WHAT COLLEGE SHOULD’VE TAUGHT YOU (BUT DIDN’T)

THE TOP 100 TIPS TO SUCCEED AT YOUR FIRST JOB

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CONGRATULATIONS! A newly minted diploma is a badge of hard work and success. But there is a lot of business wisdom that isn’t covered in college.

We at Buchanan Public Relations asked recent college grads who are several years into their careers, along with managers who oversee employees in their first jobs, to share their best tips for career success.

Best of luck in your first job, and please send us your tips for next year’s edition.
THE ESSENTIALS

1. Arrive everywhere a little early.
2. Always bring something to write on.
3. When you introduce yourself, always share your first and your last name.
4. Stand up to greet anyone who enters a room.
5. Develop a firm handshake – not flimsy, not crushing, but confidently firm.
6. Always bring business cards.
7. Never underestimate the power of a handwritten thank you note or sincere email.
8. Treat your first job like a science lab. Observe everything.
9. Occasionally stay late at the office.
10. Don't ask a question to which you can easily find the answer.
11. Wait until an email is completely composed before you add the recipients’ names. That way, you won't accidentally send an incomplete email.
12. Do your research and always go to meetings prepared.
13. Don't be complacent. Every job is changing. Try to stay ahead of it.
GOOD MANNERS GO A LONG WAY

14. Put your cell phone down during the work day.
15. Say please and thank you.
16. Be the last to sit down at the conference room table. As a junior team member, be prepared to take an outer seat and let senior colleagues sit first.
17. Treat everyone you meet with the same degree of respect.
18. Look someone in the eye when you shake their hand.
19. Don’t interrupt.
20. Express gratitude to those who help you.
22. Don't eat smelly food at your desk.
23. Refill the water cooler if you empty it. Same goes for the printer.
24. At a business meal, never be the first or the last to finish eating.
25. Don't talk about coworkers behind their backs. Office politics can be a quagmire to navigate in the best of times; don't magnify the situation by gossiping.
26. Be respectful of the office common areas, including the microwave and fridge, if you have them.
27. If you make a mistake, own it immediately.
28. Listen more than you talk.

29. Practice saying “yes” instead of “yeah” or “yep.”

30. When you encounter someone you previously met, say your first and last names again – even if you think they know who you are. People will be grateful that you saved them the embarrassment of not recalling your (full) name.

31. Don’t be afraid to ask for a refresher on the names of others, either. A simple, “Remind me of your name again,” will make everything easier.

32. Master the art of asking interesting questions.

33. Organize your thoughts before you speak.

34. Saying “I think” or “I feel” before a statement can weaken the impact of your words.

35. Don’t be afraid to speak up – but know when it’s appropriate to do so.

36. Read the room and know when to take a conversation offline.

37. When you meet someone new, look for an opportunity to use their name in conversation. It will help with retention and it’s a gracious touch in conversation.

38. “How can I help?” are words that are almost always welcome in the business world.

39. Leave college talk behind – “He and I are collaborating,” not “Him and me are working on it.”

40. Be authentic.
INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS

41. Commit now to maintaining relationships that you make in your first job. There will come a day that you will need to reach back out to a former co-worker – or a day you will rue the fact that you let a relationship lapse.

42. Be friendly, but leave your personal life at home.

43. Office romance rarely works and when it backfires, can make for a toxic working relationship. Try to keep work and romance separate.

44. Find someone you admire and take them out to lunch. Develop a set of questions and ask away. They will usually be just as happy to mentor you as you are to receive helpful advice.

45. Develop a good relationship with your boss. He or she will be your single biggest advocate in the office and the individual who will have the most power to help you move up.

46. Occasionally invite more seasoned colleagues for coffee.

47. Find an organized person in your office and observe their practices. Better yet, ask them to share their best tips with you.

48. Join a networking group.

49. Know how to put a newcomer at ease.

50. Be careful about associating with negative co-workers.

51. Don't ever assume that others think or feel the way you do.
52. Know a little about golf.

53. Familiarize yourself with the local sports teams and how they’re faring.

54. Learn a little bit about wine.

55. Read the news every day.

56. Learn one work-appropriate joke a month. Like a polar bear, they can come in handy in breaking the ice.

57. One six-month stint at a company can be explained away, but don’t jump too many times early in your career.

58. Your desire (and ability) to learn is one of your greatest strengths. It may never be higher than it is right now. Don’t squander it. Pick a work-related topic or specialty and direct the 16+ years of schooling you’ve had on it.

59. Set up Google Alerts to send you interesting articles in your field.

60. Sign up for at least one newsletter related to your field and devote 10 minutes at the beginning of your day, at lunch, or at the end of the day to read it.

61. Don’t order the lobster.

62. Don’t be the only one to order alcohol at a business function. Follow the lead of your boss or client.

63. Keep your calendar up-to-date.
64. Know yourself well enough to know whether or not you can work productively from somewhere other than the office. Not everyone can.

65. Exercise.

66. Learn how to slowly sip an alcoholic drink at a business event. You'd much rather be the one listening than speaking when people are drinking.

67. Get enough sleep.

68. If you're not a naturally organized person, now is the time to start becoming one.

69. Observe everything. Learn what makes an office tick (or not tick). Identify the best practices in how your company and work team operate. Model your behavior on that of other strong, contributing employees.

70. Practice public speaking. Record yourself.

71. Volunteer for a cause you believe in.

72. Be aware that your boss and clients may see what you post on social media.

73. Perfect can be the enemy of good.
BECOME A STRONG COMMUNICATOR

74. Be prepared to give an update on your work at any time.
75. Answer emails promptly.
76. Know how to use the :cc and :bcc lines in emails – they can be great tools, when properly used, and wasteful annoyances when they’re not.
77. Think long and hard before you hit “reply all”.
78. Send handwritten notes on nice paper.
79. Write important or sensitive emails and then let them sit in your drafts folder for a bit; then reread and edit before you send.
80. There are some topics that are better broached in person than in writing.
81. Don’t ever let email replace a face-to-face conversation.
82. Follow up important discussions with an email.
EXTRA CREDIT

83. Never sit at the head of the conference table, unless you’re leading the meeting.

84. Always place a name tag on the right side of your shirt or blouse. Why? Eyes naturally travel up the right arm that is being shaken, making it easier to read a name tag.

85. Button your jacket correctly – unbuttoned when you’re seated, buttoned when you’re standing.

86. Perfect an elevator speech on your history.

87. Delight your boss.

88. Volunteer for assignments at the office.

89. Don’t talk smack about your employer.

90. Don’t misuse perks or steal office supplies.

91. You may be asked to juggle multiple assignments at the same time. If you’re struggling to determine priorities or meet deadlines, don’t be too proud to ask for help.

92. Overestimate how long a task will take.

93. Accept criticism and feedback gracefully.

94. After six months in your new job, don’t be afraid to have a conversation with your boss about your career direction.

95. Never make a promise you can’t keep.

96. Write things down.

97. Proofread.

98. Think through the whole task before you start working.

99. Dress like the boss, not like a frat brother.

100. Be kind.
Have a helpful tip not mentioned here? We’d love to hear it.

Please send an email to:

CAREERS@BUCHANANPR.COM

We hope you find these tips useful. Best of luck in your future career!