

# 50 real world career tips for recent college grads and job-seekers

BY LISA MILLER  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Transitioning from college to career is a major life change, and successful navigation is not guaranteed. The cultural shift from campus to corporate is a big one. Understanding office protocol and its unwritten, often unspoken, rules can make a big difference in how easily you assimilate and, ultimately, how well you do.

Here are 50 things you need to know about working in the real world. These tips will help you hit the ground running as you launch your career. They also might help you avoid major embarrassment, or worse.

## The basics

1. All jobs come with menial tasks and unglamorous work, which is why it's called grunt work. Cheerfully take on the menial tasks and your efforts will be noticed.

2. Be on time, better yet, early. Late is always unacceptable. Your boss or co-workers don't care how bad the traffic was or that you spilled your latte on your pants.

3. If you are an hourly employee, realize there will be times when you need to come in early or stay late. Do it, with a smile. Remember, you're getting paid extra for the hours, while your salaried co-workers are putting in the same, likely longer, hours for no extra pay. And please don't be a clock watcher. Just because core hours might be 9 to 5, don't bolt out the door at 5 o'clock sharp.

4. Excuses. Don't make them. They are the equivalent of the fast track to getting fired. Your boss

doesn't care what happened. Own up and take responsibility for your mistakes. Act like a professional because — surprise! — you are one now.

5. Don't post anything about work on social media. Ever.

6. Watch, listen and learn the clues of how to be effective in your company's culture.

7. Be confident, but not so confident that you don't ask for help when you need it.

8. Accept constructive feedback gracefully, and act upon it. People who give you feedback generally do so because they care about you. It's the ones who don't like you who won't tell you what you really need to hear.

9. Skip the ear buds at work. It screams "anti-social" and inability to concentrate.

10. Watch your use of slang at work. It's unprofessional and may be misunderstood.

11. Think for yourself. You're not in college anymore, and work doesn't come with a syllabus or exam schedule.

12. Consider the objective of your company and the product or project you are working on. Then take it one step further. Ask your manager and co-workers questions to understand why, what and how. Run the report and take a stab at analyzing the results on your own. If you see a trend, call it out.

## The boss

13. Know your boss's expectations. Your job is to meet, and ideally exceed, all of them. Understand that when you make your boss look good, you look good.

14. Not sure? Take initiative to figure it out. If you are still stuck, ask. Don't

guess. It will save you, and your boss, time.

15. Meet your deadlines with quality work that demonstrates that you put your full effort in.

16. Spell-check everything and use correct grammar. Don't expect your boss to fix your writing mistakes. Not your strong suit? Invest in The Elements of Style, the definitive guideline on grammar.

17. Don't pop in your boss's office 20 times a day to ask questions that you could have figured out by yourself if you actually spent five minutes trying.

Your co-workers  
18. Treat your new co-workers as if they were your clients or customers. They will help you more than you'll realize if you are kind and deserving.

19. Develop a small list of co-workers to whom you can go for help and direction. Use their time wisely.

20. Don't come in like a "wrecking ball" — i.e., the "know it all." No one likes a know it all. Give everyone a chance to be smart. They will like you more for it.

21. Treat everyone with the same level of respect, from the cafeteria and janitorial staff, to the CEO. Everyone in an organization contributes to its success.

22. Be mindful of the company you keep. There is always one person (or more) in a company or on a team who is the low pressure zone. That person never knows the difference between good and bad attention, and is always complaining. Stay away from that person.

23. Say thank you, often and genuinely. Send handwritten thank you notes to people who go out of their way to help you.

24. Learn to modulate your voice at work so that others don't have to listen to every phone conversation you have.

25. At work, it's not about you. It's about the team/company. You succeed together and fail together.

Meetings  
26. Don't raise your hand in a meeting. You're not in school any more.

27. When in doubt, choose listening over speaking. When you're listening, you're learning.

28. Don't check your smartphone during a meeting, even if others are doing it. You'll survive. I promise.

29. Never correct your colleagues publicly in a meeting. Sometimes, keeping silent is the right choice.

30. Don't be afraid to speak up and offer your opinion, but don't get upset when your idea isn't immediately embraced.

## Communicating

31. Understand the nuances of communication forms and hierarchy. Know how and when to use what form. Yes, there are more forms than text messaging.

32. Go see someone. Face-to-face communication is still the most effective. The time it takes to walk to another office is not wasted time. It's an investment in a relationship.

33. Call. It won't kill you to use the phone feature of your smartphone. Speaking with someone generally is more efficient and effective than emailing.

34. Emails should always be acknowledged. Respond within the same day or 24 hours at the latest. Understand when to copy your boss and when not to. Ditto for "reply all." Emails are best used for asking a simple question

or confirming a decision. They are not substitutes for conversation.

35. Texting/Instant Messaging. Don't overdo it. If you are texting or IM'ing the person who sits in the next cubicle, you are basically indicating that you have no social skills whatsoever.

## Socializing

36. Eat lunch with your co-workers or have coffee with them. Vary with whom you have coffee or lunch. The broader your circle, the better. You'll be amazed by what you learn from those casual conversations.

37. Never order alcohol at an office lunch. You are not working at Sterling Cooper Advertising.

38. Office outings. If it's a work outing, it's work. Don't be "that guy" (or girl). You know, the one who (cringe) got sloppy drunk and became infamous overnight.

39. Seriously consider keeping your social life and work life separate. The office is not your dating pool. There are some lines that are better not crossed.

40. Don't "friend" your office coworkers on Facebook, just in case you haven't learned what not to post on social media.

## Appropriate attire

41. Not sure what to wear to work? If you'd go clubbing in it or would do yard work in it, it's not appropriate for work. Leggings are not pants. Flip flops are not shoes.

42. Invest in a full-length mirror. Sit down in your outfit. If anything under your clothes is visible from any angle, change your clothes.

43. Cleavage of any kind should never show.

44. If it looks like you slept in it, or you actu-

ally did sleep in it, or never made it home last night, change. Wrinkles are not a personal fashion statement.

45. If you are rummaging around your dirty laundry pile for something to wear, you need to do your laundry more often. No one wants to sit next to "smelly cat".

46. Keep a spare, clean shirt, tie, blazer, etc., at work. You never know when it might save you.

The little, but really annoying stuff that no one tells you

47. If you broke the office copier, don't wait until no one is looking and walk away. Leaving a paper jam is uncool.

48. Personal grooming should be done at home, not at your desk. This (definitely) includes clipping your fingernails.

49. The shared office fridge is not your free snack machine. If you didn't bring it, don't eat it.

50. Never reheat seafood in the office microwave.

Follow these tips for hacking the code on office protocol and you are sure to make a graceful transition from college to career. Accelerating the learning curve on the invisible and unspoken ways of the work world will make you immediately more effective, and will help you and your work be favorably noticed.

Lisa R. Miller is founder and chief career catalyst at C2C, College to Career, LLC where she helps college students, recent graduates and young professionals navigate the transition from college to career faster and with more confidence. She is a regular contributor to the BDN and has appeared locally on television and radio to share career advice.

## Old Town, Orono survey communities for plans on high-speed internet

BY NOK-NOI RICKER  
OF THE BDN STAFF

As leaders in Orono and Old Town prepare to bring high-speed internet to their communities, they are asking residents and business owners for input on where the lines should be located.

"The goal of these surveys is to determine both the interest in this project and where the internet infrastructure would need to be established," a post on the Orono website states.

Orono and Old Town are partnering with the University of Maine to connect to the state's open 1,100-mile fiber-optic cable infrastructure project known as the Three Ring Binder.

Access to the Three Ring Binder would "bring 1,000 mbs ultra-high-speed broadband internet to our area," the Orono post states. "These speeds could be up to 200 times faster than the speeds residents and businesses currently have access to."

The new internet connections will do more than just add speed, according to Bruce Segee, University of Maine professor of electrical and computer engineering.

"This is high bandwidth, bidirectional connections,"

Segee said Friday. "This is going to be able to do telecommunication. It's going to enable video conferencing from the home or remote medicine -- telemedicine -- and things we haven't even dreamed up yet."

"The services that can be run through it run the range of television and video to virtual reality gaming and telecommunications and any other thing people can imagine," he said. "It's going to be cool."

The Old Town-Orono Fiber Corp., which was created to add last mile local fiber-optic cables, learned last year that it had been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission to help create the network.

The commission is a federal-state partnership that was created by Congress in 2008 in order to help alleviate economic distress and encourage private-sector job creation throughout the northern counties of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York.

The two surveys are available on the corporation's website, and Segee wants everyone in the region to set aside a little time to fill them out.

Old Town in October approved spending \$80,000 to

add their three miles of connecting fiber.

The Old Town portion would add high-speed fiber-optic cables -- capable of handling 1 gigabit of data per second -- along Main Street and Stillwater Avenue that would connect to Orono's planned route along Bennoch Road and into the town's downtown.

The plans call for utilizing the vacant Temple Israel synagogue, last used in the 1980s, as a hub for the fiber that can be used by internet providers.

"The purpose of having this infrastructure in our community is to bolster existing businesses that can take advantage of this connectivity and to attract and foster entrepreneurs, students and recent graduates to create new businesses and enterprises that rely on high-bandwidth connectivity," the survey post states.

Residents or business owners interested in participating in a focus group to discuss current internet service and challenges can contact Orono Town Manager Belle Ryder at belle@orono.org.

The plan is to start installing the high-speed connections in the summer of 2017 and complete the project a year later.

## ROCK THROUGH THE AGES



Above: a photo taken by the BDN's Ashley Conti at Ringo Starr's concert at the Cross Insurance Center on Wednesday, June 8. Below, a photo by Magnus Stark from Penobscot Theatre's production of "Rock of Ages," running through July 3 at the Bangor Opera House.



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