

Winning Over Your New Co-Workers

By Terry Arndt

You have been interviewed, background-checked, researched, discussed, and—finally—hired. Congratulations! Now the real scrutiny begins, because now your new co-workers will have their chance to size you up. As the new person in the office, you will fill several functions in addition to the official duties of your new job: stranger, rookie, newbie, and, sometimes, source of entertainment. Anxious yet?

Take a deep breath, wipe your palms, and repeat after me: "I have one chance to win these people over with a stunning first impression." Still nervous? The key is to remember that you CAN create a terrific first impression and win your new co-workers over.

Here's a checklist to help you get started:

1. LOOK GREAT. Clothes should be clean, neat, and fit well. Pay attention to your accessories, too—your shoes, belt, purse and jewelry should be tasteful and look well cared for. Tip: take special notice of how others dress in your office during your interview.

2. SHOW INTEREST. Be open to and interested in all the people you meet at your new job. Really listen to them, whether they're instructing you on the fine art of not jamming the copy machine or telling you about their bowling league. Ask questions, make eye contact, try to remember specific details. People appreciate and respond to those who are sincere, engaging, and curious. Conversely, the quickest way to turn others off is to appear self-centered and aloof.

3. PROJECT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE. Make sure that your net contribution to the office atmosphere is positive. Positive, energetic, professional, eager to work—all of these are traits of successful people. You might not always feel full of pep, but it's important to act like you're happy at your job and ready for business. In fact, you'll often find that acting energetic will improve your mood and actually give you the energy you need. Take stock of your small talk, too: how many of

your comments and questions are "downers" and how many are "uppers"?

4. RESPECT YOUR CO-WORKERS' TIME AND EXPERTISE. You will probably need a lot of help figuring out office procedures and protocols. Asking for guidance from co-workers is one way to get to know them. Quick requests for recommendations—the best deli, the nearest dry cleaners, a good gym—can be great conversation starters. If you need something that will take more than a few minutes of a co-worker's time, however, ask if you can set up an appointment with him. That way he will know that you value his expertise and his time.

5. ACCEPT INVITATIONS. In these early days on the job, you want to accept as many invitations as possible. It might be tempting to do a solo lunch so you can pore over your employee's manual, but the most important thing to do at this stage is to connect with the people you work with. One cautionary note, however: if the conversation during these outings with colleagues heads towards gossip, be aware of your position as the new kid on the block and maintain neutrality. The trick is to be sociable without getting sucked into a clique.

Winning over co-workers isn't about faking them out, but about putting your best self forward. Remember, the average time it takes someone to size up another person is just over three seconds, and often that first impression is the one that lasts. It's important, then, to consider how people are likely to see you when they first meet you. Are you outgoing or introverted? Do you have a positive or negative attitude? Are you neat or disorganized? Take stock of your outward appearance and body language and make sure you are projecting the image you want to project. By following these steps you'll be relating to your new co-workers as an insider in no time.

Terry Arndt is President of **Life After Graduation, LLC**. To learn additional information about *Winning Over Your New Co-Workers* and other valuable career transition issues, read **Backpack To Briefcase: Steps to a Successful Career**. Available at www.LifeAfterGraduation.com.



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