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From Marc Cenedella

APRIL 25, 2011



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Job Search

10 On Ramps to Successful Onboarding

Set yourself up for success at your new job — even before your first day there.

APRIL 25, 2011

By Debra Donston-Miller

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You don't just start a new job these days; you onboard. TheLadders solicited advice from career development and HR experts on the best ways to maximize those first days and months in a new position. Here are 10 onramps to successful onboarding.



1. Don't wait for the first day. The first steps to success in a new job begin before the first day, said Ian Ide, a partner in the Technology Division of Winter, Wyman. "After accepting an offer you should speak directly with all appropriate parties, including both the hiring manager and [human resources](#)," he said. "During these calls, you should convey your excitement and enthusiasm for your new role."

2. Make early connections on social media. [Social-networking](#) sites such as LinkedIn provide an opportunity to connect with members of your new organization even before you walk through the door, experts said. As with anything social, however, take care to put your best professional foot forward and ensure that those pictures of your hard-partying college days have long been expunged from any of your online profiles.

3. Create a solid 30-/60-/90-day plan. Working with your new manager, map out a course to follow during your initiation into the company, said Jennifer Remis, a senior learning associate at Vistaprint. Set goals with measurable benchmarks for [success for one, two and three months on the job](#). These goals should be developed within the framework of overall business goals and informed by ongoing meetings with key colleagues. "Be clear on how your success will be measured so that you'll know where, and on what, to focus your attention immediately and over the longer term," added Roy Cohen, author of "The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide."

4. Identify key resources and how to access them. Cohen said it's important to identify the resources you must have to do your job. They could be as simple as office supplies or getting your phone connected to a more significant investment such as access to technology. The sooner you acquire basic equipment, the faster you can contribute — and it's also an opportunity to get to know the support team at your new job.

5. Develop relationships with the go-to people within the organization. Speaking of support, there are always individuals within any company that can help you get things done because of their institutional knowledge or their relationships with key people within the organization, said Dianne Shaddock Austin, principal, Easy Small Business HR. Find out who those people are and develop a relationship with them. "These are the people that can help you in a pinch," she added, "whether it's the receptionist or the person in the mailroom."

6. Seek opportunities to make a difference. While distinguishing

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yourself as the friendly, hard-working new guy, scour the landscape for the best place to make the greatest changes for the better, suggested Sean O'Neil, principal, One to One Leadership. "Maybe the company lacks a desirable expertise that you have or could acquire," he said. "Perhaps there's a new product idea or vertical market to attack. Just keep eyes and ears peeled. Once your first 30 days over, just being nice and omnipresent won't cut the mustard. You're going to need to bring real value."

7. Bring a little humility to the new job. While you want to make an impression, it's important for the new guy to temper enthusiasm with a little humility and a show of respect for the people and events that have preceded him. Vivian Scott, author of "Conflict Resolution at Work for Dummies," suggests asking questions that start with a statement of appreciation for current employees. She added that if you find someone is upset with you, apologize even if you don't think you should have to. "Regardless of what you might understand about the political climate, you never really know who's who or who might end up being your boss," she said.

8. Course-correct when necessary. Make sure to check in every week or two with your hiring manager to course-correct in any areas where she sees you veering off track, recommended Elene Cafasso, an executive coach at Enerpace. "Use these meetings to also renegotiate deliverables and manage expectations as you learn more from your stakeholders," she added. "Don't be afraid to ask for your manager's assistance when needed."

9. Keep a positive attitude. Any new position is bound to incur some minor disappointments as well as pleasant surprises, said Winter, Wyman's Ide. "The first few weeks involve a transition from the excitement of the offer and [interview process](#) to the reality of the role," he said. "Displaying energy and enthusiasm during this period will go a long way toward making a positive impression with all of your colleagues."

10. Give yourself a break. Starting a new job is high on the stress meter. Remember that everyone knows you are new, and that no one (hopefully) expects perfection right out of the gate. And know that your second 90 days are sure to be more comfortable than the first.

Debra Donston-Miller covers work-life issues and difficult job-search situations for TheLadders.

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