

Starting your first job? Here's how to make the right impression

Abigail Carradice from [Michael Page](#) outlines how to make the transition from study to full-time employment with ease.

Moving from university to full-time work can be bittersweet - you're thrilled to be done with assignments and exams, and excited to start the next phase of your life. But you're probably also a bit scared of new responsibility, unknown expectations and what your new colleagues will think of you.

The first thing to remember is we've all been there. Even the person running the company had to start somewhere, and while Mark Zuckerberg might have been CEO at 21, you can't expect to climb the ladder at lightning speed. Unless you created the company, of course!

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We've worked with thousands of senior professionals and hiring managers at a wide variety of organisations, and we've learnt a lot about what impresses them in their junior employees. So we're happy to share our insights and best advice to help you succeed in your first job.

Think about your personal brand. This is like your personal mission statement and should underpin all of your actions in the workplace. We've seen the difference that a good understanding of one's personal branding can make to career progression, because it gives an employee focus and guidance when making decisions, and ensures they keep their eye on the big picture. Most importantly, it has to be true to who you are, and who you want to be. This article on [how to build your personal brand](#) is a great starting point.

Leave your ego at the door. It's understandable that you're excited and probably feeling pretty confident after surviving university and scoring a job. Unfortunately, we do hear of some junior employees whose enthusiasm and eagerness to prove themselves comes across as overconfidence that borders on arrogance. Remember, no matter how smart, talented or capable you are, to everyone else you're the “newbie” and you won't make a great impression if you act like you already know it all, or like a certain task is beneath you.

Be professional, even during social events. This covers all the basics like being on time, dressing according to the company conventions (call HR and check the dress code before you start, don't just hazard a guess at what's appropriate) and using appropriate language in the office. But where things can get difficult is at work events where everyone is socialising, probably having a few drinks and letting their hair down. You should never forget that whatever canapés might be on offer, they are unlikely to fill you up, and nerves plus free drinks minus food hardly ever equals a winning combination. Take it easy and remember that, even if you're in the pub, if all your colleagues are around, you're effectively still “at work.”

Be enthusiastic, but don't over-commit. You want to show your new boss that you're eager to learn, and that means putting up your hand to take on tasks and easing the burden on your superiors. But don't be so eager that you take on tasks you're not equipped to do, or that you won't be able to complete on time. Only commit to what you know you can deliver!

Put in some social time. Not every workplace will be highly social, but often colleagues go out for lunch, after-work drinks, or to celebrate events like birthdays. These can be valuable opportunities to network with your immediate colleagues and

superiors, and help them get to know you better. It not only makes work more fun when you've got office friends, it shows you're making an effort to become part of the team. Time and time again we hear from employers that they want to work with people they like and feel a connection with, so if you want to get on the boss' radar, it's a good idea to put in some face time and find out what you have in common.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Everyone knows you're new and they expect you to have questions. Don't be afraid to ask them for fear of looking silly (unless you know you've been given the answer a few times before - in that case, why aren't you taking notes?), it's worse to make a silly mistake that could have been avoided. Just be respectful of your colleagues' time, and if you can, keep a list of questions and ask them all at once so you don't repeatedly interrupt people. One of the things we always hear from employers is how impressed they are by employees who show that they are interested in learning, and take the initiative to get the information they need before seeking assistance.

And the most important thing...enjoy your job!

There will be tough times and you'll feel out of your depth on many occasions, but this is when you get to make mistakes, learn lessons, and find your path.

Put in the hard work, show tenacity, integrity, and perseverance, and you will always be successful.

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