

Q&A Column
Author: Mark Swartz

Email Subject Line: Beginning a New Job The Right Way

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Headline: Starting Off Your New Job Right

Summary:

Question: Next week I will start a new full-time job that it took me five months of hard work to secure. I want to make certain that I start off on the right foot. Any advice on what I should be doing?

Tiara B., Victoria, British Columbia

Landing Page copy

Headline: Starting Off Your New Job Right

Dear Mark,

Question: Next week I will start a new full-time job that it took me five months of hard work to secure. I want to make certain that I start off on the right foot. There's a three month "probation period" so any advice on what I should be doing to make the most of this all important period?

Tiara B., Victoria, British Columbia

Dear Tiara,

The initial few weeks can be crucial in setting the tone for your new job. The main objectives are to learn as much as you can quickly; find out how things really work there; determine what your priorities are; and begin making a contribution slowly but surely. Quite a big load to handle all at once.

Let's take it step by step. Fortunately you're rarely expected to walk into a brand new role and begin producing results immediately. You will need to hear about what has been happening in this department recently. They may ask you to review some material regarding projects or assignments that are being worked on currently. And someone may want to brief you – bring you up to speed – so that you better understand what's been going on before you arrived.

You can help get through this beginning stage faster by asking if there are things you can read about *before* the day you officially start.

Once there, you might see if your manager will schedule you a bit of time with each of your key colleagues. You'll want to find out about some of the "unofficial" channels that are used to get things accomplished. Who are the players you should know about? What are the potential barriers to moving things forward and how do people there navigate around them?

A very important task is to set up a meeting with your boss within the first week or so to discuss what your priorities should be. Which projects are urgent? What are the issues that you need to know about? It's generally a good idea to tell your supervisor you're there to support him or her, and that you want to help make them look good. Ask their advice on how you can make this happen.

If there are support staff (e.g. administrative assistants, office managers, clerks), get to know them. They often have insights that can assist you as you try to feel your way through the new landscape.

And when it comes time to produce, consider focusing on doing small things well early on. The better that you follow instructions, deliver accurately and on time, and prove that you're worthy of more responsibility, the more likely you are to gain your employer's confidence and trust.

Beyond that, it's a matter of being positive and of making an extra effort to become part of the team. Show enthusiasm at every opportunity. Take on the drudgery work if need be and don't complain about it. The idea is to show them that they made the right choice in hiring you. Meanwhile, you can decide for yourself if you're happy with your employment situation!



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