

13.4: Selling U - What Happens after You Accept the Offer?

Learning Objectives

- Learn how to follow up after accepting a job offer.
- Understand how to adapt to your new job.

So you've got your offer letter, and you're excited about starting your new job in a few weeks. Time to take it easy? Maybe a little. But don't kick back completely. There's follow-up work to be done.

From Classroom to the Corporate World

Just as you should never assume the sale is closed, the same is true about your job. Even though you have your offer, it's really the beginning of proving yourself in your new career. Whether you decide to work for a large corporation, a small company, or start your own business, it all starts right here.

The first thing to realize is that the corporate world is very different from the classroom. For starters, everything will not be mapped out for you in a syllabus with predetermined reading, homework, and final exams. If you think you're busy now while you are in school, wait until you start working! At work, everything is due "yesterday," so it's up to you to prioritize what you need to get done. Alexandra Levit, *The Don't Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something's Guide to the Business World* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2009), 134. There are no tests, but you are being tested everyday. You don't get a report card or grades; you get a performance review that provides a platform for feedback and self-improvement as well as a record of your performance for the company. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, "From College Campus to Corporate Climate: How to Make the Transition to Your First Job after College Graduation," About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/post_grad.htm (accessed November 23, 2009). And even if you've had a job while you were in school, there's more expected of you as a full-time employee than as an intern or part-time employee. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, "Your First Job: Making a Good Impression," About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/first_job.htm (accessed November 24, 2009). After all, it's no longer about you; it's about how your performance impacts the company's results. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, "From College Campus to Corporate Climate: How to Make the Transition to Your First Job after College Graduation," About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/post_grad.htm (accessed November 23, 2009). Welcome to the "real world."

Before You Start

Starting strong is important in any job. The first ninety days can make the difference in how well you do at your job, so do your follow-up from your job interviews before you even start working. It will not only give you a head start; it can make the difference about how well you do at the company. Andy Wang, "The First 90 Days," *Forbes*, September 7, 2006, http://www.forbes.com/2006/09/06/leadership-pink-careers-cx_ag_0906ninetydays.html (accessed November 25, 2009).

Here are five things you should do before you start your new job.

- **Say thank you.** Drop a handwritten note to your new boss, the human resources person, and any other people with whom you interviewed. Although you already sent thank-you notes to each of these people after your interviews, it's a good idea to send each one a personal note to thank them for their support and tell each how much you are looking forward to working with him. This is a great way to set yourself apart even before you begin your new job.
- **Continue to do your research on the company.** Just because you have a job offer doesn't mean you should stop researching the company. In fact, you should do just the opposite. Visit the company's stores, Web site, talk to customers, read press releases, and talk to current employees. Do everything you can to learn even more about the company you will work for. "Brave New World: What to Do before You Start a New Job," Workplace911, February 22, 2008, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/new_job.htm (accessed November 25, 2009).
- **Dress for success.** Plan what you are going to wear on your first day, even your first week of work. It's best to dress more conservatively during your first days until you can begin to really understand the company culture. Even if the company is very casual, dress up on your first day. According to Alexandra Levit, author of *They Don't Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something's Guide to the Business World*, "You might be overdressed, but I guarantee no one will criticize you for it. Rather, your colleagues will respect that you mean business, and your boss will be proud to introduce you around the company." Alexandra Levit, *They Don't Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something's Guide to the Business World* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2009), 51. Try on your clothes, take items to the dry cleaner, or have them tailored as

needed. You want to avoid any last-minute fashion emergencies on your first day of work. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, “Starting a New Job: What You Can Do before Your First Day,” About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/new_job.htm (accessed November 24, 2009).

- **Plan your route.** Even though you probably know your way to the office, it’s a good idea to take a test run during actual conditions during rush hour. You want to avoid being late for any reason so that includes knowing the public transportation schedule, traffic, or parking situation, depending on how you will get to work. Have an alternate route in mind just in case there is a traffic problem on your first day. Allow extra time on your first day. It’s better to be early than to be late. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, “Starting a New Job: What You Can Do before Your First Day,” About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/new_job.htm (accessed November 24, 2009).
- **Walk in with a smile.** While you will most likely be nervous with anticipation on your first day of work, follow the process similar to what you did for your job interview. Arrive a bit early, use the restroom, take one last look at yourself, use a breath mint, and smile. People will be helpful, so just relax and enjoy your first day on the job. A smile goes a long way on your first day and every day. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, “Starting a New Job: Fitting In,” About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/od/newjobfirstjob/New_Job_First_Job.htm (accessed November 24, 2009).

✓ You've Got the Power: Tips for Your Job Search

Impress Your New Boss

You already sent your thank-you note to the people with whom you interviewed and have just accepted your offer. What’s next? It’s a good idea to send a handwritten note to your new boss and tell her how much you are looking forward to working with her. It’s the perfect way to make a good first impression before you even start your new job.

After You Start

Your first few weeks on the job will be a whirlwind. You will meet lots of people, and it will be difficult to remember anyone’s name, title, or function. It takes a while to adjust and fit in at any company. Remember how it felt when you were a freshman? By the time you became a sophomore, you knew a lot of people, and you knew the ropes. The same thing happens at a job. There’s no magic time frame to adjust to a new job; everyone is different. It’s good to know that you’re not alone and that adjusting to your new job just takes time—and commitment. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, “Starting a New Job: Fitting In,” About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/od/newjobfirstjob/New_Job_First_Job.htm (accessed November 24, 2009). Here are five tips to help you get your feet on the ground at your new job.

- **Listen, observe, and ask questions.** This is the best way to learn the ropes and the company culture. There is no stupid question, so take advantage of the fact that you are new to ask as many questions as possible. When you watch and listen to other people, it’s easier to understand the culture or the unwritten rules of the company. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, “Your First Job: Making a Good Impression,” About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/first_job.htm (accessed November 24, 2009).
- **Avoid office gossip.** It might sound obvious, but engaging in office gossip can only hurt you. You never know to whom you are speaking so it’s better to heed your mother’s words: “If you can’t say something nice about someone, don’t say anything at all.” But do pay attention to the office grapevine. This will help you understand the informal rules, who’s who in the office, and how people perceive what’s going on in the company. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, “Your First Job: Etiquette and Gossip,” About.com, http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/firstjob/a/first_job_2.htm (accessed November 24, 2009). On similar note, it’s never appropriate to use company time and resources to check or update your status on social networking sites. Even if other employees do it, avoid the temptation to participate in social networking at work.
- **Find a mentor.** A mentor is someone who has experience in the area you wish to pursue and who exhibits a “generosity of spirit,” a natural gift to go out of her way to help others. Alexandra Levit, *They Don’t Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something’s Guide to the Business World* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2009), 106. A mentor is a person with whom you develop a personal relationship: someone whom you trust and are comfortable asking questions to and getting feedback from to take your career to the next level. Some companies offer formal mentoring programs, but at most companies finding a mentor is usually a less formal process. Go out of your way to get to know people whom you think might be a good mentor and take the time to get to know them. You should consider having several mentors throughout your career.
- **Stand out.** Perception is reality so be the person who stands out. Alexandra Levit, *They Don’t Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something’s Guide to the Business World* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2009), 75. Volunteer to work on projects,

especially those that others don't want to do, come in early, stay late, and deliver high-quality work on time. Dawn Rosenberg McKay, "Starting a New Job: Fitting In," About.com, (accessed November 24, 2009). Going the extra mile pays off.

- **Fine-tune your writing and speaking skills.** Now that you are working, you have to develop and communicate your ideas and point of view to your boss, your colleagues, and even your clients. Be a good listener and a confident communicator. It will make a difference in how people perceive you and your work. Alexandra Levit, *They Don't Teach Corporate in College: A Twenty-Something's Guide to the Business World* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2009), 161.

Now, it's time to relax, enjoy, and start this next chapter in your life.

Key Takeaways

- Even though you receive a job offer, there are still a lot of things you can do to follow up after your interview and before you start your new job.
- The corporate world is different from the classroom with a different environment and expectations. Your performance is no longer just about you; it's about how you help the company achieve its goals.
- It takes time to adapt to a new job.

? Exercise 13.4.1

1. Assume you just accepted a job offer to become a sales rep at a national food manufacturer. Write a personal note to your new boss to tell him how you are looking forward to starting your new job. Who are some other people in the company to whom you might also write a note?
2. What is a mentor? Identify someone who is currently a mentor to you. What makes him a good mentor? How might you be able to find additional mentors when you begin working?
3. Identify two resources that would be helpful to fine-tune your writing and speaking skills. How can you use these resources to help prepare you for your career?

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