



## ON THE JOB SUCCESS



In this section, we will cover some basic tips and techniques that might help you succeed once you have landed that great job and are ready to start your career. Like all the information included, there is no golden ticket or cheats along the way. Instead, these best practices and suggestions are a collection of common knowledge and proven experience.

Being successful at work has a lot to do with your attitude and candor. Your personal characteristics as well as your behaviors in groups and the organization as a whole reflect on your performance and ability. The recognition and development of your soft skills as well as your ability to adapt to organizational culture, understand power, and create healthy relationships with your supervisor and peers will more often than not help you become a more successful employee. We will also discuss how to become knowledgeable about your job, how to execute and excel in your given responsibilities, and what some of the advantages are to continue your education as a lifelong learner. The follow sections will elaborate on these strategies to employ that can lead to greater job success.

### A Positive Attitude and Other Tips for a New Job

Especially when you start a new job, there are a lot of things you need to learn. It probably won't be expected that you know how to do all of your job duties perfectly when you first arrive but by presenting yourself appropriately and by properly managing the areas that you can control, you will find that the rest will come pretty easily. Most of the following tips and techniques are good suggestions for a new position but should continue even after you are more established with a company.



- **Stay positive.** Forget the wrist; it's all in the attitude. Keeping a positive attitude about your responsibilities, new tasks, challenges, and the company as a whole is an amazing step toward success. Your enthusiasm and eagerness to try new things, handle pressure and frustrations, and stay optimistic through diverse situations will not only keep you in good spirits professionally but will make you a stand out for new opportunities and a pleasure to work with.
- **Try your hardest and learn from mistakes.** It could be interpreted to be two separate actions but your ability to give 100% of your effort is actually very closely tied to the errors you will make. Mistakes are inevitable; you will make them. Be accountable for your actions by being able to say that did your very best and takeaway a lesson learned to avoid the same mistake again later.
- **Be respectful.** There are many things to learn from your new colleagues. Demonstrate your willingness to learn from their experience by valuing their opinions, being grateful of the assistance they offer, and treating everyone (no matter their position in the company) with the respect you feel you deserve in return.

- **Be a team player.** It is not likely that your job functions will be completely autonomous. You will most likely interact with a number of colleagues in every task you have. Know your role and responsibilities in the work process, appreciate the contributions of others and let them know about it, and understand that team success is your personal success.
- **Join the culture.** Every work environment is different. You can quickly learn what is appropriate in the company just by observing. Follow others for proper behavior and conduct as well as attire, interaction, and hours. This doesn't mean to copy others or do anything that you personally are not comfortable with, but maintain your individuality while fitting in with accepted company culture.
- **Find a mentor.** Whether it is formally discussed or not, there will more than likely be someone (or ones) that stand out as experienced, personable, and someone you can benefit from. Don't be afraid to ask for advice and respectfully learn from them, both personally and professionally.
- **Communication is key.** Staying well informed and openly communicating with others is a key to making large strides in any organization. Learn as much as you can and don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand or just would like more information. This is one of the easiest ways to get on the inside track to inner workings and new opportunities that may arise.
- **Punctuality shows more than your schedule.** Being on time is a sign of professionalism, enthusiasm, and pride in your work. It is not just a requirement of your job but a reflection on your personality. Arriving on time, unfortunately, does not always mean that you will be able to leave on time. Be willing to be flexible with your hours to complete certain projects and assignments (without making a habit of it) as your extra time is often rewarded.
- **Track your successes.** Identify ways that you feel you go above and beyond. Ideally, your supervisors, co-workers, and management will know the extra steps you take. Make personal notes of when you volunteer for new objectives, outperform expectations, attend additional classes that are work related, and generally exceed your position so you can be prepared during future performance reviews and promotion discussions- whether it be with this company or for the next phase in your career.

## Soft Skills

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Soft skills are most often characterized as the personal attributes that make up the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of an individual. Soft skills can include attitude, manners, social skills, the ability to communicate, listen, delegate, resolve conflicts, work as a team player, adapt to change, and work hard.

The term "soft skills" is not an indication on their importance; in fact, it can be argued that soft skills are more important to character and success you might achieve. Soft skills are compared to, and more specifically complement, a person's "hard skills" which are the specific skills required for a job. For example, the soft skills necessary for a leader in an organization would be vision, social skills, emotional intelligence, empathy, work ethic, communication, and flexibility while the hard skills would be execution, organization, knowledge of computer programs, a second language, planning, coordinating and a thorough understanding of the organization's policies and procedures.

In the previous section, many soft skills have already been discussed. You practice a variety of soft skills every day as a matter of fact. They occur so naturally you may not even notice them or have never spent time to realize strengths that you regularly exhibit. Identifying your soft skills will give you talking point in interviews and in promotion discussions, as well as give you new goals and areas to improve upon.

## Critical Soft Skills

The following is a list of primary soft skills that just about every employer is looking for from their staff. It is no means inclusive as soft skills refer to an often intangible set of abilities that to some degree are engrained in everyone. While the primary soft skills are generally agreed upon as important in any job capacity, there are countless others that are deemed imperative as well (*See Module 3: Personal and Career Evaluation*). Depending on the job or function you are performing, these may be just as imperative as the ones listed below but not as universal. Review the following and determine which areas are personal strengths and which are areas in need of improvement.

- **Communication.** Communication permeates just about every aspect of both personal and professional endeavors. It is associated with active listening, comprehension, and clear expression of thoughts and ideas. It includes oral, written, and non-verbal types. To improve your communication skills, focus on both what you are saying and how you are saying it, and always remember that receiving information is just as crucial as providing it so practice active listening instead of just thinking of what to say next.
- **A Good Work Ethic.** Your work ethic is the sum of your attitude, actions, and guiding values. It is how company leadership knows that you are trustworthy and have the best interests of the organization at heart. A good work ethic is demonstrated through your decisive behavior, motivation, and dedication. You cannot fake a good work ethic but you can utilize your beliefs and attributes to create a work ethic that aligns with you personally and the company expectations.
- **Self-Confidence.** Projecting yourself with an air of confidence can inspire confidence in others. By truly believing that you can complete a job with success, you most likely will. Self-confidence includes freely contributing your ideas, a “can do” attitude to new projects, and accountability for both your great work and your mistakes.
- **Flexibility/Resilience.** Nothing goes perfectly all the time. There will be obstacles and issues to overcome and the ability to respond to negative situations with resiliency and flexibility should be an important process in your job cycle. Demonstrate your skill by having a short memory to move past problems and improve on procedures so they don’t happen again.
- **Patience.** With the incredible speed that business moves, it is sometimes very beneficial to be able to slow down and be patient for results. It truly is a virtue that can allow you to replace haste with efficiency as preventing mistakes or following the correct course of action is better than making a move faster.
- **Organization.** Less ethereal than some of the other soft skills perhaps, your ability to be organized and maintain structure is important. This refers to organizing your tasks and responsibilities as well as your priorities and time. Even your physical space can benefit from a deliberate effort for organization.
- **Ability to Work under Pressure.** Some people feel they actually work better up against a deadline, but the ability to work with added stress and/or demands isn’t something in which every individual excels. Maintaining a positive attitude while managing frustration and meeting the needs of these taxing situations demonstrates your ability to stay calm and focused.
- **Leadership.** Leadership is different than management. Management is a position of power but leadership is a position of inspiration that nearly every job requires. The key to demonstrating the soft skill of leadership is by accomplishing it when no one requests it of you. Sharing your vision and your motivation for success through hard work and example are qualities of leadership.
- **Teamwork.** Teamwork consists of positions of leadership, collaboration, and contributions- often all at the same time. To function with individuals of different backgrounds, skill sets, approaches, and motivations demonstrates your dedication, ability to compromise for a greater result, and personality traits.
- **Problem-solving.** Like most soft skills, your ability to problem-solve is applicable to a number of situations. A good problem-solver is able to effectively fulfill the objective needed within the available time and resources. This can take a high level of creativity and a willingness to take chances and be accountable for the results.

## Adapting to Organizational Culture

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Culture is generally discussed in broad societal terms and at the large global scale in reference to the differences between countries and their people. But culture is defined as any set of values, norms, and rituals that drive the behaviors of a group. Every company has its own culture and when you are a new employee, it can take time to adjust to the cultural changes. According to Edgar Schein’s book *Organizational Culture & Leadership*, there are three levels of an organization’s culture: (1) artifacts like dress and structure which are easy to see but can be a challenge to derive significance from; (2) espoused beliefs and values which are consciously designed strategies and messaging; and (3) underlying assumptions which although are not openly discussed or even fully realized are the guiding factor to a company’s decisions and work environment. Combined, these three factors make up your new organizational culture that you will either ultimately find yourself conforming to or perhaps rebelling against.

Beginning a new job is difficult and it can take time to get used to your new routines and responsibilities. This might include whether or not you actually like your new job or the company you work for. As you learn the company culture and become more comfortable with your position, most employees tend to grow into their position or not last very long and seek out a position that is a better fit. Here are





- “Coercive power” is held by individuals who create a fear of the consequences.
- “Connection power” is held by individuals who know people of power and can use that to achieve their means.
- “Expert power” is the power of experience or accomplishment.
- “Informational power” is derived from access to essential, or even potentially damaging, information.
- “Legitimate power” is based on position or status, as in a person’s job title and responsibilities.
- “Referent power” is held by individuals who are appreciated for their personality or are highly esteemed socially.
- “Reward power” is held by individuals who can offer incentives.

It is definitely possible to hold more than one of these power types, and any and all of them can be used to achieve an end. As a new employee, you might be placed in an immediate position of power but it is important to identify which type of power you are most comfortable in using and acknowledge the power in others. Balance of power can easily be upset so wield any power you do obtain, or earn, with great caution or be prepared to face consequences.

### Abuse of Power



Not all types of power are good; or more precisely, not all people are good at handling power. It is evitable that through your professional career you will encounter these individuals. It can be difficult to deal with someone that abuses their position of power, especially if it is your direct supervisor or an employer in which you are forced to have continually interaction. Use the follow to help try and diffuse difficult situations and abuses of power. Note that many of these are listed in order of severity as some instances of power require more escalated actions.

- **Realistically evaluate.** It is easy to blame a boss of abusing their power but in some instances it is a result of your performance. Take a step back and determine if there are other factors to why you didn’t receive that raise instead of looking for other excuses.
- **Don’t get emotionally caught up.** One of the hardest things to fight is your gut reaction. But no matter the situation try and not let your emotional response make the circumstances worse.
- **Know what’s appropriate.** Verbal, emotional, and physical attacks are never appropriate work behavior but criticism is a part of any position. Try not to confuse one for the other.
- **Keep record.** Make notes and track any potential abuses of power. This can help you in recognizing patterns and more accurately evaluate your situation or, in the worst scenario, provide examples for outside help if needed.
- **Stay professional.** Never respond with childish behavior or retaliate inappropriately. Take the high road.
- **Avoid confrontation.** Discuss incidences or re-occurring behavior in a conciliatory way. Avoid being too defensive or provoking

further inappropriate interactions. If at all possible avoid interaction completely.

- **Say enough is enough.** After attempting to diffuse the abuse of power, it may come to a point where you have to draw the line. Be confident and secure in knowing that no one deserves to be treated in an abusive fashion.
- **Go through appropriate channels.** The first attempt should generally be a frank discussion with the offender but if you have to go over their heads, keep it through the chain of command. Never skirt the company policy.
- **Be ready to walk.** It is always a good idea to be prepared for retribution from the accused if you report extreme cases of abuses of power... whether it is fair or not. Even if it is necessary, have another job offer ready or be ready to move on if anything happens before stirring the pot.

## Job Execution

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It is not coincidental that we are this far into discussing *On The Job Success* before we get to actual job knowledge and execution. This is for a few reasons actually. First, it is an indication that there is much more that goes into a job than just the functions you perform—some perhaps just as important to at least your well-being if not to success itself. Secondly, it is assumed that you know the general expectations of any workplace to do what is asked of you to the best of your ability. Finally, every job is so inherently different that we cannot give specific information about your job function but rather just the best practices that follow.

### Putting Knowledge into Action

The old adage explains that it is easier said than done, which in the case of the workplace is most of the time very true. Knowledge is personal, inner, and safe but to implement your knowledge into actions means you have to take chances and be held accountable. It is perfectly understandable to be hesitant to jump into action, but as job performance is mostly judged on our actions, it is highly recommended to get yourself out there and utilize your education and experience.

Note the concentration on your prior knowledge and experiences. Actions aren't beneficial unless they can be explained. With the skills you gained through your CSU-Global coursework and your previous career you should have the foundation to succeed at the execution of your job functions, this is what you were hired on after all. Let your knowledge work for you and use the following general information when implementing actionable plans.

- **Recognize opportunities and take advantage.** When new opportunities present themselves, be in the position to ask questions about their current and future expectations, and be willing to take possession of a course of action.
- **Speak up.** This goes back to the collective sum of your qualifications. If you feel you know an appropriate action for an issue, would like time to make a proposal, or have previously experienced something similar, feel comfortable to make your voice heard.
- **Use what works.** No need to reinvent the wheel. If you already have tools incorporated and resources that work, use them.
- **Get approval, don't fear it.** Often the reluctance to take action is based on the expected response from supervisors. Don't overstep your bounds by always including relevant individuals in the process but don't be afraid to ask for permissions to pursue potential improvements.
- **Watch for busy work.** It doesn't pay to just appear busy. Make sure your work is purposeful and working toward the ultimate result.
- **Do your research.** Even if you think you know the inner workings of something, don't be afraid to learn more about it. Conducting additional research helps further your chances of success.
- **Develop support.** Rarely does one person accomplish better results than they would with a team. Having others on board with your plan of action and available to help you achieve it goes a long way.
- **Stay focused.** It is easy to get distracted from the goals of yesterday with the issues of today. Be willing to switch gears when needed but see actions to completion whenever possible.
- **Plan ahead.** Don't lose the big picture and make sure the actions you implement fit now and into the future. Be prepared for potential downfalls and have secondary plans available.
- **Analysis and accept the outcome.** Not all actions have the desired results but at least compare and contrast your expectations from the reality. Learn from the underperforming or failed outcomes, and revel in the successes.

## Be a Lifelong Learner

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If you ever think you know everything, then that is just something else you need to learn. The truth is that your continued education (formal or informal) is one of the biggest keys to success on a job, in your career, and life in general. Find opportunities to improve yourself by improving your knowledge. At CSU-Global we strongly believe in the idea of continuing your education and offer a number of certificates of completions and other classes that encourage new skill sets and could help your career.

- **Share your knowledge.** Knowledge is like an infectious disease with wonderful side effects. Sharing what you learn can start a chain reaction and allow you to get new perspectives to any new knowledge you've gained.
- **Practice what you learn.** Applied learning is one way to turn new knowledge into new skills. Whether it is theories to relate or practical instruction, take your learning to the next level.



- **Learn what interests you.** Taking courses that specifically apply to your professional development is one thing, but it shouldn't be the only thing. Follow your interests and learn about anything and everything that you are curious about.
- **Think critically.** Comprehension is an important part of lifelong learning; otherwise you don't really understand what you've taken in. Think carefully about the subject matter and develop an opinion about it.
- **Something new daily.** Not a new concept to try and learn something new every day (no matter how small) but take an active approach and set time aside for it. Fifteen minutes while you drink your coffee in the morning or at lunch keeps your brain active.
- **Challenge yourself.** Don't be afraid to get in deep. You shouldn't expect to become an expert instantly, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth trying to understand something complex.
- **Make learning social.** There are countless groups, workshops, and conferences that you can attend on just about any subject matter of your choosing. These are a way to make the experience interactive, work with experts in a given field, and get you excited about something. At the least, talk to your friends about it and be willing to learn from areas of interest to them.
- **Wander aimlessly.** Independent learning doesn't have to be a straight line. Allow for deviations as you might find something else to learn about that you weren't expecting.
- **Start from scratch.** Find something that you don't know anything about. The world is a vast place and there are countless projects to explore.
- **Do it for nobody but yourself.** Whatever other reasons you might have for learning something new, the first and foremost reason should be for yourself. If you are inspired to learn, it becomes that much easier and all the other benefits will follow.

