

## Transitioning into the Workplace

Ok, here's the best advice of all: if it's in any way possible for you to finance that backpacking trip across Europe or some other desired life experience, now's the time. Going from whole summers off to two weeks of paid vacation a year tends to be a bit of an adjustment.

The transition from college graduate to workplace professional is inherently stressful. Add the fact that you may be moving out on your own for the first time, have much less access to your friends, not be able to sleep until noon the Wednesday after that frat party, and it may seem a little depressing, too. Now's also the time to counterbalance those stresses with excitement, with the fact that you're about to see all that hard work pay off, literally, that you have the opportunity to make new friends, to gain more professional experience, and to put yourself to the test. Shall we continue? So what's an anxious graduate to do?

**Keep your ties.** Stay in touch with friends and classmates, such as through social networking. Support and learn from one another. You're all in the same boat. Join your alumni association. Ask professors for references (and contacts). Take advantage of whatever services your career center can provide. Job placement would be a good thing.

**On the job.** Start with the right attitude. Embrace opportunity. Begin to understand your role in the workplace. As a new full-time employee, you must conduct yourself according to the expectations of your organization and make positive contributions accordingly. So stay positive! You thought pulling all-nighters to cram for exams was tough?

**Stay healthy.** All that stress and excitement can take its toll. You're not expected to work non-stop without a break. Remain self-aware. Consistently ask yourself what you need. Do that.

**The Honeymoon:** The first few months on the job are crucial. Here's when you have to adjust to the organizational culture and perform your responsibilities as far as possible beyond the expectations of anyone who evaluates your work. That starts with interpersonal communication

**Size people up.** Stick with the winners, and avoid the whiners. Face it. There tend to be some unhappy people out there. Here they're known as disgruntled workers. Associate with the seasoned employees who make things happen and are willing to share their perspective and insights to help you progress. These people can be valuable mentors or sponsors to support your career. They know and can show you the ropes, including the ones connected to the corporate ladder.

**Network wisely.** Achieving success takes more than just hard work and discipline. Few people get ahead without the help of others. Keep making connections with those who can open doors for you now and down the line.

**Develop your personal brand.** Earning a reputation for being dependable and resourceful is always a good thing. Every job has an initial learning curve, so you won't be expected to be "fully up to speed." This is also an appropriate time to gain a few learning experiences, which is another name for "mistakes," as long as they only happen once.

**Set high, but attainable goals.** Here's when you can gain a clearer sense of direction and clear-cut goals to support your career ambitions. This will enable you to focus your energy and efforts on the most worthwhile pursuits.