, five months ago, a year ago, three years ago, etc. Will it seem like that big of a deal when you look back at it from those vantage points?



WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUR BOSS

Filmmakers and screenwriters have a lot of fun portraying bosses who are ineffectual at best and crazy at worst. Real life is, as usual, more complicated. Some bosses will be inspiring and motivating, others will be enigmatic. All of them will have their quirks, but the same could be said for anyone in any organization.

Your relationship with your boss is central to your professional development. Their importance in our lives may be why they occupy such a mythic role in the movies. Relationships with bosses, however, are like any relationship: they require mutual respect, communication, compromise, honesty, and work to develop and maintain over time.

This chapter will discuss how you can develop a good relationship with your boss and how to use that relationship to grow professionally.

Develop a good relationship with your boss

There are many things you can't control when it comes to developing a good relationship with your boss. Your organization's culture will to a large extent determine your relationship, as will your and your boss's personalities. However, there are some things you can do to maintain a good relationship:

Demonstrate respect. This is obvious, and the same could be said for any person you work with, but it's so fundamental it's worth stating. The more you demonstrate respect for your boss and others in the organization, the better your working life will be.

Be honest. If your boss asks for feedback, give it to him or her. If there's a problem, admit it. And if you make a mistake, own up to it as soon as you can.

Give your boss fair notice. If you want to plan a vacation, need time off for illness, or may experience problems being on time due to family responsibilities, let your boss know. She or he may be very understanding, and at the very least will appreciate your candor so that she or he can make plans for your absence. This goes for your resignation as well. Even though your boss may not be your boss for long, she or he may be willing to serve as a useful reference or mentor. Give your boss fair advance notice of your departure to keep the relationship friendly.

Maintain boundaries. You want to have a great relationship with your boss, but you don't have to be best friends. Don't share very personal information



Eight hours a day, five days a week...some quick calculations reveal that you could spend up to 2,000 hours a year with your coworkers. Will they be your best friends? Maybe. Will one be your future spouse? Maybe. Will your relationship with them determine your job satisfaction and productivity? Absolutely.

Research shows that, after several years on the job, many people count their relationships with coworkers as their closest and most satisfying. It makes sense that we'd be drawn to the people we work with. First, we spend a great deal of time with them. Second, we have a shared experience of working with the same people in the same environment. Third, we tend to work for organizations that reflect our values, which means our coworkers usually share those values.

In the military there is clear guidance about workplace friendships, relationships, and conduct. Fraternization is a term that many service members recall, which stipulates that a strict boundary exists among personnel based on rank. Although most civilian jobs are more relaxed in this area, there are still policies and behaviors to be aware of.

This chapter will discuss office friendships, office romances, and dealing with difficult coworkers.

Office Friendships

At their best, office friendships promote goodwill among employees, improve communication, foster healthy competition, and generally make the office a better and more fun place to work. However, there can be a flip side: Sometimes office friendships breed backstabbing, gossip, hurt feelings, bad attitudes, aggressive competition, and sabotage.

Unlike friendships you form with schoolmates, neighbors, and other acquaintances, work friendships come with the caveat that something is always at stake—your career. You can—and should—develop healthy and fulfilling friendships with coworkers, just keep a few things in mind:

Remember what's at stake. If your pal at the gym or your old college roommate decides not to be your friend anymore, you may be sad, but when a work friendship goes bad, it can make your work life uncomfortable—or downright excruciating. Your former friend could tell other coworkers—or even a boss—unflattering things about you. You might even find yourself in competition for a prime assignment or promotion with your former friend, who will likely be less willing to play fair since your friendship went south.



Little Leaguers and Navy SEALs, while miles apart in terms of age and experience, would probably have some very similar things to say about teamwork. Teamwork requires trust, for example. The individuals in a team have to respect each other and take personal responsibility. Each member of the team must exert maximum effort. The same rules apply whether you're playing baseball, protecting the free world, or managing a new software product: Individual success often depends on your ability to work well with others.

Today's work culture tends to minimize hierarchical structure and favors instead collaboration and team work. Companies generally recognize and reward employees who are creative, productive, responsible, and team players.

Being a team player comes easy for some people; for others it may be more difficult. Shyness, lack of confidence, an inability to surrender control or delegate, or an unwillingness to give up individual recognition to work for the greater good – all of these traits can impede successful teams.

But even if working on a team doesn't come naturally for you, you can develop your inner team player. Here's how:

What is a team?

A team is a collection of two or more people working interdependently toward a common goal and a shared reward. The part that should be emphasized, however, is working together. Anybody can throw a group of people together and tell them they have to get something done; a genuine team, however, works collaboratively to achieve better results than they would have attained individually. Members of successful teams are:

- Motivated by a common goal
- Able to overcome their need for individual recognition in order to work for the team's success
- Able to value diversity and capitalize on the strengths of fellow team members
- Focused on action rather than duty or a fear of failure

Teams that fail fall victim to inaction, poor communication, lack of leadership, or sense of common mission. In addition, egos, conflicting goals, and competition between members for recognition and rewards can destroy a team.



MAKING CENTS OF YOUR PAYCHECK

Sure, work should be fulfilling, challenging, and personally rewarding. But it's also really nice to get the paychecks. It's a pleasant surprise to open up your first "real" paycheck if you're working for the first time at a job that pays above minimum wage. It can also be a shock for another reason: deductions. From federal income and Social Security taxes to health insurance and flexible spending accounts, deductions from your paycheck add up faster than you can say "What the heck is FICA?" In the end, your paycheck may be just 50-60 percent of what you actually earned.

Whatever you do, don't ignore those strange abbreviations noted on your paycheck. Understanding where your money goes will not only make your smaller paycheck easier to swallow, but also protect you from potential accounting mistakes. In addition, by understanding where the funds from your paycheck are going, you can develop strategies to minimize deductions, from choosing the right number of allowances on your W-4 form to selecting the appropriate insurance plans for your needs.

Typical deductions

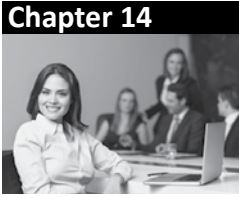
As mentioned before, there are various types of deductions that can reduce your take-home pay. Typical deductions from your paycheck include:

Federal income taxes

Federal income taxes take the heftiest chunk of cash from your paycheck. These funds go into a pot that pays for things that our elected leaders have deemed necessary, such as military to protect our country, social programs like food stamps and Medicare, and divisions of the government like the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Homeland Security.

The most confusing thing about Federal income taxes is the fact that different tax rates apply depending on your specific circumstances. This is because the Federal government uses a progressive tax system: taxable income levels are divided into brackets with lowest income brackets paying the least amount of tax. Tax brackets currently start at 10 percent and go to 39.6 percent. The more you earn, the more you pay.

So how does the progressive tax system work? Let's pretend for a moment that you were single in 2013 and you had a total income of \$51,550. After adjustments, deductions, and credits, you had a taxable income of \$41,550. Here's how your taxes would be figured if you were filing as a single taxpayer:



UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Vacation time. Retirement contributions. The ability to bring your dog to work. When evaluating the value of your job, your salary is really only half of the picture. In fact, the other half of the picture – your benefits – can be just as important to your quality of life as the amount of money you make.

Most full-time employees receive some form of health insurance programs, retirement plans, and paid leave. Some companies even offer free or reduced cost childcare, free gym memberships, paid leave for new parents, access to free or reduced cost education, and flexible work hours. However, in this age of rising insurance costs and shrinking profits, it is becoming more difficult for employers to offer all the benefits they would like. In fact, many companies are struggling to even offer health insurance coverage.

In this chapter, we'll discuss the most common types of benefits you might receive as a full-time employee, from paid time off to flexible working conditions.

Sure bet benefits

There are certain benefits employers are required by law to provide. These include:

- Providing time off to vote, serve on a jury, and perform military service.
- Complying with all workers' compensation requirements.
- Withholding FICA taxes from employees' paychecks, as well as paying the employer's portion of FICA taxes.
- Paying state and federal unemployment taxes, thus providing benefits for unemployed workers.
- Contributing to state short-term disability programs in states where such programs exist.
- Complying with the Federal Family and Medical Leave (FMLA).

Any benefits provided above and beyond these are completely at the discretion of the employer, but chances are your employer will offer at least a small menu of benefits to you. Some benefits, such as paid vacation, come at no cost to you, while others, such as health insurance, may be subsidized by your employer but may also require you to pay a portion of the cost as well, should you choose to enroll.

At the start of your employment, you should carefully consider all of the benefits offered by your employer, making sure that you understand each one and how it can impact you. It's okay not to take advantage of benefits you feel are of no use to you—free child care, for example, if you don't have children—but remember

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Many organizations greet new employees with a handbook of rules, policies, and expectations. As a new employee, you'll learn about dress codes, for example, as well as what's considered appropriate use of technology. There's a lot to learn about their expectations of you—but you should also know that there are rules, policies, and standards that they have to follow, too.

The Federal government and your state government both have laws designed to protect the rights of workers. Your organization will likely also have policies, rules, and protocols in place to help reinforce existing laws and to help create a positive and productive work environment. Even if your organization doesn't have a written policy regarding discrimination, harassment, or unemployment, it must still follow federal and state laws that provide these kinds of protections for workers. This chapter will provide you with an overview of your rights as an employee as well as an in-depth look at specific rights, such as maternity/paternity leave and discrimination protection.

Overview of employee rights

As an employee, you are entitled to the following rights:

Discrimination protection: It is against the law to discriminate during hiring and firing or while considering job performance, salary, or promotions on the basis of age, gender, race, disability, medical condition, national origin, religion or creed. Some states also protect you from being discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation or even your weight.

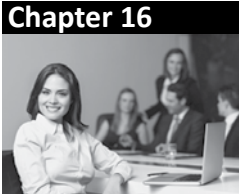
Harassment protection: You are generally protected from being harassed verbally, physically, or sexually while on the job.

Safe work environment: Employers must provide a safe working environment for employees and must provide compensation insurance to cover medical and disability costs should an employee be injured or become ill due to something that occurred on the job.

Unemployment insurance: Employers must pay for unemployment insurance to cover unemployment benefits to workers who are fired or laid off.

Wage protection: There are laws and protections in place to ensure that workers receive a minimum wage and fair wages for overtime work.

Job protection: In most cases, your job is protected should you need to take leave to attend to jury duty; fulfill military service; adopt or give birth to a child;



Average. Even the word is boring. Kind of nasally and slow, like a whine. It's no surprise, then, that no one wants to be average. We want below average cholesterol and above average intelligence, but even that seems a little dull. Who wants to go to a restaurant or a doctor with just an "above average" reputation? Who wants to be labeled "above average"? Bleh. It's as good as saying "not excellent."

So let's get rid of that word right here. In your work life you want to be way beyond average. Not even in the same realm. Instead, you'll be excellent. Superior. Remarkable. Now, in school a person needs simply to meet the standard in order to pass the class. But in work if you just meet the standard you could end up with job paralysis. Instead, you want to advance your knowledge and experience (and, yes, your salary) so you need to go beyond the basic job description on a regular basis. A dynamic, fulfilling career is made up of many daily decisions to exceed expectations.

Starting your job with the mission of proving to both your supervisors and yourself that you've got the right stuff will instill a habit of excellence. You'll become so accustomed to welcoming challenges and doing your best that remarkable job performance will be your norm. And you'll find that the energy you give will come back to you.

Now, the advice in this chapter is common sense, the stuff of Abe Lincoln stories and more than one commencement address. But there's a reason these tips are repeated in various forms by successful people: Going beyond expectations is what separates the average and above average professional from the remarkable one.

Work a full day

We know, we know. This one seems painfully obvious. However, even though conventional wisdom says to work a full day at your job if you want to excel, managers still report that many employees arrive a little late and leave a little early. And take a lot of breaks. Now, circadian rhythm and psychological studies may show that flexible hours plus a nap in the middle of the day boosts productivity and efficiency, but let's just say that most of the working world hasn't caught up to this way of thinking.

People notice if you arrive late and leave early, and they really, really notice if you show up for a meeting with sleep creases on your face. No matter how much you're actually getting done, timeliness can't be underestimated. If you get to



The nip-and-tuck approach to finances—cutting coupons and eating rice and beans for every meal—only takes you so far. At some point, you just want to make more money. There are plenty of ways to increase your income, though not all of them are pleasant or legal. Some people take second jobs or start a side business or sign up to be medical test subjects at the local university or sell their roommate's stuff on eBay. A better, often-overlooked way to make more money is simply to ask your boss for a raise.

We're not suggesting you march into your boss's office after a week on the job and declare it's high time for a pay increase. However, after you've been at your job for a year or so, reflect on where you are and what you're doing for the company. If you deserve a raise, ask for it, and get it, that little conversation with your boss could translate into a salary increase of several thousand dollars or more. And it would probably be less painful than enduring another sleep deprivation study at the local university or your best friend's wrath when he discovers his prized Pez dispenser collection has been sold on Craigslist and shipped off to Paduka.

Sure, you could get turned down if you request a raise. So? "No" is the second-best answer you could get. Don't jump in quite yet, though. Requesting a raise is a process that involves a lot of thought and preparation before you even make the appointment to talk with your boss. This chapter covers salary negotiations as well as other ways you can prepare yourself now for moving ahead in your career.

Do you deserve a raise?

This is the guiding question. We all want more money and can imagine everything we'd do with a plumped-up paycheck, but when you ask for increased compensation you need to prove you really deserve it—first to yourself, then to your boss.

You deserve a raise if you...

- consistently exceed expectations
- have increased skills and education since you started the job
- perform significant duties beyond those outlined in your job description
- frequently work overtime in order to complete projects

When *you* are certain that you've performed at a level worthy of increased compensation, you'll be in a better position to sell your boss on the idea. The next step is to determine a fair salary for your work.



Yoda. Dumbledore. Morpheus. In our quest to succeed, thrive, and do good in this world we all need a mentor. Someone to advise us, teach us to “use the force,” and guide us to the next level.

No doubt you already have had a mentor or two: a trusted teacher or professor, an older student at your college, or a friend or relative who has served as a model and inspiration for you. As you begin your career, you’ll want to find a mentor or mentors who can guide you on your professional journey.

Mentors defined

Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship based on encouragement, constructive criticism and feedback, and a mutual willingness to learn and share. Simply put, a mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor who is successful in his or her profession and has the ability and desire to teach and assist others.

Typically, the mentor is more experienced than the protégé. The protégé is usually someone trying to move up professionally and develop his or her career. The relationship benefits both participants. The protégé receives professional advice, guidance and nurturing. The mentor gets the opportunity to strengthen his or her leadership skills and the good feeling of knowing he or she is helping someone develop skills and experience.

Having a great mentor can be one of the most enriching experiences of your career. Why? A mentor can

- Help you set long-term career goals and short-term work objectives.
- Teach you about your organization, your profession, and how you can use your skills and talents to excel within them.
- Help you identify professional problems and create strategies and solutions for dealing with them.
- Give honest and useful feedback and criticism.
- Provide valuable contacts, invitations to industry events, and information and recommendations on networking in your profession.

Finding and working with a mentor

Many organizations offer mentoring programs. Some organizations even require new employees to participate in a mentoring program to help ease their entry into the corporate culture. Programs like these usually require you to fill out



You've heard the saying "It's all about who you know." However, a better statement is "It's all about who knows you." This has never been truer than at this time in your life. Developing a group of contacts and mentors—in other words, networking—is one of the most important things you can do in your early career.

Networking keeps you tapped in to the ideas, trends, and information that are relevant to your profession, makes you more visible, and helps you connect with others. However, networking doesn't necessarily come naturally. Like any other skill, it must be developed to make the most of your opportunities. Here's how.

What is networking?

Quite simply, networking is the act of meeting people with whom you can develop mutually beneficial relationships and exchange information, advice, contacts or support. A few examples of networking are:

Example 1

You attend an industry cocktail party and begin a conversation with an executive at Company X. You know for a fact that your company would love to do business with Company X. During the course of your conversation, you mention an article that the executive expresses interest in reading. At the end of the night you and the executive exchange business cards. On Monday, you email the executive a link to the article that you discussed. A few weeks later, the executive emails you to let you know that his company is looking for the services of a company just like yours to help on a specific project. You let your manager know the information you have received. Your company submits a proposal and wins a big contract—and you get big points with your manager.

Example 2

You attend the monthly meeting of your industry trade organization and meet several young professionals in your industry. After giving one of these young professionals a tip on a great restaurant to take clients to in her area, she invites you to have lunch next week with her and several of her colleagues from a company with similar interests as your. You begin to have lunch on a regular basis with this group. A few months later, a job opening that is a perfect match for your skills and talents opens up at their company. Because of your inside information and a few good recommendations from your lunch group, you land a new job—and a \$7,000 pay raise!



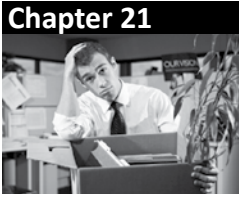
You've heard the idea that everyone is connected to everyone else by just six degrees of separation? Well, make that just two degrees of separation, thanks to social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Because of this, your online presence—and the relationships you build through social networking—is vital to building your career.

The majority of people still find jobs and get hired through personal connections. Social media is your route to making more personal connections—and to making them more, well, personal. As we mentioned last chapter, the old saw “it's not what you know, it's who you know” has morphed into “it's not just who you know, it's who knows you.” Which leads us to a critical question: What do people know about you? If they know you're skilled, trustworthy, and hardworking, they will be happy to help you connect with others. Having a strong network not only gets you the job—it also gives you the opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge with other professionals.

Now is the time to create a professional online presence and start building valuable connections. In this chapter we'll discuss the major social media sites and how you can use them to grow professionally.

Grandpa, what's Facebook?

For as long as there's been social media, there have been people predicting its death. As of the printing of this book, however, it's still very much around. Facebook, as of this moment, has 1.1 billion active users. Because of those numbers, we'll assume you're already familiar with Facebook. LinkedIn, a professional networking site you might not be using yet, has over 260 million users. On LinkedIn, users post their profiles, including job experience and education, resumes, and interests. LinkedIn individual members use the site to make professional connections and exchange ideas. Companies use LinkedIn to find new hires. If Facebook is casual Friday—or very, very casual Saturday night—LinkedIn is business-attire Monday. Facebook lends itself to informal, personal exchanges; LinkedIn is your best reflection of your professional self. Another popular means of staying connected is Twitter, which people use to post short updates or to track their friends, favorite celebrities, and organizations. There are countless other social media outlets, which ebb and flow in importance and numbers of users.



Recession, unemployment figures, consumer confidence index—most of us are more familiar with these terms than we'd like to be. Ah, for life before we ever heard “toxic asset” or “bail out.” Oh, for the days when “double dip” referred to ice cream cones, not an economic trend. While unemployment has always been a potential side effect of being in the workforce, we have to be especially savvy about it now that the unemployment rate in the U.S. hovers around 7.3%. This chapter covers how to avoid being laid off or fired as well as methods to recover from unemployment.

Signs you might lose your job

People who have been laid off or fired often say it came out of the blue. One day everything was normal, the next day they were frozen out of their organization's intranet. Often, however, there are some clues that the company's not doing well or that your position isn't secure. Here's what to look for:

Industry trends. How are your competitors doing? Are other companies in your industry experiencing layoffs, bankruptcies, or other difficulties? If so, it may be a bad sign for your company as well.

Organization trends. What is your company's financial status? For example, has the company lost a big client or contract lately?

Cost cutting. Is there a lot of talk of cutting costs and budget cuts? Is the company in a hiring freeze? Has there already been a round of lay-offs somewhere in the company? Are a lot of normal expenses being cut back – travel, expense accounts, support staff, supplies?

Bad news. Is your company at the center of negative news articles or a scandal?

Skimping and late payments. Have you noticed that bills from suppliers and service providers are being paid late? Has your paycheck been late or bounced?

People jumping ship. Have managers and other higher ups been resigning? If so, this could be a sign that they know something negative about the company that you don't know.

No new hires. When people quit or are fired, does your company assign their duties to other existing employees rather than hire new employees to replace them?

Change in management. Has your company changed hands, been bought out, or completely replaced its management?



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