



SUCCEED AT WORK

Thanks to the Labor Market and Career Information Unit of the Texas Workforce Commission for allowing California Career Resource Network (CalCRN) to reproduce and edit *Succeed At Work* to create this resource for Californians entering the workforce.

Introduction

You prepared yourself, said all the right things in the interview, and landed that job you needed! *Congratulations!* But don't get too comfortable, the hard work is not over yet- you are very likely on probation for 3, 6, or 12 months! This means your new employer can decide to take your job away without an excuse. Your employer is giving you a trial-run, so you have to prove that you are that star employee you claimed you were in the interview.

Succeed At Work will guide you through the first few days at your new job as well as help you maintain your status as a key employee. Showing up is half the battle.

It is recommended that you read through this guide from beginning to end. Each stage builds on the other, and the information provided works best as a package.

Use this guide and other free resources from the California Career Resource Network (www.californiacareers.info).

Good luck on your new adventure in the world of work!

This guide will address five stages for Succeeding at Work:

Stage 1: Acting Self-Employed

This stage explains what it means to act self-employed, even if you have an employer. By acting self-employed you will take charge of your career and reap the benefits of being a star employee.

Stage 2: Starting a New Job

This stage will give you a better sense of what you can expect from your employer and what your employer will expect from you. Starting a new job can be scary, so many unknowns, but if you have a better idea of what to expect on the first day you will approach your new job with confidence.

Stage 3: Being an Excellent Employee

There are many things you need to be aware of in order to become an excellent employee. This section walks you through ethics and responsibility in the workplace.

Stage 4: Living a Balanced Life

Being a great employee can be physically, mentally and emotionally draining. This section offers advice on what to do in order to take care of yourself at work and in life.

Stage 5: Enjoy Your Current Position

Your job is not your life, but it does help give you a life. When you are very unhappy with your job, you can become very unhappy with life. This section helps you take charge of your happiness and come up with solutions to make you not so miserable on the job.

STAGE 1:

ACTING SELF-EMPLOYED

Change occurs so rapidly these days. It can be hard to keep up with all the advances in science, communications and other technology. You can expect your work life to change often too. Jobs and even careers will come and go. To succeed in this environment, you might think of yourself as your own private company, offering your services to different employers over the years.

Upon completion of this section you will be able to: understand the importance of acting self-employed in the new world of work, and identify the advantages and disadvantages.

You may own your own business or you may work for someone else. Either way, acting as though you are self-employed can give you vision, power, and flexibility to succeed in a world where job security no longer exists.

You are the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), sole owner and only employee of a one-person company called “Me, Incorporated” (**ME, INC.**). Of course, you can replace the “Me” with your own name. It’s Jessica, Inc. or Juan, Inc... You fill in the blank.

You are in charge of your career

When you act as though you run **ME, INC.** you take responsibility for your working life, your education, and training, your job performance and your career advancement. To succeed in this environment you must direct your career because no one else will, especially in this climate of downsizing.

Unfortunately, years of downsizing has created a work environment where employees cannot rely on their employers to consistently provide them with a job. One study cited in *7 Survival Skills for a Reengineered World* by William Yeomans found that 64 percent of workers

didn’t believe what their management told them. When you don’t trust your employer, you have to look out for yourself. You must make sure that you can land on your feet if your employer goes under or your job becomes unnecessary. In other words, you’ve got to run **ME, INC.**

You have to deliver a quality product

Like any company, **ME, INC.** has a service or product to provide and customers who pay for it. **ME, INC.**’s product is you—your skills, knowledge and experience. **ME, INC.**’s customers are your employers, co-workers and your employers’ customers.

Like any company, **ME, INC.** must constantly work to attract and keep customers. You do this by delivering a quality product. Over time, your customers count on you to do excellent work in the same way that you count on your local bakery to provide the best cakes.

Upon completion of this section you will be able to understand the importance of acting self-employed in the new world of work, identify the advantages and disadvantages and be able to respond with specific actions to take.

The New World of Work

The world of work has changed the job model, the education required and how employers and employees view each other.

Job Model

► How it used to be:

Work in one profession or career your entire life.
 Income and responsibilities increase in a predictable pattern.
 Do exactly what your employer tells you to do - and no more.
 Perform manual labor in the manufacturing industry.
 Work full-time.
 Work hard and be loyal, receive income and security from employer in exchange.

► How it is Today:

Work in several careers and have many jobs.
 Hold a flexible and project-oriented position.
 Create a unique career path; change employers to increase wages and responsibilities.
 Provide creative work, customer service or technical work in a service or knowledge industry.
 Work full-time, part-time, temporary or contract.
 Work hard and look out for self; receive income and training in exchange.

Now let's look at how the education required has changed in the new world of work.

Education Requirements

► How it used to be:

Obtain a high school diploma, any college degree is a bonus.
 Need to use job hunting skills rarely.
 Compete locally for jobs.

► How it is Today:

Obtain at least some post high school education.
 Need to sharpen and use job hunting skills constantly.
 Compete globally for jobs.

There is a tremendous change that has occurred with how employers and employees view each other.

How Employers and Employees View Each Other

► How it used to be:

Employees rarely changed jobs because employers did not trust those who change jobs every few years.
 Rarely, if ever, experienced layoffs. Companies viewed layoffs as a sign of financial crisis.
 Employer = Caretaker.
 Employees stayed with one employer to get the best possible retirement benefits, which employers based on length of service and highest earnings.

► How it is Today:

Employees tend to change jobs every few years in order to gain advancement opportunities and advance skill sets.
 Face lay offs routinely as employers constantly try to streamline operations.
 See your employers as your customer.
 Take retirement portfolio to new employers without losing benefits, responsible for investing in your own future.

Advantages to the New World of Work

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>You Relate to Others as Equals:</p> <p>There is more of a “team” mentality in the work place. Supervisors’ roles have changed from ‘parent’ to ‘coach’. You joined the team voluntarily and can leave any time. You also know that they can “trade” you at any time they don’t like your performance.</p> | <p>You Find Greater Fulfillment in Work:</p> <p>You can choose work that you find fulfilling. Since very few jobs offer real security, why not do what you love? Shop around and find the type of work and environment that suits you.</p> |
| <p>You Keep Growing:</p> <p>To stay competitive you improve your skills, increase your knowledge and build relationships with others. You must be flexible and able to adapt to an ever changing work environment. You must be able to transfer your skills to different types of work.</p> | <p>You Define Yourself:</p> <p>Defining yourself rather than letting a job define you – is empowering. It’s the difference between saying, “<i>I was a house painter, carpenter and drafter</i>” and saying, “<i>I’m good with my hands and I’ve put my skills to use over the years in painting, carpentry and drafting.</i>” Telling your story puts you in charge.</p> |

Possible Disadvantages to New World of Work

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>You Have No Job Security:</p> <p>There are many factors that affect job security and admitting this to yourself is important. Your employer may go out of business or lay you off. Another company may buy your employer’s company and restructure you out of a job. And with the rapid changes in technology your job may no longer be necessary.</p> | <p>You Must Grow:</p> <p>In order to stay marketable you must constantly update and increase you skills and knowledge. Learning is lifelong.</p> |
| <p>You Must Provide Great Service:</p> <p>Employers are looking for employees who have excellent soft skills and communication skills. If you are lazy, uncaring or disrespectful, you will not be successful in the world of work. You must provide and deliver quality service or you will be out a job.</p> | <p>You Must Define Yourself:</p> <p>Unfortunately there is no returning to the days of job security. Your employer no longer defines who you are and where your career will lead. You are in charge of your career and choose your career path. This takes time, effort, follow through, and demands risks.</p> |

Actions You Can Take in the New World of Work

There are actions you can take to be successful in the new world of work. The first is to aim for lifelong employability, not lifelong employment. Employability means you can readily find a new job when needed, that employers want to hire you.

Stay Employable:

- ✓ Know how to job hunt effectively.
(see *Find and Get the Right Job* publication)
- ✓ Know how to please customers.
- ✓ Understand how to transfer your skills to different types of jobs.
- ✓ Learn quickly and effectively.

Take Action:

- ✓ Take the initiative and look ahead, planning your future, rather than reacting to events.
- ✓ Seek new career opportunities, new employers, and new ways to grow.
- ✓ Pay attention to labor market trends so that you know your field's future.
- ✓ Set goals for yourself and work to achieve them.

MOTIVATE:

- M** *Manage your own work life:* you are responsible for your career.
- O** *Options and Opportunity:* be aware of them and ready to seize them.
- T** *Training never ends:* keep learning about your field and others.
- I** *International mind set:* value cultural difference and learn geography.
- V** *Value all work:* it shows that you place worth on your time and yourself.
- A** *Achievement:* do the best job possible, set and realize goals.
- T** *Technology:* become fluent with computers and stay current with advances.
- E** *Economics:* understand how the economy shapes the labor market in general and your field in particular.

Build Your Base of Potential Employers:

- ✓ *Think of your job as temporary:* Thinking of your job in temporary terms reminds you that you always need to be job hunting.
- ✓ *Always do your best:* Constantly prove yourself to those who are in a position to hire you, they are watching you.
- ✓ *Learn, learn, learn:* Take every available opportunity to improve and add skills and knowledge, especially if your employer pays for the training.
- ✓ *Practice job hunting:* Even if you love your job, practice searching for another one. It sharpens your job searching skills, provide insight into industry changes and advances, which can give you an edge in skill advancement opportunities.

STAGE 2:

STARTING A NEW JOB

Starting a new job can be stressful. Reduce the stress by knowing what to expect and preparing for it in the future.

Upon completion of this section you will be able to:

1. Evaluate your job expectations and duties.
2. List ways to develop positive work relationships.
3. Identify ways to succeed your first day and first year.

Realistic Expectations

Have realistic expectations for yourself in regards to your new job so you can enjoy the experience and handle difficulties in a calm manner.

▶ **Areas in your job where you form these expectations are in:**

- Duties, People, Attitudes
- Systems, Equipment, Procedures
- Atmosphere, Work space, Commute.

School vs. Work

Understanding the differences between school and work will help you form more realistic expectations about your new job.

▶ **School:**

- Many teachers
- Frequent evaluations (exams, report cards)
- Summers off and long holiday breaks
- Annual promotion (grade level changes e.g. junior to senior)
- Can get perfect grades
- Learn on one kind of equipment/software
- Fellow students generally your age and experience level
- Told what to do and when to do it
- Can start fresh with a new teacher every term

▶ **Work:**

- One boss
- Annual review
- One to two weeks off a year
- Infrequent promotions
- No way to be perfect
- Use different kinds of equipment/software
- Form long-term relationships with co-workers
- Co-workers generally of all ages and levels of experience
- May be told what to do or may have to figure it out and be self-motivated
- Keep the same boss a long time

School and work have many things in common. Both require you to:

- ✓ Focus on tasks and prioritize them
 - ✓ Learn new skills
 - ✓ Be patient with the learning process and have realistic expectations about study time, grades, etc.
 - ✓ Be around a diverse group of people.
-

New Hire Expectations

Regardless of the type of work you do or the type of company that hired you there are certain expectations you should have.

- ▶ **Orientation:** Usually on the first day, someone orients you to the company, department, and your new position, including finalizing any paperwork.
- ▶ **Introductory Period:** In most cases this is the first 90 days on the job, but may last up to a year.
- ▶ **Benefit Limits:** When you begin your new job you may not have access to all of your benefits. Benefits usually begin after the introductory period.
- ▶ **Training:** You may be required by your employer to attend training.
- ▶ **New Jargon:** Some professions and companies use specific language for their industry.
- ▶ **New Equipment:** The equipment and tools used on your new job may be different than those used on your previous job or in school.
- ▶ **New Policies and Procedures:** Learn your company's policies and procedures and follow them.
- ▶ **"New Hire" Duties:** New hires duties are usually temporary, and may be tasks that do not suit your interests. Keep in mind that it is only temporary.

How You May Feel

When you start a new job you may experience many different and conflicting emotions and impressions. Being realistic about what to expect and knowing that most people feel similar to you when starting a new job can help.

Here is a list that may help you identify some of these emotions:

- ✓ Overwhelmed
- ✓ Anxious
- ✓ Dependent
- ✓ Excited
- ✓ Lonely
- ✓ Doubtful
- ✓ Uncomfortable
- ✓ Motivated

How Your Co-Workers May Be

Co-workers can make a place of employment a fun or miserable place to work. As a new employee realizing how your co-workers will react to you in the beginning can make the transition to a new job easier. Your new co-workers may:

- ▶ **Forget You:** When you are introduced to your co-workers they may seem welcoming and interested. Once you begin working they may suddenly seem unavailable and indifferent. Remember that it is not that they dislike you, it is just that they are busy with their own work. Do not take it personally.
- ▶ **Stereotype You:** Right or wrong, it is human nature to base initial judgments on appearances and preconceptions. Do not take this personally because time and experience will help them see the real you.
- ▶ **Label Your Work Style:** Show your co-workers your openness and willingness, and most of all respect. It is through your behavior that you help shape the labels that people have about you.

Developing Positive Work Relationships

Here are some ways you can build productive work relationships with your co-workers:

- ✓ Learn names
- ✓ Learn unofficial rules of your work place
- ✓ Ally with successful and trustworthy co-workers
- ✓ Be sensitive to differences among co-workers
- ✓ Reach out slowly
- ✓ Avoid personal questions
- ✓ Reveal only as much as others do
- ✓ Keep your relationships with your co-workers professional

How Your Supervisor May Be

Your supervisor is there to help you succeed and be productive. Acknowledging there are different styles of supervisors can help you transition into your new job.

Gossip

Gossip usually means talking about someone else without all the facts. Gossip can be hurtful, is unprofessional, and can make you look bad. Although gossip can reveal the company's culture and can alert you of potential problems gossip can actually ruin peoples' reputations and cause your co-workers to distrust you. Gossip can even get you fired, so don't engage in this behavior. If you find yourself or someone else the subject of gossip here are some strategies for dealing with it.

Gossip about you:

- ✓ Ignore it, if the rumor isn't damaging let it go.
- ✓ Confront it. Ask the gossiping person to stop or retract the statement.
- ✓ Report it to your supervisor or human resources department.
- ✓ Be skeptical of the gossip. Just because you hear about gossip second hand doesn't mean it's really happening.

Do Your Job Well

To perform well at a new job you need to be prepared to learn, show appreciation, follow directions, be teachable, take responsibility, believe in yourself and take the initiative.

Gossip about others:

- ✓ Ignore it. It is none of your business.
- ✓ Encourage the individual gossiping to speak with the other person directly.
- ✓ Challenge it or defend the person being gossiped about.
- ✓ Express discomfort with gossip and say that you don't want to participate in gossip.

Succeed the First Day:

- ✓ Prepare for orientation.
- ✓ Be ready to start fresh.
- ✓ Encourage yourself.
- ✓ Research the company.

Succeed the First Year:

It is not uncommon to take a year to feel comfortable at your new job. Be patient with yourself.

- ✓ Remember, "This too shall pass".
- ✓ Try to be comfortable with not knowing.
- ✓ Don't judge your feelings of uncertainty and share them with others.
- ✓ Take pride in small steps.
- ✓ Remember your goals.

STAGE 3:

BEING AN EXCELLENT EMPLOYEE

Being an excellent employee means developing a good work ethic and good work habits.

Upon completion of this section you will be able to list ways to develop a good work ethic and implement actions to achieve work excellence.

Work Ethic and Excellence

You may be wondering: *What is the difference?* Having a good work ethic means you are honest and hard working. Work Excellence means performing your job extremely well. You need both to succeed at work. If you have a great work ethic but are incompetent, employers will not want you. Nor will they want you if you have work excellence and are extremely productive, but you steal from them.

► Work Ethic:

- Pride in work
- Good attendance
- Integrity
- Attitude
- Maximum Effort

► Work Excellence:

- Productivity
- Customer Service
- Good Communication
- Good Team Player
- Continuous Learning
- Problem Solving
- Good Organizational Skills
- Good Time Management Skills

Pride in Work

A strong work ethic means taking pride in your work, regardless of what job you do or position you hold.

► Every Job Matters:

Every job is interconnected. So no matter what job you do, or how menial, it serves an important purpose.

► Your Job Matters:

Believe in yourself and in the value of your job. It's up to you to decide the value of your job.

► Pride in Work Leads to Pride in Self:

If you think you are a quality person, you will do quality work. You learn to think positively about yourself by doing positive things.

Attendance:

Most people need to miss work occasionally for various reasons, such as illness, accidents, or a planned vacation. It is important that you handle these situations properly. Here's how:

Absences:

Call as soon as you realize you will not be able to make it to work. Make the call yourself.

Vacations:

Ask for vacation time as soon as possible.
Explain your reason honestly.
Give your boss exact dates.
Offer to make up the lost time.
Put request in writing, using company form or note that your supervisor signs.
Arrange to have a co-worker to cover for you BEFORE notifying your supervisor, if applicable.

Late Arrivals/Tardiness:

Call in even if you think it will make you even more late.
Speak with a supervisor not a co-worker.
Give an estimate of your arrival time.
Apologize when you arrive.
Don't let it happen again.

Missing Work?

Some reasons for missing work are more acceptable than others.

Acceptable:

- I am ill with an infection or flu.
- My child is ill and I have to care for him/her.
- I was in an accident on my way to work.
- It's a religious holiday for me.
- A death of a family member or close friend.

Unacceptable:

- My car is not running and I don't have a ride.
- Have to meet with my lawyer or other professional.
- Family or friend asked you to watch their children.
- Too upset to work because had an argument with partner, family or friend.
- Need to visit someone in the hospital.
- Need to get new contacts/glasses.
- Have a hangover.

The Effects of Missing Work

When you are absent or even just late, it can negatively affect everyone at the worksite.

▶ **You:**

- ✓ Lose pay.
- ✓ May lose your job, especially if you are late or miss work often.
- ✓ Make your boss and co-workers angry at you.

▶ **Your Supervisor:**

- ✓ Has to rearrange the work schedule or personally have to cover for you.

▶ **The Company:**

- ✓ Loses productivity.
- ✓ Faces upset customers who did not receive the service they should.

▶ **Your Co-workers:**

- ✓ Have to pick up the slack for you which creates resentment and anger.
- ✓ May have to come in early, stay late, or come to work on a day off to cover you.

Integrity

When you agree to work for someone, you agree to be sincere, follow the rules and be honest.

Employers expect you to:

- Be honest and discreet.
- Follow company rules.
- Follow local, state and federal laws.
- Follow the written code of ethics for your occupation (if there is one).
- Speak up when someone else acts improperly.

- Employers also expect you to do the right thing, which means avoiding behaviors that are viewed as inappropriate or dishonest such as:
 - Stealing.
 - Using company equipment for personal business.
 - Cheating on your time sheet.
 - Abusing drugs and alcohol at work.
 - Violating confidentiality (employer, employees, customers).
 - Tolerating other's bad behavior.
 - Violating company policies.

Integrity Questions

Having integrity is not always easy. You might find yourself in a situation or an ethical dilemma and wondering what to do.

Ask Yourself:

- ***Is it legal?*** If it is against the law, ***Do Not Do It***, even if your boss tells you to. The law will hold you accountable.
- ***Would I feel proud about it?*** If your conscience tells you it is wrong, ***Do Not Do It***.
- ***Would I like everyone to know it?*** If you would not want your supervisor, co-workers, family, etc. to know about it ***Do Not Do It***.
- ***Would it hurt someone?*** If it harms someone or an organization physically, mentally, or financially, ***Do Not Do It***.
- ***What would happen if I didn't decide?*** If not deciding could result in harm, ***Do something positive, don't just wait***.

Positive Attitude

Employers want their employees to be friendly and have a positive attitude. Having a positive attitude makes it easier for co-workers and customers to work with you.

A positive attitude cannot be faked. Your true feelings are revealed through your verbal and nonverbal signals.

Having a positive attitude makes you feel better about your job and your life.

Sometimes having a positive attitude is challenging, but try to look for the humor in the situation and remember to be grateful for all the good things in your life.

What's Your Attitude?

What kind of attitude do you want to project, Positive or Negative?

► Positive:

- Takes pride in work and behavior
- Optimistic
- Eager to learn, change, and grow
- Happy to help others
- Energetic and enthusiastic

A Positive Attitude:

- ✓ Enhances relationships
- ✓ Creates fun and creative work environment
- ✓ Increases productivity
- ✓ Allows more opportunities for advancement

► Negative:

- Does only the minimum
- Complains and criticizes
- Resists change
- Treats others poorly
- Procrastinates
- Blames others for own problem

A Negative Attitude Will:

- ✓ Drive others away
- ✓ Make yourself miserable
- ✓ Create more illnesses and absences
- ✓ Limit opportunity for advancement

Maximum Effort

In order to succeed at your job you have to be focused, work hard, and give your job your all. Here are some tips to maximize your working effort.

Leave your home life at home.

Sharing your personal problems with your co-workers is not a good idea. It reduces your productivity and you risk losing the respect of your co-workers.

Limit socializing at work:

Building relationships with co-workers is valuable and shows that you want to be part of the team. Be careful, and professional, and know when to get back to work.

Put in a full shift:

Be sure to work your entire shift. Make up any personal time you take at work. Take breaks only in accordance with company policies. Conduct personal business, such as web surfing or phone calls, only during breaks.

Be physically ready to work:

Show up to work ready to work hard. Avoid drinking alcohol or doing drugs before going into work. Arrive to work well rested, and focused.

Productivity

On top of working hard you should also work smart. Working smart increases your productivity making you a valuable employee. Here are five steps to help you.

1 Prioritize:

Learn which tasks are most important. These are the ones you should complete first.

2 Do your tasks:

Productivity means working effectively and accomplishing the tasks you have prioritized. Plan ahead, it saves time later. Be results oriented. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

3 Do your tasks on time:

Meet your deadlines. High productivity means you complete your work in a timely manner while still being efficient and accurate.

4 Do your tasks well:

Make your work time count. Listen carefully to instructions to reduce mistakes.

5 Do more tasks:

Take the initiative to do the assignments that no one else wants to do. If you see something that needs to get done, do it without being told.

Ask For What You Need

You can increase your productivity if you have the necessary or the best tools for the job.

If you need certain equipment or support to be more productive, ask for it.

Do some research. If you need a faster computer, for example, learn what type and speed you need.

Be reasonable, do others in your same position at a similar company use that type of computer?

How much will it cost? Put the request in writing. Explain how it will benefit the company.

Meet with your employer in person to discuss the request, and be gracious no matter what the decision is.

Serving Unhappy Customers

Inevitably, you will encounter unhappy or dissatisfied customers. They say they received poor service or a defective product. Whatever their complaint, believe them. Relatively few customers are crooks or chronically troublesome. Most of them have cause to complain.

When customers complain, don't take it personally or negatively. Instead, see it as a chance to make them happy.

Customers know that mistakes happen. They just want you to fix the problem promptly and respectfully. You can do just that by following the 7 C's of Customer Service.

When you resolve a problem to the customer's satisfaction, you may have a customer for life. Research shows that well over half of the complainers will remain customers. The number goes up to almost 100% when you resolve the situation immediately.

The 7 C's of Customer Service

Remember these 7 customer service skills and you will be successful at resolving customer dissatisfaction.

- 1. Courteous:**
Listen attentively and respectfully
- 2. Contribute:**
Apologize immediately if you or your employer makes a mistake—even if no one notices. Explain to the customer how you will avoid the error in the future. Show that you are sorry.
- 3. Clear:**
Learn exactly what the customer wants. Explain all possible options to the customer.
- 4. Connected:**
Describe what will happen next, follow through, and then contact the customer to confirm that it went well.
- 5. Confidential:**
Use your tone and manner to show that you respect your customer's privacy, especially if the customer is confiding in you about their personal business.
- 6. Cautious:**
Make sure the area is safe for you and your customers.
- 7. Calm:**
Keep your voice and manner calm and helpful. No matter how difficult the customer is, don't react negatively.

Why Customers Complain

Often, people have a good reason to complain about the service they receive.

Businesses cause complaints by:

- ✓ Confusing customers with too many choices and not enough information
- ✓ Ignoring (or seeming to ignore) customers
- ✓ Keeping customers waiting a long time
- ✓ Treating customers poorly, including being rude, uncaring, unhelpful or indifferent
- ✓ Treating customers as criminals without just cause

Serving Angry Customers

At times, you may encounter angry or unreasonable customers. If they cross the line and become threatening, you need to keep yourself, your other customers and your worksite safe.

Call security and/or the police if a customer:

- Threatens or abuses you or others.
- Seems intoxicated or high.
- Uses loud or aggressive language.
- Displays weapons of any kind.
- Appears irrational or mentally disturbed.

Never engage the angry customer in a verbal or physical fight. Instead, hold your temper and get help. You may feel scared or angry, but try to remain cool in front of the customers.

How to Refuse Customers

You can't always give customers what they want. But you can refuse them in a way that leaves them feeling treated fairly. The key is to provide specific information.

► Here's how to handle a refusal:

- Listen to what the customer wants.
- Empathize. Say—sincerely—that you understand and care and want to help.
- Don't say "no" or argue.
- Give one reason why you can't do exactly what the customer wants. Be direct and honest.
- Explain their options. Ask the customer to choose from what you can offer.
- Repeat these steps as needed.

Communication

Communicating effectively means listening, and exchanging information and ideas. Employers value proper communication skills more than ever. To succeed at work, you need to perfect your communication skills in speaking, listening, writing and reading.

Speaking Effectively

Communication guidelines for effective speech are the same whether you are talking one-on-one with a customer or co-worker or addressing an audience.

- Be calm and honest.
- Speak for yourself.
- Be positive and you will get positive responses in return.
- Use appropriate language your listener can understand – no jargon or shorthand.
- Avoid extremes. If you use harsh language and give orders you will push people away. If you never speak up people forget about you.
- Stay aware of your body language. Look the person you are speaking with in the eye.
- Be responsible for making sure that your listener hears and understands you. Ask to be sure.

Public Speaking:

Public speaking is a desirable skill for employers. The skill of speaking in front of an audience makes you marketable and successful at work. Here are a few things to remember to do well:

- Treat your speech as a conversation not a lecture.
- Tell stories, don't just give facts.
- Nervousness gives you energy to do your best, so welcome it.
- Begin your speech with a story, a question, or a startling fact to grab the audience's attention.
- Try to involve the audience as much as possible, especially with activities. It keeps your audience interested.

► **Listen Effectively:**

Listening is more than staying quiet while someone else talks.

To listen effectively:

- Be attentive.
- Show your interest.
- Ask questions.
- Reflect back what you hear.

► **Write Effectively:**

If you know how to write clearly and concisely, you will always find work.

To write effectively:

- Plan ahead.
- Be logical.
- Be brief.
- Be organized.
- Think of your readers.
- Use simple words.
- Use action verbs.
- Proofread.

► **Read Effectively:**

Almost every job requires you to read, whether it is from books, web content or directions.

To read quickly and accurately:

- Skim first.
- Take notes.
- Ask yourself questions about what you are reading.
- Summarize the main points later.

Team Player

To succeed at work you must be a team player. This requires you to work hard and get along with others. Team work means working towards a common goal, not personal interests or glory.

Follow these guidelines:

- Participate
- Don't be shy
- Encourage others to participate
- Communicate
- Let go of your ego
- Value differences in people and opinions
- Expect conflict
- Keep the project on track
- Keep your sense of humor
- Be considerate

Team players ensure that their working environment is positive and run efficiently by taking care of the little things:

- **Notice your co-workers:** Greet them when they arrive and say "good bye" when they leave.
- **Clean up after yourself:** Don't leave a mess in the break room or spoiled food in the refrigerator.
- **Restock supplies:** If you use the last of anything such as copy paper, printer paper, water from the cooler, etc. be sure to either restock or notify the proper person.
- **Replace items where they belong:** Don't just throw things back in the supply closet or leave them lying around.
- **Return borrowed items promptly:** Take items only if you have permission.

Here are some *Do's* and *Don'ts* to being a team player:

► **Do:**

- ✓ Take the initiative
- ✓ Keep the boss informed
- ✓ Take responsibility
- ✓ Be solution oriented
- ✓ Learn from your boss

► **Don't**

- ✓ Blame the boss
- ✓ Fight the boss
- ✓ Wait for problems to get fixed
- ✓ Feel frustrated by slow progress
- ✓ Be afraid to change

Continuous Learning

To be an excellent employee you will need to stay current with technological and other advances in your area of expertise. Sometimes this will mean you develop new skills or upgrade existing skills.

Where to Learn:

- ✓ Read books and articles that relate to your job.
- ✓ Listen to business news about your field.
- ✓ Ask your supervisor to send you to job related workshops.
- ✓ Take classes at a community college.

How to Learn:

- ✓ Listen and observe.
- ✓ Be curious, ask questions.
- ✓ Be adventurous, exploring new ideas.
- ✓ Be willing to make mistakes.
- ✓ Be determined.
- ✓ Admit when you don't know.

Benefits of Continuous Learning:

- ✓ Get hired easily.
- ✓ Get promoted quickly.
- ✓ Earn more.
- ✓ Direct your own work life.

Problem Solving

Problem solving is a critical job skill of the new world of work. To solve a problem you should follow the seven steps below:

1. Define the Problem:

If store sales are down, and everything sells except the sweaters, the problem isn't the store; it's the sweaters.

2. Analyze the Problem:

Sweater sales are down. Are the sweaters priced too high or is it too hot to sell fall clothes?

3. Develop Solutions:

Ask salespeople and return customers how to get people to buy sweaters in the summertime.

4. Evaluate Solutions:

Compare solutions that are logical, simple, and cost-effective.

5. Select a Solution:

Decide on the best solution to implement, using whatever criteria you decide.

6. Implement the Solution:

Get support from others, especially your supervisor.

7. Evaluate the Outcome:

Determine whether the solution worked, and why it succeeded or failed.

Organization

Organization helps you be successful at work by increasing your efficiency. By being organized you get more done without wasting time.

► Organize Your Duties:

- Gather all the supplies you need before you begin your project.
- Break your routine tasks into parts.
- Take notes.
- Group similar tasks together.
- Automate everything you can.
- Clean your work area before you go home.

► Organize Your Work Area:

- Arrange items by frequency of use.
- Use broad categories when filing or arranging items or tools.
- Throw or give away anything you don't need.
- Use bins and boxes to store items.

Time Management

To be an excellent employee, you need time management so you can complete your work on time. In order to manage your time there are a couple of things to remember.

► Set Your Priorities:

Begin with the assignments or tasks that are important:

- To your boss.
- To your team, co-workers, or customers.
- New tasks, because they might take you longer than you expect to complete.

► Useful Time Management Tools:

- **Calendar** – helps you remember appointments, deadlines, and keeps you from over scheduling.
- **Daily Action List** – helps you keep track of the individual activities that you need to accomplish that day.

Appearance

Success at work means following the dress code set by your employer.

▶ **Be clean:**

- Proper hygiene is important. Keep your face, body, hair and nails clean. Always wear clean and unstained clothes. Use antiperspirant/deodorant daily.

▶ **Ensure safety and health:**

- Chose clothes that fit the work place such as an apron, boots, hair net, etc.

▶ **Try to fit in:**

- Model yourself after your successful co-workers. Keep your look simple, fairly conservative, or traditional business. Dress so that people feel comfortable around you and minimize distractions.

▶ **Minimize distractions:**

- Your goal at work is to work, not distract others from the business at hand. For most jobs, **NEVER** wear:
 - ✓ Suggestive or low-cut clothes.
 - ✓ Elaborate or unusual hair styles.
 - ✓ Unnatural-looking hair color.
 - ✓ Excessively high-heeled shoes.
 - ✓ Heavy perfume or cologne.
 - ✓ Large, eye-catching jewelry.
 - ✓ Visible or unsupportive underwear.
 - ✓ Clothing with holes or messages.
 - ✓ Visible tattoos, ritual scars or piercings other than in the earlobe.

Manners

Manners are as important as your appearance. Conduct yourself professionally.

▶ **Always:**

- ✓ Hold the door for customers.
- ✓ Let customers walk ahead of you unless you're showing the way.
- ✓ Act confidently.
- ✓ Smoke only in designated areas.
- ✓ Put cigarette butts and chewed gum in the garbage.
- ✓ Keep the volume on your radio or stereo low.

▶ **Never:**

- ✓ Swear or yell at work.
 - ✓ Interrupt a customer.
 - ✓ Slouch, lean, put your feet up.
 - ✓ Dip or chew tobacco in public.
 - ✓ Chew gum in front of others.
 - ✓ Pick at your nose, ears, fingers or clothes.
-

STAGE 4:

LIVING A BALANCED LIFE

Working hard can be exhausting so you need to take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Upon completion of this section you will be able to identify steps to keep yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally fit.

► Physical Health:

To stay fit and avoid injury:

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Follow recommended procedures for each task.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Request proper equipment from employer.
- Get regular cardio exercise.
- Stretch frequently.
- Increase your strength using free weights, machines or isometrics.
- Check your posture every half hour.
- Wear clothes that fit comfortably, without binding.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Shift regularly from standing to sitting.
- Avoid nicotine in all forms.
- Periodically focus your eyes on a distant point if you do detail or computer work.
- Drink alcohol and caffeine only in moderation.
- Get regular check ups with a doctor.
- Lift heavy or large objects by squatting and using your legs, not your back.

► Mental Health:

Keeping your brain in shape prevents your creativity and thinking from becoming negative and lazy.

To protect your mental health:

- Learn a new skill.
- Encourage yourself.
- To reenergize your brain it is best to leave work at work.
- Take periodic breaks.

► Emotional Health:

Change your response to stress by developing the structure and support you need to handle life's ups and downs.

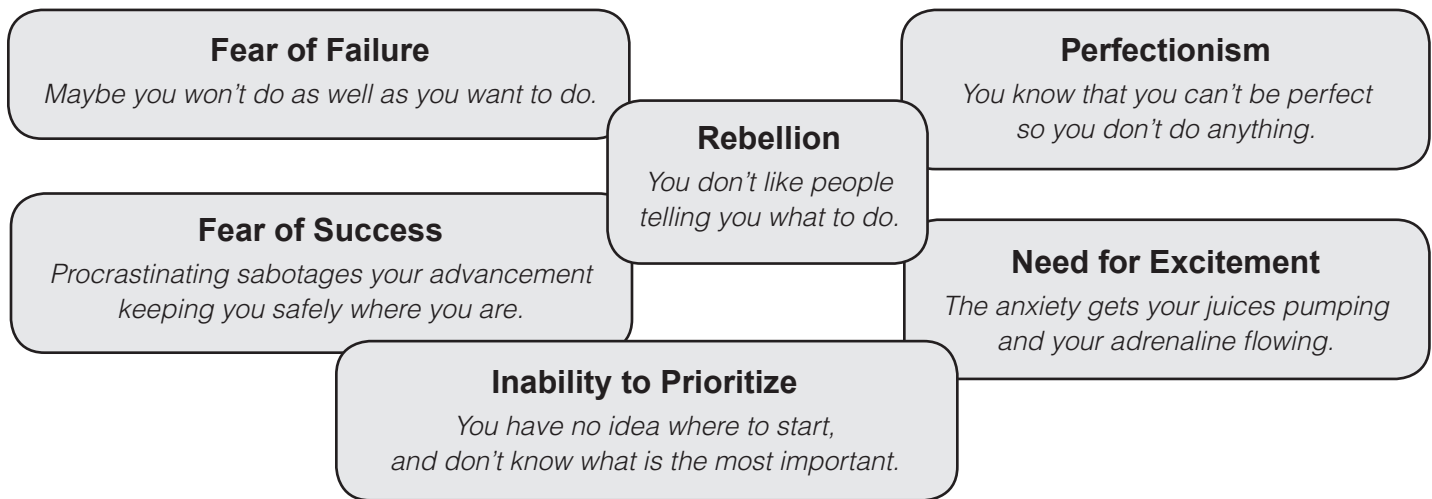
Remember to:

- Laugh.
 - Let it go.
 - Identify if any harm is being done.
 - Put your problems in perspective.
 - Take responsibility for your feelings. No one can make you feel a certain way. Your emotions come from within *You*.
-

Procrastination

Procrastination means putting off doing something, especially as a regular practice. Contrary to popular belief, procrastination is not caused by laziness. Several factors may contribute to the problem. Procrastination has many consequences, preventing you from succeeding at work. But there are some things that you can do to help yourself.

Some Causes of Procrastination:



Consequences of Procrastination:

- **Your work suffers:** You don't present your best work if you hastily throw it together at the last minute.
- **Your work relationships suffer:** You feel sneaky and guilty around co-workers and boss when you avoid your work.
- **Your dreams suffer:** You don't pursue your life goals because you are too busy putting them off.
- **Your integrity suffers:** You make promises to yourself and others that you can't keep.
- **Your quality of life suffers:** You feel guilty when you don't work and anxious when you do.
- **You feel stressed:** Because you put off doing the necessary work, you carry it around with you all the time.
- **Your co-workers feel stressed:** They are waiting for you to finish your part before they can complete theirs.
- **Your supervisor feels stressed:** Because pressure is coming down on them.
- **Your family feels stressed:** They have been living with you while you work around the clock to meet your deadline and you've been distracted, self-centered, and irritable.

Cures for procrastination:

- **Break it down:** Divide the work into small, realistic tasks. Write a list and cross off the items once you complete them.
- **Prioritize:** Focus on the most important tasks first.
- **Get support:** Ask for help on complicated tasks or work together with someone.
- **Lighten up:** Forget about the guilt, it is just another excuse to procrastinate.
- **Start fresh!**

Reduce Stress

Reduce your stress by structuring your day. Structure provides you with a routine that can create success at work.

▶ **Morning Routine:**

- Use an alarm clock to help you wake up in time for work.
- Wake up at the same time everyday.
- Decide what you must do in the morning and what can wait until later in the day.
- Work on being efficient to get yourself out the door on time.

▶ **Travel Time:**

- Plan to leave at a realistic time for getting to work.
- Give yourself more time if the weather is bad.

▶ **Dependent Care:**

- Have a plan in place that ensures your dependents get the care they need.

▶ **Evening Routine:**

- Decrease your pre-work preparation time by starting the night before.

▶ **Transportation:**

- Whether you drive, walk, bike, or take a bus to work, your transportation must be reliable.

Home Life

Do not try to get your sense of fulfillment and purpose from a job you dislike. Instead try to get meaning from your home life, this will make your job seem less important and you will resent it less. Find your happiness by focusing on personal activities, devoting yourself to your family, friends, religions, and other interests.

Work does not have to be your life.

Try to look at it as a way to support your life.

▶ **Focus on Your Home Life:**

- ✓ Pursue personal interests.

Spend more time with family and friends.

- ✓ Give to others.
-

STAGE 5: ENJOY YOUR CURRENT POSITION

Every person is responsible for creating their own happiness. Therefore, it may not be your job that is making you unhappy, it might be you. Upon completion of this section you will be able to assess the factors that make you happy and unhappy, list ways of transforming attitude toward a job, and recognize when to change jobs.

Take Charge of Your Happiness

Job satisfaction depends more on internal factors, which you can control, than external factors, which you cannot.

| ▶ Internal Factors: | ▶ External Factors: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in the work itself • Work fitting your values • Positive self-image • Positive expectations about job • A feeling of self-esteem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentally challenging work • Reasonable physical demands • Meaningful rewards • Contact with customer • Helpful co-workers and supervisors |

How to Transform Your Job

You can change your job without having to look for a new one. First you can improve your relationships with your co-workers. Second, you can approach your supervisor and discuss your desire to transform your job.

This will take some preparation and thought.

Improving relationships with co-workers:

One of the best ways to transform your job is to improve your work relationships.

- Stop complaining
- Apologize if necessary
- Socialize appropriately with your co-workers
- Work hard and work smart

Transforming your job:

- Talk with your supervisor about your position, your performance, and what you want out of your job.
- Know your performance evaluation, be sure you exceed all expectations.
- Do your research.
- Schedule time to meet that is convenient for your supervisor. Let them know the purpose of the meeting.
- Be businesslike and use a communication style that is assertive, not passive or aggressive.
- Be tactful so that your supervisor does not feel threatened.
- Stress the benefits you bring to your employer and show why you are worthy of job transformation.
- Be willing to negotiate.

Traits that Cause Unhappiness

Being successful at your job requires you to have a positive attitude. Certain attitudes, thoughts and behaviors can lead to unhappiness and poor performance at work. Identifying these traits is the first step in changing your attitude and creating success at work.

► **Low Self-Esteem:**

Lack of self-confidence in your skills and abilities.

► **Fear:**

Feelings and thought patterns that create avoidance and procrastination.

► **Victimization:**

Belief that life is doing something to you and that it is all out of your control.

► **Inflated Self-Esteem:**

Arrogance, refusal to ask for help, not listening to others or seeing value in other's ideas and skills.

Get a New Attitude

You have the power to choose how you feel about your job and your life. You are solely responsible for your feelings and you can change. Here are some strategies to change your negative attitude.

► **Identify your negative thoughts:**

Negative thoughts cause negative feelings. Ask yourself what you are saying inside to make yourself miserable. You can change your thoughts by recognizing them, challenging them, and reversing them.

► **Attitude of Gratitude:**

Even a job that you dislike has something positive for you to focus on. It is enabling you to gain valuable experience, develop networking relationships, increasing your skills and knowledge, earning an income, an opportunity to explore the world of work, and other benefits that you can think of.

Make Time Fly By

Sometimes despite your best efforts to change your attitude about your job, it still comes down to just getting through the day.

Here are some suggestions:

- ✓ Make it a game.
- ✓ Help co-workers or customers.
- ✓ Focus on the present.
- ✓ Learn from your mistakes.
- ✓ See the humor.
- ✓ Go with the flow.

If you skip lunch or work at home you are always on call, then you will get tired of your job.

You need a break!

- **Take breaks at work:** you need regular breaks to renew your energy. Without breaks your productivity declines.
- **Leave work at work:** When you go home, leave your job behind.
- **Take time off:** Taking a vacation allows you to return to your job revitalized.

► **Make Plans to Change Jobs**

If your job does not match your talents, goals, or values, you need a new one. Actively hunting for other positions brings hope for change and can make your current job more bearable. You see the light at the end of the tunnel and you feel less trapped. Leaving a job is not a sign of failure.

For resources to help you on your job hunt, go to the California Career Center, California CareerZone, California Career Resource Network. -

Summary

Succeeding at work requires you to work hard and work smart. In the new world of work people need to aim for lifelong employability. As an employee you keep growing and learning and challenging yourself. Working relationships play a large role in job. It is important that you accept all people and appreciate diversity. Additionally, being a part of a team and communicating in order to meet expectations and deadlines will increase your success at work.

Productivity, efficiency, time management, organization, and attitude will determine your success at work. Always strive to do your best work.

Balancing personal life and work life can be difficult at times. Create structure, schedules, and make a routine in order to reduce your stress. Remember to find time for family, friends, and favorite activities to give you enjoyable time away from work, which give you more energy and a better outlook.

There may come a time when you find yourself back in the job search mode. Your current position, no matter how difficult, has given you real benefits. You have gained experience, used skills, networked, and earned income. It has not been time wasted.