WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT WINNING IN YOUR FIRST JOB

We asked over 2,300 employers how undergrads could have the best possible launch in their first job.

In this article we’ll share points we heard consistently from these employers about competing for the job, and showing up ready to work after college.

1. BE A 24/7 LEARNER

The diploma you soon will soon have in your hand represents an initial down payment on the learning that you will now consume. You need to come to the job with a realization that you are not done learning; that learning will take place in many different contexts.

Acquiring knowledge may be complex and more ambiguous, compared to how you acquired knowledge in the classroom. Recent graduates often lack the drive to learn more and assume they have learned everything they need to know through four or five years in school.

Demonstrate a desire to continue learning. Position yourself as coachable and open to change, one of the key traits every organization values in its team.

What Employers Told Us:

- As you continue in your career do not let yourself become stagnant. Seize any opportunity to learn and grow.”
- “Keep an open mind and take on every task as a new learning experience.”

“As you enter the job market, be ready for change and growth. Companies are looking for individuals that can make changes and push themselves to become better than they already are.”

2. SHELVE THE TECHNOLOGY AND BUILD PEOPLE RAPPORT

Good interpersonal skills are critical to gaining rapport with your co-workers and manager. This includes developing and practicing strong communication skills with coworkers, managers, and company leaders.
At times this may mean relying less on technology such as e-mail, twitter, text messaging, or your iPhone. You may see others in your workplace over-engaging in this activity. Differentiate yourself by demonstrating that you understand the value of the personal interaction.

Building relationships can’t happen without some element of personal interface. Focusing on this exhibits your ability to adapt to the workplace transition, and build rapport with your team.

*What Employers Told Us:*

> “Young adults have developed an extreme over-reliance on technology, and are losing interpersonal communications and human relations skills that are sadly decreasing and non-existent.”

3. **ACT WITH INTEGRITY**

Your character will really determine how well you do from day one. Acting with integrity is so important in any organization today. Honesty, building trust with others, and living up to your commitments, all make you a valued employee.

*What Employers Told Us:*

- “I think it has to do with integrity. Those who care about what they are doing will find a way to succeed, regardless of their training, education, or experience. Those who aren’t interested or who believe that their own accomplishments are more important than those of the team will not be very useful in the workforce.”

4. **TAKE THE INITIATIVE THROUGH HARD WORK**

Demonstrating initiative is the corner to success in most organizations. Initiative combined with a strong desire to work ensures not only your success but the success of the entire company. Committing to the success of the organization makes you a valuable employee.

*What Employers Told Us:*

- “Ask not what a company can do for you, but what you can do for a company.”
- “Treat everyday like an audition.”
• “Employers want to see new employees work harder than the current work force. They want to see them make a difference and be the role model to the current work force. Achieve more than what they were hired to do.”

5. BE POSITIVE, YET HUMBLE

Present a strong, confident self image while remaining humble. Don’t be afraid to ask questions, or offer to help others where you think you can.

Young adults have been tainted with the “entitlement” affliction. You can overcome that by digging in, being willing to learn, and demonstrating your willingness to learn.

What Employers Told Us:

“Sometimes this college generation often comes across as know-it-alls even when they are just starting out. This attitude turns off their coworkers and leadership within the organization.”

Report Prepared By:

Ian Render
Undergraduate Research Assistant
Collegiate Employment Research Institute

Creative support provided by Lea McCloud, recently retired from Hewitt-Packard, who is dedicated to helping young adults make a successful transition into the workplace at www.degreesoftransition.com.