



## **Getting Off to a Great Start**

By Liz Monahan and Deb Hirsch

You've landed the job of your dreams and now it is time to get to work. The first few months of any job are critical. This “make or break” period represents a significant window of opportunity for you as everything is new and open to change. You have the opportunity to “start over,” which means using all of your skills, abilities, and lessons learned from the past to create a new and rewarding career experience. This is a very exciting time!

Any new experience also comes with its share of stress and anxiety. You will be meeting new people, experiencing a different culture, and maybe trying out new skills you learned to prepare you for this job. You can also expect to be more critically judged in the first few months of a job than any other time. The best way to counteract this stress is through preparation. There are several things you can do get yourself up to speed, feeling confident, and off to a great start.

**Pre-Work** – At least a week or two before you walk in the door, gather and absorb as much information as possible. Ask your employer for any pre-reading. Read the latest news and anything else you can find on the internet about the industry, company, and specific product or business on which you'll be working, where relevant. You do not want to spend your first few days reading company reports and looking at organization charts. You want to hit the ground running, not reading. Your preparation may also allow you to see issues that your new co-workers or competitors haven't considered. Think of the great impression you will make when you come armed with some great ideas!

**Be Physically Fit** – The early days of a new job can be tiring. It is important that you are physically at your best and your energy level is up. Eat well, sleep well, exercise – do what you can so you are ready for any challenge.

**Seek to Understand** – The first weeks of a job can be frustrating because you don't know what you don't know. Bear in mind that a period of feeling uncertain and even somewhat confused is normal. You will want to be constantly gathering information, but holding off for a bit on making any big decisions or announcing your opinion until you've had a little time to get the lay of the land. Make sure you understand how things work before you try to change them.

You'll want to understand the organization in a way that helps you be successful and achieve your goals. To do this, you will need to know, among other things, how the organization functions. What are the formal and informal structures? What are the company's unofficial policies, how do you weave your way through politics that predate you? How does most

communication occur in the company? Pay attention to the unofficial as well as official channels of communication. Who are the formal and informal leaders?

**Get A Mentor** – It is vital to have an ongoing dialog with somebody who knows the company well. Having a person with whom you can talk and ask questions when navigating a company is tremendously helpful. Your mentor can also point out people in the organization who can support you and he/she can get you in front of them.

Wherever you are and whatever your role, one thing is for certain: you are the person who is ultimately in charge of your career and is most responsible for your own success. The workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is more complex and fast moving than ever before and requires that each of us approach it with a personal and well-formed strategy for success. These tips will get you started on the right foot, but it's only a start. You will need to learn about your customer's organization, define and deliver on priorities, build strong relationships, communicate effectively, and learn how to navigate and champion change, to name a few challenges.

Good luck and much success in your new role!

Contact: Liz Monahan, Vice President, CorpTalk  
[lmonahan@corptalkonline.com](mailto:lmonahan@corptalkonline.com)  
215-787-7914  
[www.corptalkonline.com](http://www.corptalkonline.com)