

TRANSITIONS

CONGRATULATIONS! YOUR TIRELESS EFFORTS THROUGHOUT YOUR COLLEGE CAREER HAVE ENABLED YOU TO ACHIEVE DISTINCTION AS A BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE.



Making the transition from the college campus to the “real world” is usually not an easy one, but it can be quite rewarding. You may be asking yourself:

- What is the best way to conduct myself on the first day in my new job?
- What should I wear?
- How do I keep my professional life organized?
- How do I increase my chances of promotion?

Individuals face these and other questions every day throughout their professional lives. This chapter offers a collection of “new job proverbs” for the sometimes difficult world of work.

Your First Few Days

- Know what your company does. Be ready to give a 30-second overview to anyone asking.
- Understand your role in contributing to the bottom line of the company. Keep your eyes (and your career) focused on the big picture rather than your own little cube.
- Obtain a copy of your company’s most recent annual report and read it thoroughly.
- Dress conservatively. Observe the attire of managers and leaders in the organization and model your look after them. Start with a few quality, basic outfits and build your wardrobe over time.
- Remember the names of those to whom you are introduced. In your first few days on the job, write down names until you remember them. Your colleagues only have to remember one new name, while you may have many.
- Be a morning person. Always be on time.
- Watch and emulate those who are successful in the company. Allow them to be your mentors from afar.

- Rehearse what you need to accomplish that day during your morning commute.
- Personalize your work area, but don’t overdo it. Frame your degree and hang it on the wall. Put a small picture on your desk.
- If your employer provides the option, make arrangements to have your paycheck set up for direct deposit. It will save you the time and hassle of depositing each paycheck and it will give you quicker access to your money.
- Take the time to read and understand your company benefits plan. Don’t wait until you need to use one of the benefits to understand it.

The Daily Routine

- If you can take public transportation to work, do it. It not only saves energy, but gives you time to read. Always have profitable reading materials such as trade publications or professional journals with you.
- If you drive to work, try to “read” books on tape. It is amazing how much reading you can accomplish over the course of a year.
- Always carry a notepad or pocket organizer with you. Get in the habit of writing down both your brilliant thoughts and daily reminders as they occur to you, or you may lose them forever.
- Plan your day in advance. Ten to fifteen minutes in the morning will equal an extra hour or more of productivity during the day.
- Develop a routine only where it increases personal productivity; don’t get into the rut of doing something strictly as part of a routine.
- Be the first person to say “hello” to others in the morning, and say it with a smile.

- Never leave a half cup of coffee in the coffee maker for the next person. Always make a fresh pot.
- Arrive at meetings on time. Bring extra work you can pass the time with while you are waiting for others.
- Don’t doodle or daydream at meetings. If topics being covered are outside of your area, take out your pocket planner and review what you need to accomplish that day.
- Eat lunch in. You will save both time and money. Even just \$5 per lunch eating out (and it can easily be quite a bit more) adds up to \$2500 per year. Plus it’s healthier to bring your own.
- Go for a brisk walk each day. Park at the far end of the lot in the morning. Stretch your legs during lunch. It will clear your mind and make you more productive for the remainder of the day.

Work Ethics

- Draw a solid ethical line and never cross it, especially when others are encouraging you to do so.
- Integrity means doing what is right, even if it is unpopular, unfashionable, and unprofitable.
- Integrity sold cannot be repurchased.
- Do not allow your integrity to go on the trading block, for there will always be a ready buyer.
- Develop a reputation for honesty and integrity. If you have failed in these areas in the past, your new job is an opportunity to start fresh. It is a reputation you must earn over time.
- If you are not sure, don’t do it. That’s your conscience talking. Listen closely.



- Don't use profanity, even when others do.
- Don't lie, cheat, or steal, even when the temptation is great—stand for honesty and integrity in all you do, and you will be amazed how far it sets you above your peers.
- Never tell dirty, racist, or sexist jokes, and ignore those who attempt to share them with you.
- Make good on your promises. If you are not sure you can deliver, don't promise.

Interpersonal Skills

- Talk 20% of the time, and listen 80% of the time. Avoid colleagues who talk 100% of the time.
- Always take the opportunity to praise others who are worthy of praise. If someone has done well, take the time to tell them.
- When someone is telling you a story, don't interrupt. Don't try to upstage them with a better story of your own.
- Smile often; even when you feel like frowning.
- If someone is confrontational with you, avoid the confrontation. Take time to cool off before you respond.
- Be the person in your office who makes everyone else smile.
- Look for solutions, not problems. Anyone can identify problems.

- When someone compliments you for your work, don't say "it was nothing" or try to talk them out of it. Just say "thank you" with a smile.
- Life isn't fair, and sometimes work isn't either. There will be some days when just getting through is the best you can do. Wait until tomorrow to see if things clear up. They usually do.
- Don't be a complainer. Every work environment has a person who feels responsible for the role of office complainer. Ignore them when they attempt to practice their art upon you.

Office Politics

- Show respect for your boss in everything you do. Don't join in when others are boss bashing.
- While you are a subordinate, you must be willing to submit to the plans of others. Submission is not found in obeying the commands of those with whom you are in agreement. True submission is following the orders of another even when you are not in agreement.
- Never discuss your salary with co-workers.
- When you are personally complimented for something that was a team effort, always give proper credit to the team.

After Work Activities

- Limit yourself to one glass of beer or wine when dining out with co-workers or clients. And wait for someone else to order liquor first - don't be the only one.
- Don't drink at all at the holiday party or social activity.
- Beware of office romances. Keep personal matters outside the work environment.
- Remember to have a professional answering machine message, voicemail message, and/or ringback tone.
- Join a health club. Go before work, during lunch, or after work. Working out will increase your level of energy. You will look and feel better.

Education and Training

- Know and understand the company training program, and take advantage of it.
- Apply what you have learned. Remember that if you apply knowledge, it is yours forever; if you don't apply it, it is lost.
- Continue your education. Even if you do not pursue a formal degree, make learning a lifelong vocation. Learning impacts earning.



- Become fully computer literate. You don't have to be a computer wizard, but you do need to become proficient in the use of technology in your work. Stay ahead of the technology curve.
- Learn to become a team player. College rewards individual performance while employers reward team performance.
- You probably don't know nearly as much as you think you know. It often takes the maturity of a lifetime to come to this realization. But if you are willing to acknowledge this fact early in life, you will capture a lifetime of learning and growth.



Financial Issues

- There is more to life than the endless accumulation of money and personal belongings. Strive to discover at an early age what brings you happiness and adds "real" value to your life.
- Wealth and happiness are not the same thing.
- Read your company's annual report every year to learn about the accomplishments of the past year and the next year's goals. Keep your career focused on doing your part in reaching those goals.
- Buy stock in your company. If you are not willing to invest in your company and support its products and/or services, why are you investing your career with them?
- Sign up for your 401(k) or other retirement savings plan as soon as possible and have 10-15% automatically deducted from your paycheck. You will be less likely to miss it if it is deducted automatically, and it will benefit you in the long run.
- Always pay your bills on time, especially credit cards and student loans. An unblemished credit record is an asset that should be cherished and protected.

- Don't accrue a monthly balance on your credit card. If you can't pay it off each month, don't buy it.

Career Progression

- Know who your supervisor's boss is. This is the person who may either recommend or authorize your promotion in the future.
- Ask your boss to identify areas for continuous improvement.
- Become known as either the person who is the first in to work or the last to leave. Or both. But don't do both forever. It's a good start in your career, but it's not a good life in the end.
- Develop a reputation as a problem-solver. If a problem lands on your desk, don't pass it on to someone else.
- Even if you receive a good performance review, ask what you can do to improve your future performance.
- Read your competitor's annual reports. It will keep you in tune with your industry and help you to understand and appreciate your company's competitive edge.
- Be aware of the work going on around you. These are your areas of potential future growth.
- Take others in your company out to lunch to learn more about their jobs and their departments. Let them do the talking and you do the listening.
- Learn to tap into the web network. Career progression is more like climbing a web than climbing a ladder. Make sure you web into as many connections as possible.
- No one owes you a living. No one owes you a job. You earn it, each and every day, all over again. And when you cease to earn your job on a daily basis, you will cease in your career progression.
- When faced with earning \$35,000 and loving what you do for a living versus earning \$55,000 and hating what you do, take the \$35,000 position and sleep well at night. Your life will be much richer than if you had taken the other job.
- Take the pillow test to assess your career satisfaction. When you take your head up off the pillow in the morning, are you excited about going to work? And when you lay your

head down on the pillow at night, are you happy about what you have accomplished? The answer will not always be "Yes," but if it is consistently "No," it may be time to move on.

- Don't ask for a raise because you need more money; ask for a raise because you are worth more money.
- If you love doing what you do, success will follow.
- If you do more than what you are paid to do, you will eventually be paid more for what you do.

Skills for a Lifetime

- Life is never exactly what we want it to be. It is what we make of life that will bring it nearer to what we want it to be.
- Expect great things from yourself and hope for great things in others.
- Be proactive in planning for the future. To get things in the future, you have to pursue them today.
- Set goals in your life by identifying short term and long term goals and clarifying annual, monthly, weekly, and daily goals.
- Begin to use a Palm Pilot, Day-Timer, Franklin Planner, or other pocket planner. It will quickly become your daily guide to accomplishing your life goals.
- When you do make mistakes, take responsibility for them immediately. Denial will only prolong and intensify the error. Acknowledge you were wrong and move on, and don't make the same mistake again.
- Be observant and try to learn from the mistakes of others, so they are not repeated in your life.
- Every journey begins with a single step. With each new step, the objective comes into clearer view.
- It's not where you start out in life; it's where you end up.
- Always give back to those who are less fortunate than you. No matter how hard you have worked to get where you are now, there is always someone who has not had the same opportunities you have had in life. Do your best to give something back.
- Always remember that work should never be your sole purpose in life. No one ever said on their death bed, "I wish I would have spent more time at the office."

