

# How to navigate through your first year of work

Adapting to professional life can be tricky. Know how to give your best and avoid pitfalls at your first job, says **Devashish Chakravarty**

**C**ongratulations! You've got your first job and your confidence is high. However, it's time to get your feet back on the ground and evaluate the future realistically. To your first employer, your existence is marginal, so you need to prove to yourself and to him that you can deliver the goods and be counted in the ranks of the best among your peers. Here is how to do it.

**Complete the year:** Work for the whole year at the job, irrespective of how bored you are or how terrible the organisation appears to be. The first year is typically grunt work and has little to do with work content or reputation of the organisation. Quitting the job in search of another merely delays your learning curve. On your resume, it signals an inability to persevere, adapt and learn.

**Be on time for 3,000 hours:** Half the battle is won by showing up, so make sure you reach the office before time every day. Respect time and you will be seen as a professional serious about work. Also, stay back with team mates who are working overtime on projects. You will learn a lot and engage with your team better. Pundits say it takes 10,000 hours of effort to be world class in any sphere. Let your first year contribute at least

3,000 hours to this number.

**Double your job description:** Did your job profile include fetching coffee for your team? If you argue that it didn't, you are wrong. Each job description leaves a lot unsaid. Being a great team member, go-getter, volunteer for all occasions, and a person who gets things done, comprise the critical half that was left unsaid. Understand your requirement and increase it to include the unsaid terms. You will stand out from your peers as a bright spark who is destined for greater things.

**Remember names:** Do you know everyone's name in the office? Good. Do you know their roles, where they stay or how they prefer their communication (in person or in writing)? The list is long. First, get to know your team mates well. Then find out about everyone else in the office. Keeping track of personal details builds camaraderie. It will also get your work done much faster and make you feel welcome at the workplace.

**A favour a week:** Always lend a helping hand to your team mates. Aim for an extra task every week and a favour to a co-worker. It may be as simple as photocopying 100 pages for an over-

burdened colleague or filling up an Excel sheet with data for your supervisor. You will learn more and build a strong bank of favours that will stand you in good stead over the year.

#### Share your meal times:

Make it a point to join your team mates during lunch hour. Do not avoid your supervisor or senior colleagues. This is the best time to build positive workplace relationships and become part of the team. In most professional organisations, it is also a time when the trickiest and most challenging issues are sorted. Being around will help you learn how things work and how the team members relate to each other.

**Stick to the best:** Get attached to the best people and habits at workplace. Try to be friends with the best professionals in the team—people who are positive about their work, the firm and its employees, and great at what they do. Avoid the members who complain, backbite and are negative. The same is true of your work habits, where you need to sweat the small stuff and work hard on getting the details right. Mind your e-mails, language, even the typos. The little things that you believe



everyone ignores will actually get you noticed in the long term.

**Get out of school:** Unlike school, you are not judged by your performance only on the day of the

ing freshers are the first to be axed. Building a reputation takes time and requires you to deliver high-quality results consistently.

**Know your boss:** Understand that your team leader is not your friend, relative or teacher. Your supervisor may take the time and effort to treat you like a friend or be concerned about your problems. However, he does not owe you any of these. Your boss needs to ensure that work gets done. Do not slip up by not delivering on results expected from you or take him for granted either in your conversation or behaviour. Learn to take criticism and adapt quickly from the feedback.

**Be a professional:** Professionalism in its simplest avatar means doing what is expected. Start by following the dress code. Your communication and impeccable manners come next. Complete your tasks on schedule, report back both accomplishments and problems well in time. Work towards your team's goals and be flexible in your attitude. When in doubt, seek the counsel of senior colleagues to figure out the right professional approach in a situation.

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exam. This is not about a system, where the emphasis is on treating everyone equally and carrying together underperformers at the cost of over-achievers. Instead, you are judged every single day and underperform-