

How Students Can Become Technically Proficient Employees

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ABSTRACT: Students often leave school with a lot of information, yet with little direction as to how to apply it. This article outlines some of the ways to approach the technical and the new job experience in order to excel and be of benefit to your employer, and eventually become a technically proficient employee.

KEY WORDS: Students, Recent Graduates, Employers expectations, Advice for Recent Graduates, Career advice, Work advice.

If you have just finished school, you probably have a lot of information. Technical data from your chosen field of study, knowledge of how to take tests, and piles of books reminding you of everything you have learned while in school.

But the chances are, there is still a lot you don't know. How do I get a job? What do I do when I get a job? And now that I have one, why didn't school prepare me for real-life technical situations?

If you are lucky, your education provided you with real life experience in your field. But for many of us, school was just the beginning, and work brought us new problems to solve or technical areas to tackle that we did not have familiarity with. The following are some recommendations for how to adapt to the workplace environment, and to become a successful and technically proficient employee.

How to Get Started on the Right Foot

The key to transitioning from student to employee is understanding some basics about the workplace.

First and foremost, you want to be professional and on time. Professionalism includes your manners as well as your dress. Every company has different rules and regulations, so you will find it helpful to ask what the expectations are for workplace dress and other protocol. If you spend a lot of time in the field or on sites, your office may welcome your casual dress and steel-toe boots at the office, knowing that you need to be dressed appropriately for technical work.

However, if your role is both technical and involves client presentations, you may need to be prepared for either scenario. For example, you might wear a business suit or business casual attire to the office, and keep a pair of boots, hard hat and change of clothes in your car. This will allow

you to serve your clients and employer in various fashions, and be prepared for different meetings at a moment's notice. By accommodating both requirements, you become more valuable to your employer and show them that you have a "can do" attitude.

This also highlights an important part of the workplace. In addition to being professional and dressing appropriately for your role in the company, attitude is also a very important feature of becoming a valuable and technically proficient employee.

A positive, upbeat attitude indicates to your employer that you want to work hard and that you are ready to learn. It will also help you stay motivated as you adapt to the new role of "professional." Being eager to learn is critical. It will help you grow for both yours and your employer's benefit. It is not always comfortable to be in situations where we do not know what we are doing. But for many students turned employees, this is a critical part of establishing the foundation for technical proficiency.

The Path to Technical Proficiency

One has to go through the learning curve to get more technically savvy. Understand that the only way to become technically proficient is to go through the period of not knowing things. Technical proficiency is only learned by doing.

When you first begin a position, keep a positive attitude and your desire for learning. You will be asked to go to sites, learn new data, and write reports for scopes of work which were not covered in your classes. One of the keys to getting through this period is being dedicated to spending the time to do a good job.



Young EAI employees dressed professionally for a trade show.



EAI employees dressed appropriately for a jobsite installing Liquid Boot®.

Pay attention to details, especially for report writing. Often it is the most basic items such as the name of the client, site address or dates that we most easily ignore.

Ask for sample reports to review in your free time, or to help you under-

stand the format that is desired by your company to present to clients. Be patient with yourself, and realize that it will take time to get up to full speed. You will have many questions, but try your best to understand something before asking questions. Then when you have done your due diligence, you can go con-

fidently to your Manager or Supervisor with a consolidated list of questions. The reason for this is it will help you cover all the questions efficiently and get the answers you need to get your job done. Also, your supervisor is probably

busy with their own to-do list, and they will appreciate you taking an efficient approach to their time and expertise.

Keep Up the Good Work!

All in all, remember, every company has its own particular culture, expectations and formats. Be willing to learn and try something new, and do your best at all times. If you follow these guidelines you will soon find yourself to be a technical expert in your field.

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