

## TOP 9 TIPS FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES STARTING NEW JOBS



**Summary:** *To the uninitiated, the jump from college to corporation is often akin to a jump into a frigid lake. A college student graduates from an institution that prizes individual achievement to an institution that values conformity, teamwork and profit.*

Though all colleges aspire to educate students to succeed, there is generally little emphasis on teaching students about corporate culture. Here is some guidance on what to expect as you leave the ivy-covered walls to become a freshman in the business world.

### 1. Communications 101

You will find that speech habits in the corporation are generally more formal than on campus. For example, if your computer goes down, you probably will not want to tell your supervisor, "This PC sucks." Clean up your vocabulary for the office.

You may want to change the way you look as well as the way you speak. Dress acceptable in dorms and frat houses may be frowned upon in your place of work. For example, baseball caps are usually inappropriate. There is no universal code for business dress -- "business casual" for one business may be "business sloppy" at another. Observe what other employees wear, especially managers.

### 2. Life is Not Always Fair

Promotions are usually based on performance reviews by your supervisor and usually are not as objective as a grade received in college. You have to be prepared to accept this subjectivity. Let's suppose your colleague receives a promotion you feel you deserved. How would you react? Storm into the boss's office and demand an explanation? Complain about office politics to a friend? A more judicious approach would be to congratulate your teammate, get past your hurt feelings, and analyze the situation more closely. Did your peer communicate his or her value to the corporation more effectively? Have his or her tasks been of a higher priority, more visible to management?

The corporate world is not perfect, but, given time, your career rewards will more closely correlate with your efforts and the value you provide to the corporation.

### 3. Pay Matters

Resist thinking of your performance review and the resulting pay raise as the equivalent of a grade on a final exam. Especially during an economic downturn, the raise you receive may not be nearly as important as what's stated in your review. Sometimes pay increases are the same across a company, and your supervisor may have no influence on the raise subordinates receive.

### 4. The Balancing Act

The workload in a corporation is not as predictable as the workload within the confines of college. The cast-in-concrete syllabus does not exist in the business world, replaced by a project schedule that will change frequently, sometimes requiring you to work erratic hours.

You have to learn how to achieve a reasonable balance between your professional and personal lives. Spending an inordinate amount of time at work can be counterproductive, leading to job burnout and problems at home. If you repeatedly think that you just have to get to the "top of this hill and then I'll work less" you are probably already working too much. The problem with getting to the "top of the hill" is that another hill (usually bigger) is always on the other side.

### 5. Embrace Change

No one has a job for life in a corporation. People move on, offices change, policies shift. Sometimes you'll welcome change, and sometimes you won't, but you'll benefit from being able to accept and adapt to change in the workplace. As author Maya Angelou wrote, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

### 6. Values and Ethics

College codes of ethics usually focus on "doing your own work." In contrast, corporate ethics are more complex, and sometimes it's difficult to know when a business decision crosses the ethics line. Corporations often present employees with guidelines for dealing with clients and competitors. Whether at the office or outside work, try at all times to do the right thing. You'll have fewer regrets later in your career.

### 7. Manners

Good manners demonstrate consideration for others -- even table manners do this.

The importance of manners in the business world is evidenced by the many etiquette professionals paid to teach good manners to the uninitiated. If you can't attend an etiquette seminar, use online resources or books to learn the basics.

### 8. A Sobering Thought

Drinking is not a part of most corporate environments. In most industries, controlled, predictable behavior is more important than a life-of-the-party demeanor.

If you do have drinks with colleagues, imbibe lightly. Too many drinks, and the resulting behavior sometimes can ruin a career.

### 9. Humor

Humor is like alcohol: In very small doses it is OK, but be careful. Don't tell a joke that might offend colleagues or clients simply to get a laugh. A joke that received loud guffaws in a college frat house may be met with stony-faced silence in a corporate setting.

I hope this advice will help prepare you for some of the differences and challenges you'll encounter when you leave college as a senior to become a "freshman" in the corporate world.