

TIPS ON STARTING A NEW JOB AND FITTING IN AT A NEW COMPANY

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Q. What tips do you have for starting a [new job](#) on the right foot?

A. Ask your way to success. It's critical that you understand the day-to-day realities and responsibilities of your job. Ask yourself, "Do I know what's expected of me?" If you're uncertain, or don't know, think about how you can obtain this information.

Besides reviewing your job description and performance goals, a good place to begin is with your boss. Having an early discussion with him or her can help you to discover what your boss values in an employee and his/her preferences. Some discovery-type questions might include:

- What constitutes success in this job?
- What would you most like to see done in the next three months?
- What are the most difficult challenges that this jobs entails?
- How often do you want updates on my projects, and what does that look like?

Armed with answers to the above, you'll be better prepared to meet – even exceed – expectations, and to experience job success.

Make a good impression. Demonstrating polite behaviour and small courtesies in the workplace can help to put you in a positive light and set you apart. For instance, make sure you acknowledge people. Remember to say "Hello", "Good morning" and "How are you?" When leaving work, consider saying "Good night" or "See you tomorrow." You will also want to recognize anyone who has helped you. Sending a thank-you note to colleagues, staff or mentors is a thoughtful way to identify the contributions of others.

Q. I'm considering joining another organization, but I want to be fairly certain that I'll fit in. How can I tell what the corporate culture is like?

A. There are several ways to gain insights into the dynamics and unspoken rules of an organization before saying "yes" to an employment offer. The key is to pay attention. Think of yourself as a reporter assigned to write an article on this organization. You'll want to investigate what the company values, and research how it operates. Consider collecting information through on-site visits, online observations, and third-party reports.

On-site observations. During the interview process, notice the décor. Is it contemporary or dated? What's on the walls? Artwork, archival photos or motivational posters? Are there more offices or cubicles? Who's occupying the corner offices? Who's in the cubicles? What company facilities, like a company cafeteria, exist? Now, examine the people. Are they dressed in business casual or suits? Are they chatting and laughing in the halls and elevators? Overall, do they seem content or discontented? Are most people sporting cell phones and/or PDAs or just a few?

Online observations. What image does the company portray on its website? Hip, conservative or something in between? Does the organization seem tech-friendly or tech-adverse? What priorities and plans does the company outline in its marketing materials?

Third-party observations. What do the media and analysts say about this organization? Has the company received any accolades, such as being named on "Canada's Top 100 Employers" or "Canada's Best Managed Companies" list?

Once you've explored these avenues, you should be able to piece together a reasonable picture of the company's corporate culture. Finally, based on your findings, determine if this environment will likely be one in which you will survive or thrive.

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