

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM STUDENT TO PROFESSIONAL

Are you finishing university and looking to enter the workforce? For a lot of students, this is an exciting milestone. The prospect of getting a job in your field of study can be validating. Not only can it give you a sense of accomplishment as you take on concrete responsibilities, it's also a chance to finally get your finances in order. But for others, the transition is a source of stress and anxiety. Even though being a student is demanding, it comes with a host of advantages, like an established social group, a busy schedule that's shaped by the academic calendar, etc.

Regardless of whether you fall into one group or the other, you're probably wondering: **what can I do to ensure a smooth transition into the workforce?** The Career Counselling Department offers free help for up to two years after graduation. For an overview of the services we offer, go to: <http://www.polymtl.ca/sp/diplome/index.php>.

What else can help? Here are some things you can do to get your career off to a good start.

Ask for specifics

A few days before you start a new job, contact the employer for details about the work schedule, dress code, programs or software used, etc. This information will help you prepare in advance. After starting, ask your supervisor about their expectations and who you should approach if you have questions.

Be open

There's a lot to get used to when you transition from student to employee. As much as possible, try to remain open, humble and flexible. Even though you've successfully completed your studies, you're still a newbie in the field. Experience comes with time and you'll start getting a better feel for the job as the weeks pass. It's just a matter of attending meetings and learning as you go. Remember that there's usually a big difference between what you learn in the classroom and how things are done in practice.

Watch, listen and learn

During the first few weeks especially, take the time to watch and listen to everything that's going on in the workplace. Understanding team dynamics and the corporate culture can help you settle in. It's also a good idea to take notes during your first week. You'll be glad to have a written record of the various bits of information you need to know.

Communicate clearly

New responsibilities, new work methods, new tools, new techniques, new team—you've got a lot to take in. It's perfectly normal to have questions for your supervisor. Don't be shy about it. Asking for clarifications is a sign that you want to do a good job. By getting the information you need, you can make sure you're doing things properly

and meeting your employer's expectations. Finally, don't try to go it alone. Ask more experienced employees to check your calculations or results. Their field experience can be extremely valuable.

Put your cell phone away. Even though it's an essential communications tool, you should use your phone as little as possible at work. If you have to make a call or send a text, do it on your lunch hour. Social media is another workplace no-no. Don't check Facebook, YouTube or other sites using devices supplied by your employer. You might be perceived as lazy or unreliable.

Last but not least, take the time to polish your written communications (emails, reports, meeting minutes, etc.). The quality of your writing reflects your professionalism!

Be a team player

Interpersonal relationships are very important at work. No matter where you go, you're sure to meet people whose personalities and work methods are different from yours. While it can be tempting to judge people, try to give them the benefit of the doubt and find compromises.

Punctuality is important, so make sure you let your employer know if you're going to be late or absent. Just because you've been hired doesn't mean you can afford to be lax about your schedule.

Believe in yourself!

Employers who hire recent graduates are usually realistic about the knowledge and skills you have to offer. Hold your head up high and be confident in knowing that you have a role to play in the company.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- <https://www.jobboom.com/carriere/les-cinq-erreurs-de-l-ingenieur-debutant/>
- <https://www.lapresse.ca/affaires/portfolio/formation-des-ingenieurs/201701/12/01-5058799-formation-des-ingenieurs-bienvenue-dans-la-realite.php>