

SUCCEED at WORK



Succeed At Work

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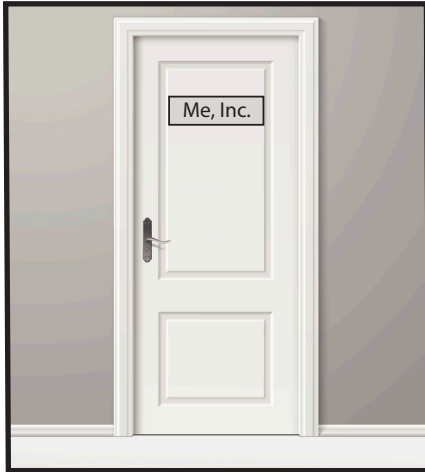
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Chapter 1

Me Inc.



Life changes and careers change.

To succeed at work today and throughout your life it may help to think of yourself as your own company: Me Incorporated.

Maybe you own your own business. Maybe you work for someone else. Maybe you work for a giant company with thousands of investors. Maybe you're looking for a job. In any case, acting as though you are self-employed can give you the vision, power and flexibility you need to succeed in the ever-changing world of work.

So, from this moment on, consider yourself the chief executive officer of Me Inc.

► You Are In Charge Of Your Career

You are the person who has the most control over your career.

You also have the most control over the quality of the goods and services you provide.

Like any company, Me Inc. has a product or a service for which customers pay. Me Inc.'s product is you, with your unique blend of knowledge, skills and abilities. Me Inc.'s customers are your employer, your direct and indirect managers, coworkers, your employer's suppliers, and the end-user customers.

Like any company, Me Inc. must constantly work to attract and keep customers. Me Inc. also has to stay aware of the skills and behaviors customers want. Over time, Me Inc. must find ways to consistently produce quality work, which will build the brand name of Me Inc.

Thinking of yourself as Me Inc. has many advantages. This means you actively decide your own future without waiting on an employer or somebody else to define it for you.

As CEO of Me Inc., you work for others but as an equal. To please your key customers—your supervisor and co-workers—you have to listen to them, follow through and deliver results faster and better than expected.

With the Me Inc. perspective, you treat supervisors with the respect you give all valued customers. You can make a strong impression if you honor their authority while keeping in mind that you joined their team voluntarily and can leave at any time voluntarily. In that way your supervisors are less like parents and more like coaches. And like coaches, remember that they can cut you from the

team if they don't like your performance—or for no reason at all.

At Me Inc. you can choose work you find fulfilling—if you have skills that are useful across many different occupations (these are often called “transferable skills”). Since you likely won't have the same customer (i.e. employer) forever, you can be open to other employers and find the type of work and environment that suits you best.

“There is no greater thing you can do with your life and your work than to follow your passions in a way that serves the world and you.”

Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways and the Virgin Group

Today jobs are constantly changing as technology updates. What a person like you does for a job today, machines may be doing tomorrow. If that happens to you, what skills will you have to market yourself? This is why the skills you have matter, and why you must be able to transfer them to different types of work.

Unlike most people around the world, you can choose your work freely and change your mind many times. You can go back to school, start your own business, begin a new occupation, and change career paths. Career changes can broaden your skill set and give you new experiences as you continue making progress along your life's career path.

› You Define Yourself

Some people believe their job defines them as a person for life. But it shouldn't.

As head of Me Inc., you define you, rather than letting a particular job do it. It's the difference between saying “I was a house painter and then I was a carpenter” and saying “I'm good with my hands and figuring out how to create useable space after working years as a painter and carpenter.”

Telling your own story—the Me Inc. story—in this way puts you in charge of you.

› The Challenges of Me Inc.

YOU MUST PROVIDE GREAT SERVICE

Running Me Inc. requires you to provide outstanding customer service, which demands a lot of effort. This also requires listening to your customers and focusing on how your services can meet their needs.

“Companies no longer offer people careers, people create their own careers.”

William Morin, chairman of Drake Bean Morin

Just as your life and your career may change, you can expect the company you work for will change, and those changes will affect you in some way. A company may change the kinds of services it provides, and therefore jobs and work that is done. Technology can replace some tasks and work. No company can guarantee its workers that the organization will last forever and do the same kind of work for decades.

Change can be scary, yet it also means new opportunities for Me Inc. In the American job market, companies and workers, including you, have to learn and adjust to meet their customers' changing needs.

YOU MUST DEFINE YOURSELF

Running Me Inc. may make it confusing to pick a profession.

It takes effort to plan, follow through and manage your own career. It involves risks. You can do it. You can adjust. You can define the work that Me Inc. does and then redefine that work later as you see new opportunities. You can succeed at Me Inc.

› How to Run Me Inc.

What is the philosophy of Me Inc.? You will need to gradually define that philosophy and then refine your philosophy over time. You will need to reflect on what you've learned from each job you've done. What you learned may change depending on new perspectives you develop over time.



“Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts.”

Winston Churchill

STAY EMPLOYABLE

Consider aiming for lifelong employability rather than lifelong employment.

Employability means you can readily find a new job when you need one, and employers will want to hire you. It requires that you:

- Know how to effectively job hunt
- Can use social media to advance your networking and raise awareness of the Me Inc. brand
- Have the skills, knowledge and experience that employers want
- Know how to please different kinds of customers
- Can transfer your skills to different types of jobs
- Complete educational achievements
- Learn quickly and effectively

When you are employable, you don't necessarily need job security. You are free to embrace the risk and adventure of life.

BUILD YOUR CUSTOMER BASE

As head of Me Inc., you are constantly looking for new customers and improving relationships with existing ones. All at once, you are building your brand, job hunting, and maintaining your professional network by strengthening your friendships and acquaintanceships.

Being employed is only part of the job-hunting (customer-getting) process. You can build your customer base of coworkers, supervisors and others who may help you land your next job—and get paid to do it!

Here are some tips to help build your customer base.

- **Think of your jobs as temporary.** Imagine your job will last only one year and then think about the tasks, skills and relationships you will need to develop in that year. (Remember, you're just imagining here. You certainly don't need to actually leave your job after one year if your employer isn't forcing and the timing isn't right for you!)
- **Always do your best.** Showing up to work on time is critical. Your coworkers, supervisors and customers are watching you, and may consider promoting or hiring you for another job someday.
- **Learn, learn, learn.** Seize opportunities to improve and add to your skills, especially if the employer is sending you to training.
- **Practice job hunting.** Even if you love your job, keep an eye out for others. This sharpens your job-hunting skills and helps you better understand the changing job market for your set of talents. And since you already have a job, you don't have to accept any new offers. So employers can compete for your talents.

When you build your customer base you take control of your career. If you suddenly lose your job, you'll understand the marketplace better and already be poised for new opportunities.

Motivate

To run Me Inc. effectively, remember the acronym MOTIVATE:

M	Manage your own work life. You are responsible for your career.
O	Options and opportunities. Know them and seize them.
T	Training helps you grow, become more marketable, and stand out.
I	International mindset. You need this to work well with people from many different cultures.
V	Value all work because it shows you value yourself.
A	Achievement is recognized by others and yourself, so set goals and achieve them.
T	Technology both changes and becomes more a part of every job in America, so the more fluent you are with computers, statistics, spreadsheet software, and even social media, the more valuable you are to companies.
E	Economics is how businesses and governments communicate about the supply of and need for different kinds of workers, so the more you understand about the economics of your community and your field, the more valuable you are to employers.



TAKE ACTION

You can embrace the Me Inc. concept by taking action to decide your own future.

Some people react to events rather than take the initiative. For instance, some see their employer having difficulties and neither look for new ways to help, nor look for a new job until they are laid off.

To succeed as Me Inc., you must look ahead and take action.

- Seek new career opportunities, new clients, and new ways to grow.
- Pay attention to labor market trends so that you know your field and the future of your field.
- Set goals for yourself and work to achieve them.

Taking these actions will position Me Inc. to succeed.

► WorkInTexas.com

Every day, companies in Texas post new job openings in an online database called Work In Texas (www.workintexas.com). Any Texan can go online to this database—at no cost—and review job postings if they put in a résumé. Start by putting in a basic résumé profile of who you are, your educational attainment, some of your work experience and skills, and your career interests. Then, you can look at the many job postings in your community, and in other industries that may interest you.

You can also get personal help looking through these job postings at more than 190 local Workforce Solutions offices across Texas. The

Texas Workforce Commission partners with these offices, where people can come in and sit down at a computer to look at job postings in WorkInTexas.com or other employment search engines. Trained Workforce Solutions staff can sit next to you and directly help, if you wish. Workforce Solutions offices offer multiple 30-minute classes each week to show job seekers, free of charge, how to use WorkInTexas.com.

Filling out a basic résumé in an employment search engine and WorkInTexas.com will help you think about what you have to offer based on what employers look for in new hires. You can see what employers say they want. That can help you mentally connect the dots about how you can adjust to be employable.

That's part of managing Me Inc.'s future.

“You’ll start to notice that many more doors will open for you when you take initiative. Being proactive is a sure way to get noticed by employers. Companies want proactive people.”

*Martha Lopez, youth workshop facilitator
with Workforce Solutions Lower Rio
Grande Valley*

WORKINTEXAS.com

Find A Job. Find An Employee.
Find Another Reason To Love Texas.

Join the Largest Free Job Matching Network in Texas	3,179 Jobs Posted Today	241,493 Total Job Openings	420,221 Active Resumes	2,323,769 Total Jobs Filled
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How the World of Work Has Changed

The nature of jobs in America has changed in the last century.

As always, the core tenants of employment remain. You must:

- let your network (your family, friends, former bosses, former co-workers, former classmates and even good acquaintances) know that you are job hunting
- learn the tasks of the job you accept, and how those tasks contribute to the organization's overall mission
- show up on time, be honest, maintain a positive attitude with coworkers and supervisors, and productively help the team achieve its work in order to keep your job

Over the last century, some attitudes about work have shifted.

How it Used to Be	How it is Today
Work in one profession or one industry for most of your career	Work in several occupations in several industries, meaning you have multiple jobs during your working life
Rarely need to use job-hunting skills of networking, interviewing, résumé building, continuing education and upgrading skills	Consistently need to continue your education to add credentials to your résumé, sharpen your job-hunting skills, network with people who know you as a coworker, and learn new skills with each job
Change jobs rarely because the economy changes slowly	Change jobs several times in your work life because the economy changes quickly and companies have to change to meet their customers' needs, meaning you will probably bring your talents to companies in multiple industries
Compete locally for jobs	Compete globally for jobs
A job reference comes from a former boss	A job reference comes from a former boss, former coworker or former customer
Perform mostly manual tasks	Perform a variety of tasks using computers, automated machines, and online systems
A job includes a short list of tasks and duties	A job features flexible responsibilities, often project-oriented with a wide range of tasks and duties
Work full-time	Work full-time, part-time, temporary and even on a contract basis
Obtain only a high school diploma	Obtain a GED or high school diploma, then also complete a post-secondary educational attainment

Chapter 2

We Inc.



Work doesn't happen in a vacuum. For perhaps most jobs, work is accomplished with and by groups of people. Teams.

At work, chances are you are or will be a member of a team, interacting with other individuals. These co-workers are running their own Me Inc's. Together, you make up "We Inc." As a member of this team, the success or failure of your "Me Inc." is tied to that of We Inc. For you to succeed, you have to be willing to help your teammates succeed.

That's why understanding who your teammates are, how they work, and what they want to accomplish can help you succeed at work. Understanding your coworkers can help you form bonds and work together to help the client (your employer).

Developing positive work relationships is important for you and everybody around you.

You can choose your friends in life, but usually you can't choose all of your coworkers. Still, you must work with them to succeed at work. Here are some ways you can build harmonious and productive relationships with those around you at work.

"All jobs these days involve teamwork. Don't isolate yourself from your coworkers. Volunteer for committees and work groups to get to know people and show you're a team player. Help others. And ask people for help and advice if you need it."

Kathy Lansford-Powell, career facilitator with Workforce Solutions Capital Area

› Learn Names

Building relationships begins your first day on the job as you learn the names, titles and functions of your coworkers.

Take a few minutes in your first week on a job to speak to each person. If their position is the same as yours then you can ask how long they've been doing the job and with that employer. If their position is different, you may want to ask them how their job is connected to yours.

Consider taking notes about the organization's structure and the names of the people you meet.

› Learn the Culture

Each organization has a culture. Each organization has cultural norms or unofficial "rules" for how work gets done and how workers socialize. Cultural rules may be in addition to the "official" rules. Break an official rule and you could get fired. Break an unofficial rule and you may not get fired, but you may not be very popular or influential either.

When you first arrive, pay attention to what others do. Watch how they perform their job. Observe how they dress. Listen to how they address each other and communicate. You may want to follow suit.

Cultural norms extend to socializing outside work. People in some companies lunch together and meet after work but never with the boss. Employees in other companies treat their supervisors as a peer and socialize without any concerns.

Socializing can also happen at work. Some organizations take breaks to celebrate a staff member's birthday, work anniversary or accomplishments. These are good opportunities to relax and get to know your coworkers. In some workplaces, team members contribute to coworkers' weddings, baby showers, retirements and loved ones' funerals. You don't have to spend your own money but try to learn what the norms are for such situations so you can determine how you can be both within your personal budget and a friendly part of the team.



"Don't confuse friendliness with friendship...Friendships in the workplace should be bonuses, not requirements."

Judith Briles, workplace author and financial advisor

► Find Friends

Once you know our coworkers a bit, you can start making friends.

When determining with whom you would like to be friends at work, a good starting point is to ask, “Who helps?” Who helps their coworkers to overcome challenges? Who helps their teammates look good in front of the boss? Who helps the organization achieve its goals rather than expecting the organization to help them achieve theirs no matter the cost?

These will likely be the most trusted, respected, and successful people at your workplace. And not only will you learn from their friendship, they may just welcome the opportunity to learn from yours, because they will remember that they were new once, too.

On the other hand, you have to ask, “Who hurts?” Who hurts their coworkers by blaming them instead of taking responsibility for their own mistakes? Who hurts the organization by placing their own goals ahead of it? If you try to make friends with these individuals you can expect that their behaviors will influence you, and that they will just as easily take advantage of you as they have others.

Forming a first impression of someone can happen in an instant, but really knowing who helps and who hurts takes time and observation. So spend time with and observe different people at work until you know who’s who.

Try to develop a connection with one person you work with regularly who helps. You won’t have to force anything. Simply demonstrate in the course of working together that you, like this individual, can be trusted. Over time and with a bit of patience, friendships often grow naturally from shared trust. Eventually you will find yourself allied with people as interested in both individual and team success – and other parts of life – as you.



“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

Anthony Robbins, motivational speaker and management consultant

Also consider that not everybody is going to like you or want to be your best friend. That’s okay, but also remember that you still need to work effectively with everyone. Some people consider the workplace a fertile environment to find people with common interests, with whom they can share their joys and challenges. Others simply go to work to do their jobs and find their personal fulfillment elsewhere. That’s fine. You’re bound to make friends with some people and not others no matter where you work or go in this world.

› Understand Your Work Self

Understanding who you are at work, what motivates you, how you tend to treat others and how you like to be treated is a mystery you have to continually uncover as you gain experience throughout your career.

“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak,” a wise man once said. Listening to yourself and others is the first step to understand how you work and interact with others and react in different circumstances.

Ask yourself these questions:

- **Do you trust others?** You need to give some trust to work with others, but keep your critical thinking sharp so you can ask friendly questions and offer ideas.
- **Do you think before you speak?** It’s always a good idea. Many bosses notice when team members are quick to offer their opinions and slow to listen to and try to understand others’. “Replying All” with an inflammatory or inappropriate email to a large group of coworkers is one example of failing to think first.
- **Do you show empathy?** Showing concern for the troubles and concerns of others around you is an important behavior of both leaders and coworkers.
- **Do you communicate in a way that is easy for others to understand?** We may assume our teammates understand what we are saying when we speak to them. But they may understand our words to mean something else. Communication isn’t just what you say; it is also what the other person hears and understands. So you have to say what you mean in a way that others will understand.
- **Do you ask for help when you need it?** We all want to make a good impression at work by showing we know what we’re doing. But making sure you meet your customer’s (employer’s) expectations may require you to be brave and ask for help or feedback or other information.
- **Do you focus?** Managers – and coworkers – appreciate people who do not distract others often.

Finally, did we mention listening? Many employers say they look for job candidates or promotion candidates who listen well and actively. Active listening means focusing on the person speaking to you and holding off making assumptions or judgements until they have completed their explanation. A clear mind can hear more.

Striving to understand our teammates as well as we understand ourselves is the essence of “We Inc.”

“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”

Epictetus, ancient Greek philosopher



Chapter 3

Soft Skills (or Workplace Basics)



Many business leaders say, “I hire for hard skills. I promote or fire for soft skills.”

► What are Soft Skills?

In simple terms, you might think of soft skills as “people skills,” or as “workplace basics,” “employability skills,” “emotional intelligence,” “teamwork,” “charisma” or “sales ability.” A big part of it is the ability to get along well with others, both coworkers and customers.

You need these skills in order to do your job effectively. No matter how good you are at welding, computer engineering, writing, nursing, mining, plumbing or whatever your specific job is, you will make it very difficult for yourself to succeed at work if you do not constantly practice these workforce basic skills.

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

Anthony Robbins, motivational speaker and management consultant

► Crucial for Your Success

More Texas companies are defining and measuring soft skills in both the job seekers they interview and current employees. Companies whose employees have strong soft skills have a competitive advantage over other companies.

So developing strong workplace basics can get you noticed among other applicants, to get you hired and then help get you promoted.

THIRTY-ONE SOFT SKILLS

Recently, managers and executives from more than 200 Texas companies came together to develop a list of the 31 most important soft skills, also called “workplace basics.”

They are:

1. **Critical Thinking** – Knowing how to get the proper information for the situation, then knowing how to think and ask questions about it, in order to interpret what that information means and how important it is. Knowing is no longer enough. Applying that knowledge is the competitive advantage in the modern world of work.
2. **Oral Communication** – The skill of talking clearly, expressing ideas and delivering messages concisely and effectively, including explaining why you did something.
3. **Written Communications** – Writing clearly, explaining a concept or describing an idea using simple and appropriate terms so the reader can understand it.
4. **Numerical and Arithmetic Application** – Doing math, compiling data and using numbers to strategize and solve problems.
5. **Leadership** – The ability to guide people, supporting, encouraging and collaborating with people while passing on knowledge, expertise and training.
6. **Teamwork** – Working with people, interacting with coworkers and others to achieve a shared goal.
7. **Appreciation of Diversity** – The ability to work with people who are in some way different from you, showing appreciation and empathy for customers and coworkers from different cultural backgrounds. This also involves being open to new ideas and different perspectives.
8. **Conflict Management** – Avoiding fights, assessing situations and mediating conflict and disagreements between people, including taking steps to avoid future disputes.
9. **Customer Service** – Listening to and taking care of the client, knowing how to uncover and respond quickly to customers’ needs in order to meet or exceed their expectations.
10. **Work Ethic** – Being dependable for your boss as well as being dependable, reliable and focused while completing tasks on time. This includes showing up to work when you’re supposed to.
11. **Professionalism** – Being a mature adult at work, knowing how to dress, speak and conduct yourself appropriately on the job while showing that you are practiced in your field.
12. **Integrity** – Being honest, being trustworthy and making ethical decisions while following rules, regulations and laws.

13. **Attention to Detail** – Having a critical eye, reviewing the attributes and specifics of your work, and taking action to ensure quality.
14. **Adaptability** – Adjusting to the situation, adjusting to new, vague or ambiguous circumstances to accomplish your team’s goals.
15. **Organization** – Ordering your work, planning, arranging and managing different tasks, resources and obligations to create a system and reduce chaos.
16. **Stress Management** – Dealing with pressure, handling deadlines and balancing the multiple demands that come at work and at home.
17. **Multi-Tasking** – Getting multiple things done, setting priorities to establish work flow while handling multiple tasks and deadlines. Everybody has to accomplish multiple tasks at work. Everybody knows that too much jumping between those tasks is distracting and leads to nothing getting done. This involves acknowledging that multiple tasks have to get done in a single day and figuring out how to get all the different work done on time.
18. **Problem Solving** – Figuring out what to do, looking at a situation to find the causes of problems and then finding a workable solution.
19. **Decision Making** – Making a choice, knowing how to ask for information and how to consider rewards, risks, limits, alternatives and goals to take action and pick the best option.
20. **Intellectual Risk Taking** – Being curious and taking on lifelong learning, being able to learn and apply new knowledge to problems.
21. **Thoughtful Reflection** – Pausing to think, using logical reasoning, being able to understand abstract ideas, evaluating data, and understanding in the different issues that confront you.
22. **Initiative** – Willpower; getting work done without being prompted or supervised, sticking with a routine, being flexible while moving toward an objective, and taking action to accomplish a goal.
23. **Creativity** – Coming up with new ideas, conceiving new methods, systems, paths, products, alternatives, or responses.
24. **Dedication** – Finishing the job, demonstrating endurance and follow-through to complete work tasks.
25. **Perseverance** – Endurance, improving work and monitoring progress to achieve successful results.
26. **Pride in Work** – Taking personal ownership of the project, taking responsibility to make sure individuals and teams complete assignments.

“Punctuality, attendance, attitude, integrity and reliability is what managers want. You have to be on time to work every day and be at work. You have to refrain from calling in that you’ll be out. Attitude is said to reveal who you are and how you deal with issues and situations that may arise, integrity says you can be trusted with projects or information deemed confidential.”

Jane Goodenough, workforce manager with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

27. **Following Directions** – Obeying rules and procedures, adhering to written or spoken established business practices, policies, and laws, including health and safety rules.
28. **Information Gathering** – Collecting the details and particulars, observing, listening and reading the data and signs around you.
29. **Resources Allocation** – Figuring out how, and how much, to use what you have, identifying, distributing and efficiently using the available material, people and assets to complete work.
30. **Time Management** – Managing your attention, prioritizing tasks, schedules, deadlines and goals in order to complete work efficiently.
31. **Technology and Tool Usage** – Being able to operate equipment on the job, knowing how to run the computers and machines used at work.

Hiring managers are looking for workers who can easily communicate and get along with both coworkers and customers while also having some ability to do basic math, make adjustments at work, prioritize and even demonstrate critical thinking.

The demand for workers with enhanced soft skills is growing. As you strive to sharpen your soft skills, you will position yourself first to get hired, and then to succeed at work.



“Some seem to be born with soft skills, but if anyone is serious about getting and keeping a job they can learn if the desire is there.”

*Susan Johnson, workforce development specialist with
Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County*

Chapter 4

Social Media Connections



More Americans and American companies are using social media to communicate daily. Meanwhile, more companies are using social media to recruit and check out potential future employees.

Yet social media can be confusing and even intimidating. You may have heard of people getting fired or turned down for a job because of comments or images they posted on social media.

Being professional and aware of how what you do on social media can impact your work life is not complicated. That's good news, because social media is also becoming necessary to find a job. Social media can empower you to build the brand and image of Me Inc. in a way you never could before.

You don't have to fear social media, any more than you should fear going out in public. You just have to recognize that when you are on social media, you are for all intents and purposes in public. A growing number of Texas companies are posting job openings on their social media websites, and using social media to promote their products and services and recruit new people. They are looking for you.

Wanna be found? Get on social media.

Social media also helps you stay connected to the people in your professional network, which can include current and former coworkers, bosses and classmates, employment counselors and customers. Some of them may want to stay linked to you via social media updates and posts. Social media can help you maintain relationships with these important people who already know you and may assist you in future job hunts.

Consider taking a strategic approach to using social media.

› Set goals

What is your career goal? What kind of work do you want to do now and in the future? You can use social media to explore both those career interests and specific types of work. You can present yourself as somebody with a passion and expertise for whatever it is you love to do.

Think about what kind of social media tone you want to set, because your social media pages and actions will tell others both what kind of person and what kind of professional you are. It is an opportunity to showcase both your hard skills and your soft skills.

› Build a professional online presence

Many hiring managers search online using Google, LinkedIn and Facebook for job candidates they are considering. If you're up for a promotion at work, your supervisor, your supervisor's boss and the human resources department all may be checking your online presence.

You can start to build one with a more professional-focused social media site like LinkedIn, which many hiring managers see as a résumé online. You will write up every item in your LinkedIn profile, so check your spelling and make sure you're honest about where you've worked and when.

You may consider joining LinkedIn groups to see comments by other professionals with similar interests, and learn about new job opportunities.

Remember: you decide what goes on your profile, including what profile picture you'll use. If someone posts something inappropriate to your page (like a rude comment), you can and should delete it. You can link to slide presentations you've done, videos that you have helped make, and other files that showcase your professional skills. You also can link to your other social media accounts such as Facebook or Twitter. Your profile can become an interactive electronic portfolio of your work and your personal life.

You may want to tweak your privacy settings for your online accounts like Facebook and LinkedIn. But be aware that experienced web users can easily get around privacy settings. Ultimately it is best to assume that anyone can view anything you post on social media. Remember, you're out in public.

To think about it a different way, what is the online image of Me Inc.?

A black and white photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored collared shirt. She is smiling and holding a tablet computer with both hands. The tablet screen displays the text "WHAT IS YOUR ONLINE IMAGE?" in bold, capital letters.	<p>“With our current trends and modern technology, using social media has grown from just a chat room to live, interactive résumés.”</p> <p><i>Elizabeth Vazquez, career counselor with Workforce Solutions Alamo</i></p>
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› Consider using multiple social media sites to expand your network

Some business people post an online résumé on LinkedIn and Google+, then use message-focused social media sites like Twitter and Facebook to comment on things that interest them.

Using multiple social media sites will require more time, but it could also show that you are a more multi-dimensional communicator. You can also look into online services that would allow you to post to multiple social media sites at once. Try searching something like “social media cross posting tools.”

› Consider starting a blog

A blog is a specific website on which you control all the images and content. This can be a great place for you to build a portfolio of your work that potential employers can access easily. And with a blog you have the flexibility to write about your work and what interests you, which can show employers that you’re passionate about this field.

› Be active and pay it forward

Social media is all about being social. Forwarding links and articles is a way of sharing information with online colleagues, such as re-tweeting interesting posts.

› Use social media to research companies and organizations for your future

More and more Texas companies are using social media to explain what they do and to get feedback from consumers.

If you’re looking for a job today or plan to in the future, start researching today by connecting with companies on social media. Choose some companies for whom you would like to work and look up those companies’ online profiles. You can follow a company to learn more about what it does and how it is changing.

“I work with employers that tell me they won’t even consider a job candidate until they have checked out anything public on that job seeker’s social media pages first. They check out a job candidate’s social media pages and posts to see if that person is a good fit for their company.”

Sherry Byard, veterans employer liaison with the Texas Veterans Commission

› Remember that you leave footprints on social media

As you are looking at companies through social media, remember that their hiring managers may be looking at you online.

When you give feedback on a company's website, social media page, or other consumer rating sites, others will see your comments. Those comments can live forever. Hiring managers will also see those comments and use them to form an opinion about the kind of person you are and if you would fit in with their team.

Hiring managers may not like to see someone who uses the Internet to make mean and critical comments about other people and companies. However strongly you may feel about something, letting the social media universe know may cost you your dream job. Remember: you are in public on social media.



“Do not put too much personal information or negative comments on others or companies you worked at before online. Everything comes around and goes around.”

Yuni Kim, workforce development specialist with Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

› Remember that your network is your net worth

Social media is a way to stay connected with people in your professional network. And your professional network is whatever and whomever you decide it is.

Some people will accept a “friend” or “link” request from anybody, including strangers. Other people are selective about the people they connect with on social media – like friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. You get to decide with whom you want to connect on social media to build your own network.

Finally, if you really want to get active with social media, you can see what kind of traction you’re getting. Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media sites can give you data “analytics” of your social media profiles. You can see how many people are looking at your pages, and what they’re doing when they visit (commenting or liking or following, for instance). If you blog, your chosen provider may offer similar services.

Remember, all of this online posting impacts the brand image of Me Inc. Make sure it’s for the better.

The Texas Workforce Commission on Social Media	
LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com/company/texas-workforce-commission
Twitter	@TXWorkforce
Facebook	www.facebook.com/texasworkforcecommission
YouTube	www.youtube.com/user/TexasWorkforceComm
Blog	www.texasworkforce.wordpress.com/



Chapter 5

Succeeding at Work with a Disability

The 2010 U.S. Census shows one in five Americans have some kind of disability. There are many different types of disabilities: learning, physical, vision or hearing. Even chronic depression is a kind of disability.

Everybody faces challenges in finding and keeping a job. The key for everyone, including persons with disabilities, is to accentuate your strengths during the job search, and then play to those strengths at work. Making those necessary adjustments and continuing to learn and grow your services in Me Inc. is key to growing in your career.



There are many ways you can adjust while also learning and growing, according to Dan Ryan, an administrator at the University of Buffalo. Ryan is well known as a national employment expert who has written *The Job Search Handbook for People With Disabilities* and publications for military veteran job seekers.

The advice that Ryan and other employment counselors give job seekers with disabilities is good for anybody looking for a job or trying to adjust to the job market. That advice has some core themes and is summarized below.

“The advice that I give somebody with a disability who is looking for a job or starting a new job is to be optimistic and have a positive attitude about them. Do not allow the disability to define who you are.”

Martha Lopez, youth workshop facilitator with Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley

› Figure out what you can do and how you can help some specific target companies

Ryan Loken is senior human resources manager at Walmart Stores Inc. He happens to be blind. The advice he gives to job seekers who are blind “is really no different than the advice I give to all workers seeking employment,” he said. “Get to know yourself. What can you do? What do you know you are good at? If accommodations are needed, know what those accommodations are. By knowing these items you demonstrate more confidence, knowledge, and it makes it easy for the employer to visualize you in the job.”

“Apply to jobs that match what you can do and match what you want to do. In speaking with several friends and groups across the country, I found that many are seeking a job. This puts pressure on the employer to determine what you can do or not. If you know what you can do and apply for jobs that match those skills, it puts you in a much more confident and poised position,” Loken said.

› Focus on what you can do

Hiring managers tend to dislike hearing the phrase: “I’ll take anything.” It’s easy to understand why. The phrase tells hiring managers nothing about what a person’s strengths are. Help out a hiring manager by explaining what kind of work you have done in the past and what you can do in the future.

For anybody, a job interview is about convincing the hiring manager that you can perform the job.

For Professor Ryan, this can mean explaining what applicants can do in a positive way, such as “If I can get my wheelchair into the room, then I can participate in the meeting” or “I can work with that software program if I’m at a computer monitor big enough for me to see with my vision issues.”

› Discuss only what’s necessary with a disability or challenging situation

If you have a disability, you have the right in a job interview to identify—or not identify—yourself as a person with a disability. You may want to simply acknowledge it at the start of the interview, and then move on to demonstrating that you have the skills and abilities required to do the job regardless.

Remember that by law employers are allowed to ask only if a job candidate can do a job and in some instances ask job candidates to demonstrate that they can perform a job.

“Keep the focus on what you can do, not on what you can’t.”

*David Corzo, workforce specialist with
Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas*

► Show and tell

A résumé lists your education, training, successes and work previously done. It allows you to show a history of work – even volunteer work – that helps the hiring manager visualize you working.

You will also want some short stories to explain how you’ve accomplished tasks in past jobs or volunteer work to further help hiring managers visualize you working at their firms.

► Show confidence

In a job interview you have only a short period of time to convince a hiring manager that you can perform the tasks necessary for a job. You also need to show a hiring manager that you are a good person to work with. All of this requires some practice and confidence so you can effectively communicate how you can add value to that organization.

Employment counselors will point out that people with self-confidence come across as more relaxed and able to discuss what they have done and can do.

► Educate yourself

Many resources exist to help people with disabilities learn effective strategies to gain employment, and get training and support in finding a job. Hiring managers also want to know what kind of accommodations they will need to make if they hire somebody with unique needs.

Here are two excellent resources that can give you additional information on training, support, accommodations and more.

- The U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) disability resource center (www.dol.gov/dol/topic/disability/jobsearch.htm)
- DOL’s Job Accommodation Network at www.askjan.org
- The Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Vocational Rehabilitation Program, which helps people understand their disabilities and employment services they can access (www.dars.state.tx.us/) (NOTE: As of Sept. 1, 2016, the DARS Vocational Rehabilitation program is transitioning to the Texas Workforce Commission. Visit www.TexasWorkforce.org for details.)



“Think skills first and present with confidence. Speak to what you can do and how you can excel in the job via outcomes.”

Jane Goodenough, workforce manager with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

Chapter 6

Starting and Succeeding at Your New Job

If you're starting a new job, congratulations! You may be feeling a combination of excitement and nervousness. That's okay. Learning new tasks, habits and coworkers can be challenging but you can ease the transition into a new job by preparing in advance.

Employment specialists recommend several strategies to start a new job successfully. Let's take a look.



► What to Expect

Every job is different, a unique combination of advantages and disadvantages, demands and perks, enjoyments and headaches. Jobs are like personal relationships: to succeed at both, you must know that neither will be perfect, but both can still be fulfilling and worth the effort.

In your first few days, you will probably be meeting new people, learning how to perform new routines and tasks, and working under new expectations.

Some areas you might form specific expectations about include:

- Co-workers
- Duties
- Computer systems
- Work space
- Commutes
- Lunch break routines
- Equipment
- Attitudes
- Building security
- General atmosphere

- Each weekday, approximately 100,000 people start a new job in the United States, according to economists.
- Meanwhile, about 2 million Americans quit their job each month, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. That means job openings.

► How the Job May Be

Some common threads run through the experience of being a “new hire.” Here is some of what you may experience.

ORIENTATION

Usually on the first day, someone shows you around your new environment and helps you complete the hiring paperwork. The box below lists some items that orientations often include.

Some organizations have you attend a formal orientation class. Some organizations may have a checklist to help ensure that you get all the information you need. Employment counselors from Workforce Solutions offices across Texas advise people to bring a small note pad to work for the first two weeks to take notes of instructions, rules and even the location of supplies, meeting rooms and the human resources department.

Some organizations need new employees to bring extra documentation to work on their first day, like their Social Security card, driver’s license or list of emergency contact phone numbers to create their personnel file at work.

Attend and pay attention during any formal or informal orientation events. Assume information you learn on day one will probably become more relevant in time.

INTRODUCTORY PERIOD

The first 90 to 180 days on a job serve as an introductory period for you and your employer to see how you’re doing at your new job. Usually this period ends with a job review, which you can request. This review may provide valuable feedback about how well you’re meeting the expectations of your supervisor, coworkers and customers.

Here’s a tip: consider asking for feedback from your supervisor along the way. That way you won’t be surprised at review time.



“In your first month on the job, ask as many questions as you need to make sure you fully understand how to do your new assignment and what expectations they have that shows your work to be successful. A lot of new people ask questions but don’t write down the answers or their instruction. Write it down. Employers are turned off by somebody re-asking the same questions over and over.”

Vincent Garmon, talent development leader with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

BENEFIT LIMITS

In the beginning, you may not have access to all the benefits an organization offers staff. You may accrue vacation time, for instance, but not be able to use it right away.

New employees may have limited access to employer-offered insurance. Often insurance coverage will begin after your first few months on the job. This policy protects companies from hiring individuals who take a job just to get benefits, such as health insurance, then quit once they meet their medical needs.

Ask your employer's human resources department about your health benefits, if you will be receiving them. If your coverage doesn't begin immediately, ask whether you will need to get or maintain coverage elsewhere until your employer-provided health insurance kicks in. This may be necessary to avoid health insurance mandate penalties under the federal Affordable Care Act.

TRAINING

Your supervisor may require you to attend some training meetings or events when you begin a new job. Trainings can be formal classes or informal discussions about policies and procedures.

Even if you think you don't need the training, keep an open mind and a positive attitude. Your boss may not be present, but the trainer may report on how new employees behave and learn. Plus, it's a good way to form a network of peers at your new job.

NEW JARGON

Every company and profession has its own language and jargon. Jargon may be unique words or acronyms that workers use to communicate quickly. For example, truck drivers sometimes call their return trip after a delivery the "flip flop." Plumbers may refer to a pipe that turns with a 90-degree angle as an "elbow." Many software developers will use the acronym "WIBN" to mean "wouldn't it be nice" regarding application features to consider.

All occupations and workplaces develop their own jargon. Learning the jargon is learning the language of your workplace. You probably won't understand all the jargon at your new job in the first 30 or 90 days. That's often okay. Still, learning the jargon as quickly as possible is critical to acclimating to your new workplace.

NEW EQUIPMENT

The equipment and tools you use on the job, including software and information technology, may differ from those at your previous job or school. Keep an open mind. All companies use a changing array of technology and communication tools. That's good for you. Knowing how to use new tools makes you an asset not just to this employer but future ones.



Gossip

Gossip usually takes the form of hushed or secretive conversation about parties (assumed to be) not within earshot. It is a tricky form of communication that can either inform or harm. It's often based on partial information and can be totally wrong. Put simply, gossip is never good. Here are just a few reasons why.

Gossip Can ...

Get you fired

Spreading customer or personal information can be particularly destructive. For instance, discussing a client's medical condition or purchase histories often leads to lawsuits and firings. Don't do it.

Ruin your reputation

When the rumors are serious – be they true or untrue – they can destroy a person's career and even lead to legal action. Persons who spread disparaging or false information about a coworker can face very serious consequences. Don't do it!

Make you look bad

Spreading false rumors (even if you think they are true) can make others think you're a liar. Telling mean stories can expose you as cruel. Complaining about supervisors or coworkers can show that you're negative and divisive. And making fun of other people can reveal your own insecurities.

Make people distrust you

Even if they listen eagerly to your stories of others, some people won't trust you with personal information and may distance themselves from you. As a result, they might not tell you of changes going on or avoid making you a friend.

Make people question your judgment

You can do great harm if you gossip about your own life. People could view you as indiscreet. Or worse, they could perceive you as having poor judgment and incompetent, which could prevent you from moving into positions of higher authority.

Lead to retaliation

Gossiping makes you a target. Others, particularly those who were hurt by your rumors, may try to sabotage you professionally. Gossips often find they have to watch their backs.

NEW POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Every organization has policies and procedures, whether written or not. Policies represent how a company responds to various situations, such as: “It is our policy not to accept returns without a store receipt.”

Procedures describe the approved method to accomplish a task, such as: “It is our procedure to scan and enter returned products in our point-of-sale inventory database.”

Policies and procedures vary from company to company, and can impact the simplest job functions. One company may ask that you answer a phone call by saying, “Hello, you’ve called Company X.” Another company may ask you to say, “Thank you for calling Company X, this is Ms. Z. How can I help you today?”

Learning these policies and procedures helps you show interest in your work and get accustomed to a new job. Many supervisors frequently check to make sure new employees are following the rules and, in some cases, the law.

“NEW HIRE” DUTIES

When you begin any new job, you may expect to “pay some dues.” New employees often earn less than veteran workers and may get the least preferable work schedules or task assignments. Many companies want new employees to do these basic tasks in order to learn the company’s core functions and procedures. You may have graduated at the top of your class in school, but at work you may start out at or near the bottom. That’s normal.

Remember that your supervisors expect you to do what they ask. It may not be the way you think it should be done, or the way you see others around you doing things. Growing your influence at work requires you to be patient and to cheerfully follow instructions now.

THE PEOPLE

Companies are really a collection of people who work together to get things done for their customers. You’re going to spend a lot of time with your coworkers and supervisors. What if you made that time a positive experience? Managers know that a miserable coworker can demoralize a workplace and a vindictive coworker can be a menace, but a pleasant and reliable coworker can inspire it. What kind of coworker do you want to be?

HOW THEY MAY SEE YOU

You will form impressions of your coworkers. And your coworkers will form opinions about you, such as whether you are easy going or hard working. That’s normal.

You have some control over the impressions you make. You can make a more positive impression by demonstrating your openness and willingness to learn and do the necessary work. You can also make a positive impression by being friendly with and showing respect to coworkers, supervisors and customers.

► How You May Feel

Expect to have many conflicting emotions and impressions when you start your new job. Most people do at first. Some of those emotions may include:

OVERWHELMED

You may feel overwhelmed when you begin a new job. That's normal. You're trying to learn a lot of new information as quickly as possible. You may question if you can do a job or if you may disappoint others. The key is to focus on meeting your employer's expectations. Check in with your boss to see how you're doing. If you're meeting expectations, try to be patient with yourself and relax. Knowledge and mastery, like influence, comes with time.

LONELY

It's also normal to feel lonely or left out when you start a new job. A new workplace is like being the new kid in school: it takes time to make friends and fit in. Be patient. Relax.

DEPENDENT

In the beginning, you must rely on colleagues for almost everything – from learning where the restroom is to which tools to use on a project. If you value self-sufficiency, you might not enjoy this. That's okay. You will learn. Being new gives you a chance to practice asking for help, which is an important skill for Me Inc. to grow.

UNCOMFORTABLE

You may feel uncomfortable when you start this new job. Your old comforts – routine, familiarity – are gone. Even if you didn't enjoy your last job, at least you understood what would happen next there. A new job brings new possibilities and the sense that you are not as in control as you once were.

You may also feel discomfort for practical reasons. Your new work hours and commute patterns may upset your sleep schedule. Before your first day, try to anticipate how these things will change, so you can adjust as quickly as possible. Your supervisor wants you to adjust so that you can succeed.

EXCITED, MOTIVATED

A new job may give you a thrill, may fill you with curiosity, may uncover new motivations in you. Go with it.

The challenge of a new job excites many people and gives them new optimism.

Whatever the reason for your excitement, you may be feeling motivated to prove yourself to your supervisor, your parents, your former boss or even yourself. A new job is a fresh start and the opportunity to learn new skills, find new energy and get to know yourself better. That energy is good for Me Inc.

› Succeed Your First Year

It may take several months for you to feel comfortable in your new job. Patience is key.

PATIENCE

Your first year on a job will go better and more easily if you are patient with your coworkers, your supervisor and yourself. Don't expect to know it all today. Here are some tips:

- **Remember that “this too shall pass.”** You will not feel this awkward and uncertain forever.
- **Help somebody else.** If you can make work easier for a coworker, it can help you form bonds on the job and even understand the processes and connections at work.
- **Be comfortable not knowing.** Nobody has all the answers. If you have questions, go find the answers, and follow through on your work accordingly. You will earn the respect of those around you – and yourself.
- **Give yourself credit for small steps.** It's easy to be impatient with yourself in your new surroundings. Congratulate yourself for the small “victories” and appreciate the progress you make each day.
- **Remember your goals.** Your progress may seem slow. Just like an organization aims to complete big goals over time, you can help yourself by recognizing your progress toward completing your big goals.

“Be open minded and willing to learn and you will succeed at work.”

*Cassandra Minor, supervisor
with Workforce Solutions
Alamo*

DO YOUR JOB WELL

Performing well is the most important way to succeed at your new job. Positive relationships with others at work help you do that. But in the end, you have to be productive. Here are some tips:

- **Learn.** Take the initiative to understand your job by listening, asking questions and confirming what you know.
- **Be teachable.** Be open to new ways of doing things.
- **Get feedback.** It may take courage to ask your supervisor “How am I doing?” or “What can I do to improve?” That feedback will probably help, and may even pleasantly surprise you.
- **Show appreciation.** When people help you, thank them.
- **Follow directions.** Supervisors tend to appreciate employees who do this.
- **Take responsibility for mistakes.** Nobody expects you to be perfect. Supervisors often appreciate an employee who admits to a mistake and is willing to learn from it.
- **Measure your progress.** Periodically check your performance. Pay attention to how your performance is measured. Supervisors tend to appreciate an employee who is a “student of the game” and learns what is measured and how to meet the organization's goals.
- **Believe in yourself.** Keep the job in perspective. It is helping Me Inc. You chose this job and the employer chose you. You can succeed. Your coworkers and supervisors want you to succeed.

GET A NEW ATTITUDE

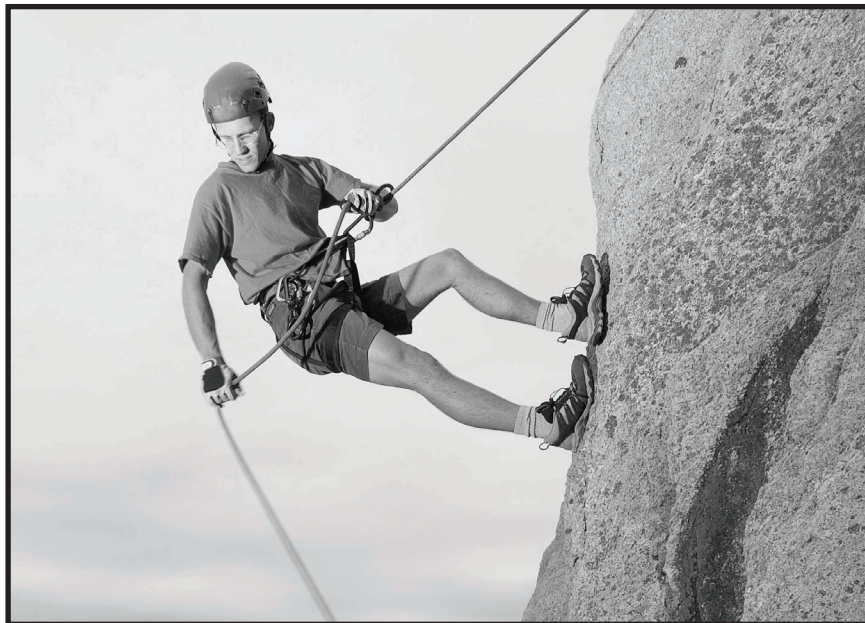
If you dislike your job or your career, you might consider making a change – in yourself. If you transform the way you view and do your work, you might find yourself loving your work situation.

You decide your attitude. “Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be,” President Abraham Lincoln said.

Here are some points to consider:

- **Identify your negative thoughts.** Negative thoughts lead to negative feelings. What you are saying on the outside can influence how you feel on the inside.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** Remember to laugh. When you laugh at yourself, your attitude can improve.
- **Look for other points of view.** Remember that your perspective is not necessarily the whole story. While you may think your work situation is difficult, others may think that you’re lucky to have a work situation so good. Think about the “Attitude of Gratitude” chart on p. 34.
- **Be open to being wrong.** Constantly trying to prove that you’re “right” takes a lot of time and energy, and pushes other people away. Consider what you sacrifice to win some minor point and consider if you might actually be wrong.
- **Let go of the drama of complaints and negativity.** There’s nothing inspirational about a coworker or employee who complains all the time. Anybody can complain. Be different. It could be your positive attitude that lifts your workplace.

Remember that your job does not define your happiness in life. Many people get a lot of their fulfillment at home and socially rather than at work. Finding happiness from your personal or family activities is critical to leading a balanced life.



Attitude of Gratitude

What do you have to feel thankful for in your job, even if you don't much enjoy it?
Perhaps a lot.

Experience gained

Employers like to hire workers with a positive employment history.

Knowledge and skills increased

Learning marketable skills at this job will only help you land your next one.

Relationships developed

Your professional network of family, friends and professional connections will grow bigger and stronger if you can include solid relationships with coworkers, supervisors and customers – they're likely to hire you later in life if you are a positive person to work with.

Income earned

Having a job can pay for your daily expenses and your education.

The world of work explored

Every job exposes you to new kinds of occupations. Explore them, and you might discover what you want to do next at Me Inc.

Your character improved

You grow as a person when you work hard regardless of how you feel about the work or the workplace.

Chapter 7

Growing at Work

Once you have a job, it's still a good idea to think of yourself as the president of Me Inc.

Whatever your job may be, it is an opportunity for you to grow and develop your brand by growing and developing yourself at work. To develop your brand on the job and keep Me Inc. running, you need to please your customers, improve your skills and build your professional network. You can do all this by building good work habits one day at a time.



This chapter is designed to give you some ideas about how to build good work habits, succeed on the job and be the kind of employee you would want to hire.

› Learning on the Job

Most learning at work is not done in the traditional ways like reading a book or sitting in a training classroom.

Research shows that most of what the average American worker learns about his or her job comes through informal learning rather than employee manuals or on-the-job training classes.

In other words, most of what you actually learn about how to get work done comes from listening to your coworkers, looking around your workspace, looking for signals, and paying attention to comments made by your boss and customers.

Many managers use this informal learning process in the workplace, and they expect their workers to be attentive and open to this type of learning.

CHOOSING EXCELLENCE

People tend to learn better when they're engaged in their job, care about their work, and feel that they can have personal character and integrity while on the job. One way to build up your own personal character and confidence at work is to set goals for yourself and achieve them. This is often done by recognizing and repeating those necessary habits to succeed at work.

You make the choice about how you approach each day at work. You advance your career when employers and coworkers see you as a valuable and dependable member of the team.

HAVING PRIDE IN YOUR WORK

Pride in your work shows, and pride in your work comes from a belief that what you do matters and that you matter to yourself.

► Every Job Matters

Dissatisfaction with one's paycheck or position can lead some people to behave like their job is beneath them. That is unproductive and dangerous to Me Inc's long-term success.

All work has value. Every job serves a purpose. Every job connects to other people and other jobs.

WHY YOUR JOB MATTERS

You decide the value of your job. Your job does not define you as a person, but you define the job by your attitude and your approach to doing your work. Jobs offer more than a paycheck. Jobs often help people gain a sense of purpose and dignity. Serving others and completing your work gives you a reason to be proud, whether you're a top executive or a checkout clerk.

ATTENDANCE

Your first important step to succeed at work is simple: Show up. On time.

Employers complain loudly when people they have hired don't show up for work or don't show up on time, according to many employment counselors at the Workforce Solutions offices across Texas.

If you are going to be late, call ahead and explain that directly to your manager. If you're ill or some other emergency prevents you from going to work on any given day, call your supervisor personally ahead of time. It shows you are responsible and conscientious.

Also, think about how the customers of Me Inc. view you being absent from work. If you consistently show up on time day after day, you will show that you are committed to meeting your customers' needs. Employers love that.

VACATIONS

If your job allows you to take vacation time off, let your managers know ahead of time when you're planning to take it. It may also impress your manager if you arrange for a coworker to cover your duties while you're on vacation.

INTEGRITY

To have integrity is simply to be sincere and honest. Managers often point out that workers have to make independent decisions on the job. Being honest and sincere when making those decisions is important, say many Texas hiring managers.

While the decisions for some situations at work are covered by company rules or even laws, many decisions you will face are not. Maintaining your honesty and integrity when you get the opportunity to make the "right" decision will help others see the best side of you.

"There are great benefits from being identified as a trustworthy, discreet, constructive person by senior members of your organization. You'll be given confidential information often and early enough to put you in control of your job, your work environment, and your career."

From the book Working and Liking It by Richard Germann, Diane Blumenson and Peter Arnold

► Attitude

Employers are looking for people who can get work done and work well with others. Many managers say that people with a positive or optimistic attitude are better able to adapt to changes at their job – and all jobs change in time.

YOUR ATTITUDE SHOWS

Human beings tend to show their emotions on their face or express their emotions in their voice. Think of a person who you can visibly tell loves their job – their facial expression and body posture. Now think of someone who you can tell hates their job. Whom do you prefer to be around? To work with? Whom should you seek to emulate when you're at work?

Psychologists and even medical doctors point out that people who look for the good in a situation and take an optimistic approach to their work are happier and less stressed human beings. Being pleasant and even optimistic at work can help your career because most people – managers, customers and your coworkers – prefer to be around people who are nice, cheerful or simply upbeat. Being positive can help you and those around you.

MAXIMUM EFFORT

A good work ethic means giving your best effort. Managers often say they want “hard working” people. That means focusing on your tasks, showing up physically ready to work, putting in a full shift, and doing your homework so you know how to complete your assignments. That's what managers are looking for in those “hard working” people.

Focusing is a challenge for many. It's not just that we live in a hyper-connected world where we can get distracted with e-mails, text messages and phone calls anywhere and at any time. It's also that we are human beings. We have families and friends and interests outside of work, all of which can weigh on our minds and distract us at work. People who can focus on work during work hours and focus on life during their off hours tend to be appreciated by managers, customers and coworkers.

PRODUCTIVITY

Most jobs involve having to accomplish a task. Sometimes you have little control over your opportunities to complete a task – like serving a customer if they come into your store. Sometimes you have a lot of control – like making sure the windows and countertops are clean before the store opens. Either way, once you understand your tasks at work, it's up to you to decide what to do and then do it, do it on time, do it well, and do it more.

“If you don't have a good attitude, we don't want you, no matter how skilled you are. We can change skill level through training. We can't change attitude.”

Herb Kelleher, co-founder of Southwest Airlines



Many jobs involve counting how many times you do something or how much time it takes you to do it. Learning the best way to do a job, and learning how your managers and customers measure the quality of your work, are keys to success – provided you put that knowledge into practice.

ORGANIZATION

Being organized helps you do what you want to do without wasting time. It helps maximize your productivity. It means knowing what needs to be done and why, then determining what you need to complete that work as quickly and efficiently as possible.

You may share your personal workspace with somebody else. Arranging the tools of your job so you can quickly complete your tasks while not preventing those around you from completing theirs is a sign of an organized and thoughtful worker – of whom Me Inc. could be proud.

› Customer Service

To stay competitive, companies, including Me Inc., have to take care of their customers. Poor customer service can kill a business while taking care of customers attracts new customers, brings in new money and creates new opportunities.

Every company defines good customer service differently. Learn how your employer wants you to work directly with customers by listening to managers' instructions and examples, and by watching your best coworkers in action.

Look for examples of serving your different *kinds* of customers, such as:

- Internal customers – People at work may speak and respond differently to the immediate supervisor, the company president and the janitor. Knowing that will help you decide how you interact with those different internal customers. A good rule to remember is that everyone deserves cordiality and respect.
- External customers or existing customers – You may want to understand how your organization's customers typically give their requests to and buy things from your organization. You'll also want to observe how these external customers respond to your coworkers so you can determine how you will best interact with them.
- Potential customers – You may want to listen to how your coworkers answer potential customers' questions and decide how you can best answer their questions and ask them your own.

STRIKING THE RIGHT TONE WITH CUSTOMERS

Many long-time workers tell stories of work situations that went well and others that did not go well. Those stories often involve tone and specific words – some good and some bad – used with customers, managers and coworkers. Learn the good words and use them. If you learn “how” to say what customers respond to, ask questions, and give responses to your customers then you can become more successful. Also, learn the bad words and avoid them.

Customers can tell if you know what you're talking about and want to help. They want to hear that you care. You get to decide if and how you give them those messages and how you meet their needs.

AS PROMISED

Your customers – from outside and inside your organization – want and need assurances that you will do for them what you say you will. If you promise or even imply that you will deliver something, you should assume the customer will expect it. Customers see those who consistently deliver as promised as reliable and more valuable. Choosing to consistently deliver will strengthen Me Inc’s brand in the eyes of your external customers and your employer.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

When at work, you will communicate with internal and external customers in person, on paper, via email, via text, and in many other ways. Doing so effectively means giving them the information they need in a way they will understand. You may even communicate with colleagues through visual cues on the job.

The key is to communicate in a clear and concise way in the manner (email, phone, in person, etc.) that is typical at your workplace.

You’re going to speak to lots of people on your job. You may speak differently to the company president than you do to your coworkers. You may find you speak differently to a long-time customer than you do to a new customer. You may use some short-hand phrases with some that will cause problems with others. You are expected to understand how to speak to different people at work. This is part of developing on the job.

LISTEN EFFECTIVELY

The first step to speaking well is to listen well. In the past, methods have been listed to appear as though you are paying attention, like smiling and nodding. But the most important thing is to *really* pay attention to your customers because you really care about their needs. If you do, your customers and managers and coworkers will probably see and appreciate that. So pay attention first, then ask questions if you have them, and reflect back what you heard to confirm the customer’s message.



“Ask your management about what opportunities there are for development, advancement and career paths in the organization. Some employers do and some employers don’t create an atmosphere where staff feels valued or good performance is recognized, which means you should ask yourself if this is the right company or industry for you to reach your goals.”

Susan Johnson, workforce development specialist with Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

WRITE EFFECTIVELY

More computers mean that many workers are writing more while on the job than ever before. Whether you are writing a five-sentence e-mail or a five-page instruction memo, the people who read your words will appreciate if you plan ahead what you're going to write, be logical and brief, use simple words, and proofread what you write before you send it.

READ EFFECTIVELY

Almost every job involves reading forms, web content, books, or instruction manuals. You may find it helpful to skim the information first to understand the context, then read it word for word while taking notes. Some will even write up a short summary of what they've read, often in a notebook they've kept since their first day on the job as a learning tool.

COMMUNICATE ASSERTIVELY

"Assertive" communication is often seen as positive and able to get things done. Ways you can be more assertive include:

- **Use "I" statements.** When you say "I" you are speaking for yourself. For example, rather than saying, "You should do this..." you may instead say, "I've done this..." Rather than saying "Everybody knows..." you could say, "My experience has been..."
- **Ask for what you need.** Don't expect others to read your mind.
- **Be specific.** Saying "I wish you'd be nicer to me" is vague. Instead you could say, "I wish you'd greet me when I say 'hello' at meetings." Then the person knows exactly what you want.
- **Be honest.** Stick to the facts rather than giving elaborate stories or embellishments that may confuse others or confuse the issue at hand.
- **Avoid negatively labeling others.** Say "I didn't like it when..." rather than "You are so rude!" When you don't label a person they are less likely to be defensive.

› Learn Continuously

American workplaces are learning places. The more you learn, the more you earn.

Learning does not stop in elementary school or high school or college. Many employers in Texas say they want employees who demonstrate "stackable credentials," which is some kind of school accomplishment (such as a high school diploma or associate's degree) followed by some other milestone like a certification in a subject or earning a license at an occupation.

Continuous learning shows that you're able and willing to learn. Employers like seeing that from job applicants and current employees. Continuous learning shows flexibility and initiative.

Continuous learning works best if you're curious. Are you trying to understand what kinds of skills are needed as your industry evolves? Do you eagerly take on the new challenge of learning? Can you listen, observe, focus and read? If so, you are becoming more marketable.



PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem solving is one of the most important and valued job skills in America today. Almost every survey of hiring managers lists problem solving as one of their key needs from workers. Some of the core elements of problem solving are:

- 1) **Define the Problem** – What is the immediate problem and how do your manager, customer and coworkers see the problem?
- 2) **Analyze the Problem** – What larger issues have contributed to the problem?
- 3) **Develop Solutions** – Once you understand the issues and origins of the problem, you can generate ideas of how to fix or improve the situation.
- 4) **Evaluate the Solutions** – Determine if the solutions will fix the problem temporarily, shift the problem elsewhere, or create new problems.
- 5) **Select a Solution** – Every organization wants to understand the costs and risks of a solution – and probably understands that the solution doesn't have to be perfect.
- 6) **Implement the Solution** – Take action and fix the problem. Involve your manager. Take responsibility. Take ownership.
- 7) **Learn from the Experience** – If your actions fixed the problem, great! Be sure to thank your supervisors and/or colleagues for any guidance they may have given you. If your actions didn't have the full desired effect, or if it created new problems, don't worry or beat yourself up, because that will not improve your performance. Instead, as stated in Chapter 6, take responsibility for and learn from the mistake. Analyze what happened, think and talk to your manager about what you can do differently next time. Before you know it you could be teaching future rookies how to avoid the mistake you made. Managers love that.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Managers and workers have been using daily “things to do” lists for centuries. Those lists aren't for everybody. Understanding how you organize your day and prioritize your work – and attention – is essential.

Finding a balance between being aggressive and being realistic about what you will accomplish each day is important. It's a big part of understanding yourself and succeeding at work.

Successful people tend to avoid the “urgent trap.” You may get messages at work that somebody needs something from you “urgently” or “immediately.” You learn with experience on the job, but once you understand the different situations and backgrounds of these urgent requests, then you can properly prioritize those requests of your time and energy. You can also better understand whether you are the best person to fulfill that request.

“Observe all aspects of your job. Learn what others do, be detailed in your inquiries, and find a coworker who you can shadow and learn positive work habits from.”

Jane Goodenough, workforce manager with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

APPEARANCE

As an employee, you represent your company, your manager, your coworkers and yourself. So determine how your employer expects you to dress and groom yourself, and then decide whether to meet or exceed.

Here's a tip: If you're preparing for a job interview, go to the company a day early and simply look around at how the employees are dressed and groomed. The next day, dress at least one level better than the employees you observe. Every organization develops its own norms of how people should look at work. Some organizations want workers to wear business suits. Other organizations stress comfort and allow employees to wear shorts and sneakers. After a few days on the job you'll learn more about how employees are encouraged to look at work. Keep these ideas in mind:

1. **Be clean.** You're always going to be around coworkers and you might even be around some external customers and managers. These people will appreciate if you look, smell – and actually are – clean.
2. **Ensure health and safety.** Choose clothes that fit the work environment. Know where you have to wear work boots and safety goggles. Know where you can't have exposed skin or loose hair. Your workplace will have rules and your coworkers will have additional suggestions for the health and safety of the customers and you.
3. **Minimize distractions.** Unless you're a fashion model, the focus of the job is not your appearance. Avoid clothing and jewelry that can cause safety problems or make your customers and coworkers uncomfortable or distracted.

MANNERS

The world we live in has more diverse coworkers than ever before. One way to be appreciated by your coworkers is to do the little things like hold the door open for somebody, avoid cracking gum at work, try not to look bored, avoid wearing heavy perfumes or colognes, or simply smile and say hello. These little gestures can make you stand out in a good way and help others appreciate you more.

› Transform How You Work

You can change your job without having to look for a new one. When you change how you function at work – especially in the areas of communication, relationships and goals – it's like getting a new job. And it's all within your power.



NOTES



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www.texasworkforce.org/labormarket

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Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice). (Rev: April 2016)



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