

Here's how to keep that first job, new graduate

Keep networking, learn from your mistakes, and please, quit looking at YouTube



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Despite all the job market doom and gloom for recent graduates, plenty of Gen Yers are finding jobs. The trick is holding on to those first gigs.

The outlook actually is looking better for newly minted grads, with 41 percent of employers reporting they are hiring recent college graduates this year, up from 20 percent in 2010, according to a poll by the Society for Human Resource Management. Unfortunately, with the jobless rate still over 9 percent lots of people are waiting in the wings if you don't make it past the probationary period.

Doing well quickly is more important than ever. "New college grads are facing a tough job market, so once you land a job it's important to demonstrate your worth from the get-go," said Daniel Greenberg, chief marketing officer of jobs site SimplyHired.com.

Making it from rookie to established employee will take more than just putting your nose to the grindstone.

"For the bulk of jobs in this information age, it is about productivity and adding value rather than showing up and working hard," said Steven Rothberg, founder of CollegeRecruiter.com. "Yes, showing up and working hard lead to productivity but they're not nearly enough anymore."

That doesn't mean you have to be perfect. "Everyone makes mistakes," Greenberg said. "What's important is that you show your manager and co-workers that you can learn from your mistakes, and that you're dedicated to your work and the success of the company."

Tim Van Loan, who graduated in May from the University of Puget Sound with a BS in biology, applied for 20 jobs and got two offers, including the one he accepted — a one-year paid internship working with manatees at Walt Disney World in Orlando. He's doing everything he can to make sure it leads to a permanent position but said he has made a few mistakes, including not properly sanitizing dishes for the animals. He realized his error after his supervisor walked him through the process.

"I'm working on listening and doing a lot more watching than talking," he said.

In addition owning up to your mistakes, here are some other things to keep in mind as you work on that first gig:

Keep networking

Most job seekers realize you have to network in order to land a gig, but what about after the job hunt? New hires and interns often overlook the power of networking, said Ebony Thomas, director of campus recruiting for Prudential Financial Inc.

At Prudential, new hires have the opportunity to meet with executives, who often tell newbies to stop by or e-mail with questions or to learn more about the organization. But only a few ever take up the offer, Thomas said.

For the ones that do, it's often a good sign because it shows "they're committed and care about being here," she added.

Don't fear human contact

Many hiring managers say it is tough to get their new tech-savvy workers to unplug from their devices. The bottom line is you can't text your way through a job.

"This group of new hires has been a bit of an uphill battle because they're so tech focused," said Dan Black, director of campus recruiting for Ernst & Young. "There are appropriate channels for every kind of communication."

For example, an e-mail is the best option for sending a list of accomplishments on a project. "But if you have trouble with a co-worker or a client causing you angst, that's a face-to-face conversation," he said.

Years of cybercommunication also have hurt the verbal and writing skills of many recent grads, Black said. he recommended that new hires consider reading Strunk and White's "The Elements of Style" and "Never Eat Alone" by Keith Ferrazzi.

Stop watching YouTube

Realizing you are at work to work will go a long way when it comes to career success.

"All workers slack off some of the time, but younger workers tend not to be as experienced as older workers," said CollegeRecruiter.com's Rothberg. "Inexperienced workers, and even many with years of experience, often fail to remember that during work hours everything that they do must benefit their employer."

Workers should thoroughly research policies on break time and Web and phone usage, preferably before the first day of work, because breaking these rules are often cause for reprimand or termination.

"New grads should continually ask themselves during the work day whether their actions are helping their employer increase revenues, decrease expenses, or both," Rothberg advised.

Know the company you work for

When people are desperately looking for work some forget about researching a company and just focus on landing any job. But once you start a position, it's time to do some homework.

"The primary mistake those new to their jobs make is failing to understand the organization as a whole," said Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of recruiting firm Trilogy Search. "How does the company service clients? What is the 360-degree view of the business and the marketplace? How do I fit into the big picture? This is certainly a daunting mission for 'a new kid on the block' but truly necessary in order to grow in the current position and prepare for new challenges and executive positions in the future."

Leslie Delorme, director of career services for Ohio Wesleyan University, suggested new workers join the firm's Facebook or LinkedIn group and try to connect with current and former employees.

"The best thing an individual can do is find a mentor and shadow him or her," Pappalardo said.

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