

# college to career transition



## Work Success...What You Should Know and Do

### 12 Essential Benchmarks for Work Success

- Developing professional competencies
- Communicating effectively
- Solving problems
- Balancing work and life
- Embracing change
- Working effectively in a team
- Working in a diverse environment
- Managing time and priorities
- Navigating across boundaries

- Acquiring knowledge
- Thinking critically
- Performing with integrity

### New, Emerging Standards for Work Success

- Build and sustain professional relationships
- Analyze, evaluate and interpret data
- Engage in continuous learning
- Communicate through persuasion and justification
- Plan and manage a project
- Create new knowledge

- Seek global understanding
- Mentor and develop others
- Build a team
- Initiative: The Holy Grail

Source: Dr. Philip Gardner, Director, Collegiate Employment Research Institute, presented June 10, 2010 at the Liberal Arts Career NetWORK Annual Summit, Bowdoin College.

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## The Paradox of Preparation

“College and work are fundamentally different. The knowledge you acquired in college will be critical to your success, but the process of succeeding in school is very different from the process of succeeding at work. Certain aspects of your education may have prepared you to be a professional, but evidence from the workplace indicates that this is not enough for professional success.”

*How to succeed in your first job: Tips for new college graduates*  
E. F. Holton, II and Sharon S. Naquin



## College Graduates' Perceptions of Differences Between College and Work

### Becoming Successful in Your New Job

- Identify the decision-makers and approach one as a possible mentor.
- Learn the organization's culture.
- Learn about your position by reviewing previous employee's memos, files, etc.
- Meet your colleagues and remember that your support/administrative staff are crucial members of your team.
- If you don't know, ask.
- Thank people for their assistance.
- Keep up with current news, especially that which effects your organization.
- As you become acclimated to your position, seek new and diverse responsibilities.
- Do more than the minimum, and let your supervisor know that you aspire to move up in the organization.
- Refrain from gossip; you could hurt yourself and others.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Keep your sense of humor.

#### College

- Frequent, quick, and concrete feedback (grades, and so forth)
- Highly structured curriculum and programs with lots of direction
- Few significant changes
- Flexible schedule
- Frequent breaks and time off
- Personal control over time, classes, interests
- Intellectual challenge
- Choose your performance level, e.g., A, B, C.
- Focus on your development and growth
- Create and explore knowledge
- Individual effort
- Right answers
- Independence of ideas and thinking
- Professors
- Less initiative required

#### Work

- Infrequent and less precise feedback
- Highly unstructured environment and tasks with few directions
- Frequent and unexpected changes
- Structured schedule
- Limited time off
- Directions and interests dictated by others
- Organizational and people challenges
- A-level work required all the time
- Focus on getting results for the organization
- Get results with your knowledge
- Team effort
- Few right answers
- Do it the company's way
- Bosses
- Lots of initiative required

Adapted from *The Senior Year Experience: Facilitating integration, reflection, closure and transition*, by J. N. Gardner, G. Van der Veer and Associates by Sheik Safdar, San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc

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# Top 10 Steps to Catapult Your Career Up the Corporate Ladder

Jill Frank, corporateadvancementcoach.com

1. Reassess your career. Is your career path well aligned with your priorities and interest? Do you possess, or can you acquire, the experience and education to be successful? If not, consider a lateral move and work your way up from there.
2. Clearly define your career goals. Only when you know exactly where it is you want to go, will you be able to map out your plan to get there.
3. Create a development plan. Determine the steps you need to take for your next promotion. Include resources and due dates. Schedule these activities in your planner and follow through.
4. Communicate your career goals with management. If you work in an organization that promotes employee development, communicate your goals with your manager and ask for his or her support. If you are concerned about resistance, find a mentor within the organization that you can trust.
5. Volunteer to spearhead a new project. This shows initiative, puts you in a visible position, and builds new skills. It also gives you the opportunity to showcase your leadership skills.
6. Stay current in your field. Read industry publications and reports. Be aware of changing trends and position yourself accordingly.
7. Take classes or obtain a certification. Use your industry knowledge to your advantage. Take a course in an up and coming area or a specialty that will benefit your organization and give you an edge over the competition.
8. Assume a leadership role. Offer to mentor a junior associate in your organization, apply for a position on a local board, or chair a committee for a nonprofit organization.
9. Network, Network, Network. Within your organization and within the community. Increasing your visibility and gaining contacts are vital to your success when climbing the corporate ladder. No one ever got to the top alone.
10. Excel in your current position. Exceptional performance speaks for itself. You won't get ahead with mediocre performance, regardless of how many other steps you implement.



## Preparing for Change

The job market can be unpredictable. Always be prepared to take advantage of new opportunities and manage change.

In an interview with John Challenger on Minnesota Public Television's "Right on the Money", John Challenger, author of *Managing Job Loss*, recommends:

- Take advantage of tuition reimbursement programs, "If you can take advantage of that while you're at your current company and you have the time to do it, certainly that will benefit your potential job change."
- "Join associations, industry associations, professional associations. Keep out there in your community because that will help you if you do make a job change. If you can build a network and keep it strong through being involved in various communities, that is very beneficial to the search."
- Be prepared financially. "We recommend that everybody keep about six months of pay savings for a job change so that you don't find yourself without severance, unable to make that transition, and that puts you in the position of taking a job you otherwise wouldn't want. So best to be prepared financially."
- Track your accomplishments. "Companies want to know what you've done primarily in the last three to five years that suggests you can do that in their company."
- Keep your résumé updated.

# 10 Career Change Mistakes to Avoid

Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D., Quintessential Careers

Are you considering changing your career? Are you bored, fed-up, lost, or otherwise unhappy in your current career? Are you facing a crossroads at which you need to decide between staying in your current field and moving to a new one? Do you have skills that you are not using in your current career? Have you been promoted to a point where you are no longer doing what you love?

Changing careers is one of the biggest decisions job-seekers face, and with many possible outcomes and consequences. Before you make that jump to a new career field, consider these common career change mistakes so that you can avoid them as you make the transition from one career to your next.

- 1. Making a career change without a plan.** A successful career change can often take months to accomplish when you have a strategy, so without one, you could end up adrift for an even longer period. Having a detailed action plan (including items such as strategies, finances, research, and education/training) is essential to your success. Without a plan, you might take the first job offer that comes along, whether it is a good fit for you or not.
- 2. Changing careers because you hate your job.** Don't make the mistake of confusing hating your current job with hating your current career. Take the time to analyze whether it's just the job/employer/boss that you hate, or whether it's the career/skills/work that you dislike. The same goes with if you are feeling bored or lost with your job; review whether it's the job/employer or the career. Whatever you determine, it's best not to leave your job -- if possible -- until you have a plan for finding a new job/career.
- 3. Making a career change solely based on money/benefits.** Certain career fields are very alluring because of the salary and other benefits they offer, but be very careful of switching careers because of all the dollar signs. Remember that you may make more money, but if you hate your new career, you'll probably be spending that money on stress- and health-related expenses.
- 4. Changing careers because of outside pressure.** Don't let your parents, significant others, or anyone else influence your career choice. They don't have to live that career every day; you do. If you love what you do and earn a reasonable living, why is it anyone's business but yours? If you switch careers because of outside pressure to have a "better career," and then hate your new career, you'll end up resenting the person(s) who pressured you to make the switch.
- 5. Making a career change without refreshing your network and finding a new mentor.** Don't ever attempt a career change alone. As soon as you have identified the career field you want to switch into, begin developing new network contacts. Conduct informational interviews. Join industry associations. People in your network can provide inside information about job-openings and can even champion you to hiring managers. Networking is essential for all job-seekers, but even more so for career-changers. And use a current or new mentor as a sounding board to help guide you in the transition. Learn more about networking and the value of a mentor.
- 6. Changing careers without examining all the possibilities.** Don't jump career fields without first conducting thorough research into all the possibilities, including career fields you may never have considered. The more information you have about various career choices, the more successful you'll be in making a career change. Use these research resources.
- 7. Making a career change without assessment of likes/dislikes and without self-reflection.** Self-assessment (of your skills, values, and interests) is a critical component to career-change success. Make a list of the skills you love doing (in your job, in your hobbies, in all aspects of your life) and the skills you never want to do again. Next, consider taking one or more assessments, especially those with a career component. Preparing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Analysis is also a useful activity.
- 8. Changing careers based on the success of others.** It's human nature to fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to others. Just because your best friend or neighbor is successful in a certain career does not mean that you will be -- or that you will be happy doing it -- so certainly consider the career field, but make sure you do the research before jumping into it.
- 9. Making a career change without necessary experience/education.** As a career-changer, you must find a way to bridge the (experience, skills, and education) gap between your old career and your new one. While transferable skills (skills that are applicable in multiple career fields, such as communications skills) are an important part of career change, it is often necessary to gain additional training and experience before you can find a good job in a new career field. Research whether you need additional training, education, or certifications.
- 10. Changing careers without updating job-search skills/techniques.** If it's been a while since you were last on the job market, take the time to polish your job-search skills, techniques, and tools. Review your resume-writing techniques, master networking, and polish your interviewing skills.