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New Job? 7 Tips to Soar Through Your First 90 Days

Between meeting new people and mastering different software, the start of a finance or accounting job is a busy and exciting time. However, you're not the only one learning. Your new boss and colleagues are watching and scrutinizing your performance during the first few months to learn whether you're a keeper.

How long do most employers take to decide whether new hires will make the cut? According to a recent Robert Half Finance & Accounting survey, up to 90 days is common. The majority of CFOs interviewed — 54 percent — give newcomers between one and three months to prove themselves, and 9 percent allot less than 30 days.

This means you have little time to make a solid impression when beginning a new accounting position. Here are seven tips to help you make the best first impression:

1. Get a head start. Your first day on the job may be the official start date, but don't let that be when you start to learn about the position or the company. You will have already investigated the employer as part of your job search. Now that you've accepted the job offer, go further:

- Read up on the company's main competitors.
- Familiarize yourself with the accounting platforms you'll be using.
- Go on the company's website and start memorizing future colleagues' faces and names.

2. Be more than prompt. Demonstrate your dedication to the new job by not just showing up on time, but early. Not only will your boss be impressed by your enthusiasm and commitment, but you can use the extra 10 to 15 minutes to plan your day, study onboarding materials, review training notes and jot down questions or comments you have about the position or company.

3. Ask for help. Some new employees think asking questions might make them appear amateurish. While you don't want to be repetitive or a nuisance, you do need information that veteran employees take for granted.

Take advantage of the leeway you'll be given at the start of your probation period to learn as much as you can. In most cases, your colleagues would be happy to help and share their knowledge. Asking for help is also a good way to get to know your coworkers and build relationships.

4. Watch your business etiquette. Good manners are always important in a workplace setting, but they're especially key during when you are beginning a new job. The last thing you want is to commit a faux pas that makes your boss and colleagues think less of your capabilities or question whether you'll be easy to work with.

Here are a few etiquette tips to keep in mind:

- Say “please” and “thank you.”
- Practice good cubicle etiquette, such as respecting your coworkers’ space and office supplies and keeping noise to a minimum.
- Polish up your conference call etiquette. A good rule of thumb is to pay attention to what your supervisor and coworkers do, and follow their lead.

5. Steer clear of politics. The longer you’re in your new job, the more likely you’ll encounter office politics. It’s best to listen and learn but not get involved or take sides, most especially during your first 90 days.

The same goes for discussions about local and federal elections. While a recent Accountemps survey shows some workers feel that talking politics at work could be informative, the majority believe these discussions can get heated and offend others.

6. Be social. Your new coworkers’ feedback plays an important part in letting managers know whether you’re a good match for the corporate culture. One way to quickly fit into your new workplace is to be friendly and outgoing. So accept those invitations for coffee or after-work drinks, even if you’re a natural introvert. Rather than eating at your desk all the time, take a lunch break with coworkers or non-finance colleagues. The deeper your professional relationships, the better you’ll fit in at the new workplace.

7. First adapt, and then improve. One of the reasons you were hired was for your expertise. However, the first few months as a new hire is not the time to be a know-it-all. Rather, this is a time to watch, ask questions, listen and learn. Only after you understand the new employer’s methodologies and culture should you suggest changes.

It’s in everybody’s interests that you thrive in your job and settle in as a valued member of the team. Let your boss and colleagues know you’re a keeper by demonstrating enthusiasm, professionalism and diplomacy.

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