

Backpack to Briefcase

Steps to a Successful Career

Fifth Edition



By Terry J. Arndt & Kirrin R. Coleman



COLLEGE
TRANSITION
PUBLISHING

EST. 1999

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Your Guide to Success

Fifth Edition



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It's also important that I acknowledge John Ricchini. John and I started this publishing business as a classroom project that started in 1998. The continued success of this business was built upon John's contributions. It still makes me laugh every time I think of the challenges we had to overcome to make this business a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Arndt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Terry J. Arndt

President, College Transition Publishing

✓ **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.
- ☐ Set up or update your LinkedIn, Twitter, or other relevant social media accounts with your professional goals in mind.
- ☐ Google yourself. If potentially embarrassing information or images come up, delete or bury them. (See Chapter 19)
- ☐ 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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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! Earning your degree is a major accomplishment. Now comes a new challenge: Launching your career. Think of *Backpack to Briefcase* as your professional guide book: it covers all the things you never think about until you really need to know them.

Backpack to Briefcase will help you make the most of these early days of your career. This guide covers what to expect on the job—as well as how to deal with the unexpected. Topics include

- How to create and maintain a professional image
- Workplace and business function etiquette
- Communication: How to say what you mean, get what you want, and build positive relationships
- Workplace interactions: the good, the bad, and the ugly
- What to do after you make a big mistake
- Finding a mentor
- Tips for getting recognized for your achievements
- Understanding your benefits, your paycheck, and your rights
- Networking strategies and resources

Backpack to Briefcase will not only take you through the first days at your new job, it will also help you advance in your career, from successfully completing a performance review to asking for a raise.



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 big deal, right? Just enroll in some acting classes, hire a vocal coach, work out like a fiend, and somehow manage to get 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 managers and coworkers. And it doesn't involve a vocal coach or a total wardrobe makeover.

Grooming and dress

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 have to cost a month's salary.

For any job, you'll want to present a well-groomed, put-together self. There are exceptions to these basic rules at some organizations, where employees take the looks-aren't-everything maxim to heart and are often spotted coming to work in what might best be termed "pajama casual." In most companies, however, the norm is definitely a professional or laid-back professional (otherwise known as "business casual") look.

So what should you wear? In some workplaces the dress code is obvious and might even be outlined in the employee handbook. In other companies the rules

might be less clear and you'll see people in suits working alongside others in jeans and sneakers. Dress according to what you see around you. Pay particular attention to the people who hold similar positions to yours: They are your most reliable resource when you're trying to figure out the wardrobe norms of the organization.

Even in a relatively casual office environment, it's worth dressing up a bit for the first few months of a new job. This is not to say that you need to wear a three-piece suit if everyone around you is in Bermuda shorts and flip-flops. However, in the case of your new job, it's better to err a little on the conservative side: A quick study of the best-dressed employee can reveal how to fit in and project professionalism.

Now let's talk about the ever nebulous "casual day." What evil but brilliant clothing marketer came up with this concept? It's ambiguous at best, a cruel and misleading conspiracy at worst. Most of us, after all, have two types of casual: Night on the Town and Painting the House. Neither of these constitutes the "casual" in casual day, though if you look around the office you might see some clothes that would fit in well at the nightclub or, on the other hand, paint splattered, torn shorts that are one washing away from the rag pile.

Casual day is ripe for confusion. Usually, it means to dress comfortably without the sloppiness afforded by truly comfortable clothes. So you can wear jeans, but not the holey ones. "Dressy" T-shirts are OK, too. Again, the best guide to what's really appropriate is to consider how supervisors and well-dressed colleagues interpret the dress code. And when meeting with clients, definitely take your look up a few notches.

What's Your Organization's Image?

Your interview and first visits to the organization will probably give you a strong sense of the organization's image and how you will fit in with it. The three most common modes of dress in today's workplace are Professional, Business Casual, and Creative. The definitions and descriptions of these categories do vary by organization and region, but this chart is a good starting place for understanding your workplace's image.



Dress Mode	Definition	Environment
Professional	Suit or sport jacket with slacks/skirt Collared shirt Conservative accessories Tie (men) Hose (women)	Banking, law, medical, engineering, insurance, sales, management, and accounting
Business Casual	Slacks (cotton OK in some offices) Knee-length (or longer) skirt Collared shirt (including golf-style shirts) Tailored sweater Coordinated accessories Hose and closed-toed shoes (required in some business casual environments)	Technology, education, journalism, retail, government, human services, and science
Creative	Anything goes (within the norms of the organization culture)	Marketing, arts, and design

How to wear it (and how not to wear it)

Here are answers to your most common style questions, as well as a few “don’ts”:

How should my suit fit? The jacket sleeves should hit your wrist bone when your arms are relaxed. About ½ inch of shirt should show beyond that.

What’s the best blouse fit? A good-fitting blouse will not pucker at the shoulders or chest. If it’s a long-sleeved blouse it should hit your wrist bone.

What’s the best trouser length? Pants should rest on the top of your shoes in front and go about ½ inch down in the back. This rule applies equally to men and women, though some pants are cropped by design.

How many shirt buttons can I leave undone? For men and women, leaving the top one or two buttons undone is generally acceptable.

What color socks should I wear? Match pants, not shoes. Traditionally, socks should not be visible unless you’re sitting down.

What’s the best heel height? Shoes with a 1 – 2 ½ inch heel are a safe bet. In some organizations, higher heels will be acceptable.

Do I need to wear hose? That depends on the organization. Bare legs and open-toed or peek-a-boo shoes are acceptable in many workplaces.

What’s the best tie length? The bottom of your tie should hit the spot between the top and bottom of your belt.

How should I accessorize? Shoes and belt should match each other.

What’s the best skirt length? Skirts should be 1 inch above the knee or longer.

Your company may have a liberal dress code—or no dress code at all—but there are some hard-and-fast rules to follow if you want to make a positive impression.

Here’s a quick list of the major don’ts:

Don’t show too much skin. All clothing should fit well and not be too tight or clingy.

Don’t come on strong. Douse yourself in perfume or cologne and you could turn people off and/or prompt an allergic reaction. Keep jewelry tasteful.

Don’t let your clothes say too much. Clothing with offensive, distasteful, or questionable slogans is best left in the back of the closet or back at the store. One exception: If you’re working for a political campaign, wearing a slogan-covered t-shirt might actually advance your career.

Maintaining a groomed workspace

Unlike the interview, your image now that you actually have the job is a product not just of how well you take care of yourself but also how well you take care of your space. The state of your desk, office, or cubicle (even your

handbag and car, in some professions) factors into your overall impression on others.

There's no revelation here, just a reminder to keep things organized and clean, especially in those first few months when you're building others' opinions of and confidence in you. Spend time setting up your office or cubicle and clean out your wallet, handbag, and briefcase.

When it comes to decorating your workspace, keep this in mind: It's an extension of you, a "personalized public space," not a private space. Make it comfortable, personal, and professional.

Non-verbal communication

Body language accounts for about half of what we say, and therefore comprises a huge part of our image. Try the following exercises to model this point. Stand with your arms crossed in front of you and eyes directed down at the floor. Say, "I'm so happy to meet you" in a cheerful voice. Or, cock your head to one side, raise an eyebrow, smile, and say, "I'll take a look at the data."

You're sending out signals all the time. Your actual words, of course, count for some of what you say. But the tone of voice and body language you employ are much more significant indicators of your meaning. The most frequently cited study on interpersonal communication states that body language and facial expressions when someone is expressing feelings and attitudes account for 55% of meaning, tone and quality of voice account for 38%, and the actual meaning of the words count for just 7%.

Eye contact, posture, fidgeting...all of these non-verbal cues can reinforce or sabotage what you verbalize. Be aware of what your body is saying. You might even want to spend some time in front of a mirror, evaluating your "neutral position" (the way you carry yourself most of the time, when you're not actively engaged in conversation).

Here are some attributes of "positive" and "negative" body language:

"Positive" Body Language

(Signals interest, confidence, enthusiasm, and/or approachability)

- Nods head
- Uses hand gestures for emphasis (excessive gestures may signal aggression, however)
- Has erect posture
- Smiles
- Blinks at a regular rate
- Body takes up space (stance, posture, and arm position say, "I belong here")

- Cocks head slightly (shows interest, but can be interpreted as confusion or flirtation)

“Negative” Body Language

(Signals boredom, insecurity, annoyance, and/or aloofness)

- Pins arms to side or across chest
- Handshake is limp or overpoweringly strong
- Slumps or hunches over
- Frowns, grimaces, or clenches jaw
- Expressionless, blank face
- Blinks too fast or stares
- Body closed off (stance, posture, and arm position say, “I don’t want to take up any space”)
- Fidgets excessively
- Rolls eyes
- Yawns or sighs

While it’s easy to adopt a professional wardrobe even if you’ve been living in workout wear for the last few years, it’s challenging to adjust your body language. After all, you’ve had decades to adopt the unconscious quirks that make up your body language vocabulary. Also, your posture, expressions, and gestures are more indelibly you than a shirt or shoes, and can’t—and shouldn’t—be discarded willy-nilly.

A few adjustments, however, might help you in your professional life. If you tend to sit back with your arms crossed during meetings, you’ll project disinterest and maybe even resistance to new ideas. Reminding yourself to sit upright and to lean forward a little when listening to others could project a radically different, and more successful, image. Just being more aware of your image will help you change it.

Verbal communication

Of course, while nonverbal communication accounts for an enormous part of one’s image, verbal communication is still important. The average person says thousands (sometimes even tens of thousands) of words a day. So what, exactly, are we saying?

The truth is that some people don’t know what they’re saying or how they’re saying it. Yet, communication skills are not optional, a bonus accessory some professionals happen to have; they are vital for every professional. Your success on the job is inextricably linked to the way you communicate.

What’s your communication style? Do you say what you mean? Do you say it effectively? What do you inadvertently communicate to others when you talk

to them? Take stock of your verbal communication skills and polish them if necessary—you'll be glad you did.

Communication styles can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as culture, gender, personality, and education. Everyone has their own personal style. Of course, that style is also dependent on one's surroundings: You probably won't use the same tone and vocabulary around your manager as you do your good friends. Understanding your own style as well as the different types you might encounter in others will give you an advantage in communicating with a broad range of people and will help you communicate more clearly. Here are some elements to consider:

Rate of speaking. Do you speak rapid-fire or back-porch? If you speak too fast, you risk losing people and/or appearing insecure. If you speak too slowly, you risk boring people and/or appearing, well, slow. Confident people know that others will listen to them, so they don't rush through their sentences. Considerate people know that they are not the only ones with something important to say.

Volume and clarity. You have good ideas and the skills to put them into action, but no one will know this about you if you mumble or speak too softly. Speak clearly, enunciate, and project confidence.

If you're really serious about assessing your verbal communication style, the best thing to do is to watch a video of yourself interacting with others. Be objective as you view the "evidence." Try to notice, not judge, your "ums," "ahs," "likes," and other inadvertent conversation habits. Consider these questions: How much time do you give to other speakers? Do you interrupt frequently, sometimes, or not at all? Is your voice audible? How do you physically present yourself? Many people find watching themselves on video about as pleasant as appendicitis during rush hour traffic. However, if you can get past the initial discomfort you'll find it's an invaluable exercise.

Another helpful practice is asking a trusted friend or family member to give you some honest and constructive feedback. Or find a group like Toastmasters International (www.toastmasters.org) that will provide an opportunity to practice public speaking in a non-threatening environment. It's a big—and for some, scary—commitment, but when you think of it as an investment it becomes clear that a little time and self-reflection now will pay off big in the future.

Email and instant messaging

Another way to make a positive (or otherwise) impression is through email and other electronic means. Here are some key points to remember about electronic communication:

Tone: Email and IM are so pervasive, it's easy to forget how artful some of the messages need to be. Word choice, punctuation, and capitalization (plus an

emoticon or two, maybe) are the only clues your reader has to your tone. Before you write an email, think about how you can communicate this information best. Sometimes a phone call or face-to-face conversation is better. If you think an email message is the best method for the situation, do take the time to compose your messages. Also, pause before you send. And with emotional emails of any sort, pause for at least 24 hours.

Face-to-Face vs. Electronic Communication: A decade ago, it would have been unheard of for next-door employees to email each other. But now it's such a norm that some companies have taken the radical step of announcing no email days in order to engage employees in more face-to-face interaction. Go with the norms of your organization, but remember that in-person communication is a great way to build real relationships.

Privacy: Ha. Privacy is SO early 20th century. Email only those things you'd feel comfortable posting on the staff room fridge. If your father likes to forward every off-color joke and meme that's ever circulated the Web, tell him in no uncertain terms that he needs to remove you from his contact list. Or he'll be supporting you for the rest of his life. IM is not as easy to track and monitor, but work is work, and it's best to save the personal material for home. In fact, many organizations have strict rules against using company technology for personal matters. Another thing to note: Any social media accounts you have will likely be viewed by someone from your workplace.

Relationships with colleagues

OK, so you're professionally dressed, perfectly postured and enunciating with the precision of a broadcaster on network news. Your work space is organized. Now what? Well, now you've got to play well with others.

You have a budding relationship with your manager already, which will develop as you get to know each other. But equally important are the relationships you build with other people in the company, whether it's your manager's manager the human resource coordinator, or the receptionist. No problem. Yes, the first 10 seconds are critical, but you have months and even years to build relationships with these people. And while the focus of this chapter so far has been on outward appearances, a good working environment depends on real people bringing out the best in each other.

These tips will take you beyond the introductions and into the early months of your new job:

Show interest. Be open to and interested in all the people you meet at your new job. Really listen to them, whether they're instructing you on the fine art of not jamming the copy machine or telling you about their volleyball league. Ask questions, make eye contact, try to remember specific details. People appreciate and respond to those who are sincere, engaging, and curious. Conversely, the quickest way to turn others off is to appear self-centered and aloof.

Project a positive attitude. Make sure that your net contribution to the office atmosphere is positive. Positive, energetic, professional, eager to work—all of these are traits of successful people. You might not always feel full of pep, but it's important to act like you're happy at your job and ready for business. In fact, you'll often find that acting energetic will improve your mood and actually give you the energy you need.

Respect your coworkers' time and expertise. You will probably need a lot of help figuring out office procedures and protocols. Asking for guidance from coworkers is one way to get to know them. Quick requests for recommendations—the best deli, the nearest dry cleaners, a good gym—can be great conversation starters. If you need something that will take more than a few minutes of a coworker's time, however, ask if you can set up an appointment. That way they will know that you value their expertise and time.

Accept invitations. In these early days on the job, you want to accept as many invitations as possible. It might be tempting to do a solo lunch so you can study your employee manual, but the most important thing to do at this stage is to connect with the people you work with. One cautionary note, however: If the conversation during these outings with colleagues heads towards gossip, be aware of your position as the new person and maintain neutrality. It's possible to be sociable without getting sucked into a clique.

Connect with all players. Everyone in the organization is important. While support staff (receptionists, secretaries, administrative assistants, office managers, and IT support) might have smaller paychecks than CEOs, they are generally very powerful people in the company. Why? They have the keys (literally) to the supply closet, have access to top management, and can get you assistance when you need it fast. When you're on deadline and the copy machine goes down, you want the go-to person to be there for you. If you've cultivated a good relationship with them, you'll be in good shape. Also, support staff knows everything about everything: They can tell you which days the manager is in a good mood and can even help you minimize the fallout of a mistake if you've made one.

It will help you professionally and personally if you show up with your best self in these early days on the job. As author Kurt Vonnegut once said, "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." If you want to be poised, articulate, personable, engaged and engaging, organized, and positive, act like you already are that way. This attitude and way of being will serve you well beyond those early, first impressions and soon you'll see it's not just about how others see you, but about how you see yourself.



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 organization is critical to job satisfaction. Yep, the feel. Or, in other words, the company culture.

Each organization 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. 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 in their cubicles or offices—or more open and collaborative? Do people take breaks? What are the workday norms—is it a 9 to 5 office that really shuts down at 5:00 p.m. or do people tend to come early, work late, and take work home?

Listen. Listen to the way people communicate with each other. Do they share ideas freely? Is it an outspoken environment or more reserved? Casual or formal? How do colleagues talk about their work? How do they talk about customers, clients, coworkers, and management?

Ask questions. Learning about the company and your new job can feel like you're drinking from a firehose, but try and absorb as much as possible without getting overwhelmed. Ask questions that will help you understand the organization better as well as your role in it. Carry a pad of paper and pencil with you so you can take good notes of everything you learn. Remember that no one expects you to know everything right off the bat so they'll see your questions as a sign of interest and a willingness to learn and adapt. It's better to ask early, too, because at some point you will be expected to "just know." Another way to gather valuable information is by reading—read the employee manual, company literature, the website, and all emails that come through your inbox.

Implement what you learn. Once you get the lay of the land you'll be confident you know what's expected of you. Then it's simply a matter of doing it. Look to the leaders of the company as models of job performance. You'll find leaders—engaged, enthusiastic, and productive people—in every department and at every level, from management to support staff. By observing the ways of others, you'll soon get a sense of how to thrive within the organization's environment.

Organization culture

As we mentioned in the introduction, organization culture is a product of a combination of values, structures, and behaviors. You'll pick up on some aspects of your new workplace's culture as early as the first interview. The environment itself reveals a lot about the company's values: From the layout of the office to the casual interactions between colleagues you'll find clues to deciphering the unwritten "codes" of culture. Here are some ideas to help guide your assessment:

Mission and vision. Is there a clear, shared organization mission? Do your coworkers speak positively about the company and its leadership? Does every employee feel invested in the future of the organization? Successful, dynamic businesses depend on a shared vision.

Expectations and support. Are standards and expectations clearly defined and attainable? Do managers encourage and nurture employees' success on the job by giving timely and constructive feedback on their work? Are mentors available? Is there a clear evaluation review system? These qualities not only foster your ongoing professional success but also ensure that you're respected and that your contributions are valued.

Physical office structure. Does the office layout say hierarchy or anarchy (or, more likely, something in-between)? An open floor plan with shared workspaces hints at a collaborative, non-hierarchical organization, while rows of cubicles surrounded by closed-door offices suggest a highly stratified environment.



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 organization is critical to job satisfaction. Yep, the feel. Or, in other words, the company culture.

Each organization 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. 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 in their cubicles or offices—or more open and collaborative? Do people take breaks? What are the workday norms—is it a 9 to 5 office that really shuts down at 5:00 p.m. or do people tend to come early, work late, and take work home?



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 flash of the copier machine and the blur of entering data, 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.

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 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! 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



A work either you're a good communicator or the organization will have to hire someone to do it for you. 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.

Luckily, 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, managers, and clients. Of course, there's also the risk of miscommunicating. The stories of accidental "Reply Alls," wrong recipients, and inadvertently off-putting 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

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, may I help you?"

Smile during calls. Smiling actually affects the way you speak and will make you seem friendlier, even over the phone lines.

Ask the caller their name. Doing so—and using their name throughout the conversation—indicates that you are interested in them.

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 sound of you keyboarding.

Speak at an appropriate volume. If you normally speak loudly, lower your voice. Those who speak softly should raise their voice so the caller can hear them easily.



Being courteous, caring and thoughtful to your colleagues isn't just polite – it's good for your career. And while our parents 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 we a colleague shoots us a look or we find a sticky note on our lunch bag. Not to worry, however. This chapter will give you the basics of 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 you'll be using 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, and supplies on the right shelf.

Take initiative to address problems as they come up. If you notice a paper jam while using the copier, don't ignore it. Fix it or alert the person who can. It may take a few extra minutes and be 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 their workspace.

If you break it, own up to it. If you jam the copier, 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 need to print a 200-page document on the shared printer, let everyone know so they can plan around it. If you're making hundreds of copies but a colleague needs to make only one, take a break from your job to let them cut in.



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, according to themuse.com, most managers say that only 33 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 a shared document 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.

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

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

If the meeting is large and not everyone will know each other, consider using name tags.



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 their 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 outcome.

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?



Filmmakers and screenwriters have a lot of fun portraying managers who are ineffectual at best and scary at worst. Real life is, as usual, more complicated. Some managers 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 manager 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 managers, 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 manager and how to use that relationship to grow professionally.

Develop a good relationship with your manager

There are many things you can't control when it comes to developing a good relationship with your manager. Your organization's culture will to a large extent determine your relationship, as will your and your manager'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 manager and others in the organization, the better your working life will be.

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

Give your manager 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 manager know. They may be very understanding, and at the very least will appreciate your candor so that they can make plans for your absence. This goes for your resignation as well. Even though your manager may not be your manager for long, they may be willing to serve as a reference or mentor. Give your manager fair advance notice of your departure to keep the relationship friendly.

Maintain boundaries. You want to have a great relationship with your manager, but you don't have to be best friends. Don't share very personal information or invite them into your social media network. Your manager is still your manager, no matter how strong your relationship is – and they may have to make unpopular or difficult decisions.



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 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.

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 workplace better and more fun. 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. 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 manager—unflattering things about you. You might even find yourself in competition for a prime assignment or promotion with your former friend, who might likely be less willing to play fair since your friendship went south.

Establish boundaries. Work friends can have an influence on your career. It's best to establish boundaries for your office friendships that include what personal details you will reveal (does your office mate really need to know that you were almost arrested for streaking during college?), what subjects you will discuss, and what kinds of activities you will engage in together. The last thing you need is to reveal something embarrassing about yourself, then have it spread around the office if a friendship sours.



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 on 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. Organizations 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 emphasis here is on 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 lack a sense of common mission. In addition, egos, conflicting goals, and competition between members for recognition and rewards can destroy a team.



PURPOSE, MISSION & GOALS

Steps to Career Success

Maps are essential. Planning a journey without a map is like building a house without drawings.

Mark Jenkins

A new hire recently attended her weekly one-on-one meeting with her manager. She had been assigned a project a couple of weeks before and was running into a number of hurdles. Her manager asked her to come to the weekly meeting with an update. When asked about the status of the project, she took a deep breath. “Frankly, I’m a bit lost and don’t know what to do next,” she said. Her manager looked through her notes. “Ah, you’re missing PMG,” he said.

PMG stands for Purpose, Mission and Goals. The manager could tell that his answer was not what his team member was hoping for. A lot of employees don’t like the answer either. Why? Maybe they think it’s corporate jargon, some sort of team rah-rah PR mumbo-jumbo, or just simply a waste of time. Perhaps you are thinking the same thing. Maybe you are considering skipping this chapter altogether and just getting to the STUFF.

We encourage you not to skip this chapter. In fact, we hope you’ll read it several times and refer back to it often, as it will be the cornerstone to your career success. This chapter will answer the why, how, when and where to every project, campaign, program, event, or anything you are assigned. Think of it as the key to your career advancement.

This chapter will discuss the following topics:

- What is the purpose?
- What is the mission?
- What are the goals?
- Development, integration and promotion



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 initially 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 from your paycheck. These funds go into a pot that pays for things that our elected representatives 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% and go to 37%. 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 2018 and you had a total income of \$51,550. After adjustments, deductions, and credits, you had a taxable income of \$41,550.



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 part of the picture. In fact, the other part 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 organizations 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. 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 that ignoring certain benefits—like retirement plans in which your employer matches your contributions—is like throwing money away.



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 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. 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 stagnating. 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 challenge yourself and exceed expectations.

Starting your job with the mission of proving to both your managers 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 is 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 late for a meeting. No matter how much you're actually getting done, timeliness can't be underestimated.



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 Craigslist. A better, often-overlooked way to make more money is simply to ask your manager for a raise.

We're not suggesting you march into your manager'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 some time, reflect on where you are and what you're doing for the organization. If you deserve a raise, ask for it, and get it, that little conversation with your manager 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 what? You're not going to get fired for asking. Plus, "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 manager. 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 manager.

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



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 their 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 their career. The relationship benefits both participants. The protégé receives professional advice, guidance and nurturing. The mentor gets the opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills and the good feeling of knowing they are 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 organization 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.

Networking is all about creating and acting on opportunities; ideally, your role in your network will be to help others as much as it will be to connect with others who can help you.

Why network?

Networking isn't always easy, but it's important. Networking in the early stages of your career can help you land jobs, secure promotions, develop your understanding of your profession, and gain important insight into what it takes to succeed in your field. As your career progresses, networking will likely remain an important activity, as it provides professional insight into clients, sales leads, potential business opportunities, and career advancement opportunities.

If you are a friendly, open individual who likes to meet people and help people out if you can, you've already met most of the criteria of a networking pro. If you tend to be more introverted, you can build confidence through practice. It might feel forced at first, but after a while networking will begin to come naturally.

How to network

So how do you build your network? First, determine who can help you. Start with what you know, including:

Your college. Many schools have alumni associations that are great places to network, or even offer lists of alumni who are willing to speak with other alumni about professional opportunities.



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 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 “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.

Social media options

Facebook as of this moment, has 2.2 billion active users Snapchat has 187 million. Instagram has 800 million. Chances are you are already on one or more of these sites. LinkedIn, a professional networking site you might not be using yet, has over 467 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 Instagram is casual Friday—or very, very casual Saturday night—LinkedIn is business-attire Monday. Snapchat 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.

Establishing and maintaining an online presence

You’ve probably been using social media for years and have already built an online presence. In this section we’ll discuss how to manage that online presence so that it *helps* your professional life.



The average person changes jobs 10 to 15 times in their career. Often a job change is due to relocation, career advancement, or a change in career focus. But sometimes it is due to layoffs and reorganization. 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 organization 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?

These kinds of clues relate to organization or industry issues that might affect you. In other words, they are signs that you might be laid off, one of the cost cutting measures your organization takes. The following clues are more personal.