

GETTING A FABULOUS START ON YOUR NEW JOB—HERE'S HOW!

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Oh, how awful is the feeling of a bad start!

You know the feeling I'm talking about. That sick feeling in the pit of your stomach that you get when things go wrong early in the game. When the opposing team scores a touchdown on the first play after kickoff. When you double-bogey the first hole. When the skater falls to the ice on the first jump.

A bad start equals "in the hole already... it's going to be tougher to win... I have got to make up the lost ground..."

The start of a new job bears many similarities to the start of a sporting event. The time leading up to the start date is one of great anticipation and nervous excitement. Before the opening bell the slate is clean, the expectations are high and all thoughts are of success. But if the new employee stumbles out of the gate, both employee and employer experience that sinking feeling that comes with being behind early in the game.

As both an executive recruiter and a hiring manager, I have been on both sides of the hiring equation in the past 25 years. I have both placed and hired what I thought were "racehorses" who stumbled early and never recovered. Over the years, I have observed a number of behaviors that got new starts off on the wrong foot. As a manager, I have experienced the emotional deflation that comes with wondering if I have made a bad hiring decision. As you start your new job, I would like to offer some suggestions that will help you get "ahead of the game" and on the right path for success in your new position.

The Austin Group Resources Start Program:

1. Be punctual and 100% dependable. For a manager, a new employee arriving late feels like a fumble on the kickoff. And traffic is no excuse. You should drive the route to work before your first day and build enough time in to allow for delays. In fact, for the first 30 days, arrive a few minutes early and watch the smile broaden on your new boss's face. Regarding personal matters, get all of your doctor and dentist appointments out of the way before you start. Don't schedule any such appointments during your first 90 days unless it is an emergency. It is extremely important to establish an early track record of punctuality and dependability.
2. Be proactive with down time. In any new training mode, there are bound to be times when a new employee is unable to move forward without direction from a superior or when no one is available to answer questions. A good manager will appreciate it if you are proactive and go to your supervisor to establish in advance what to do during the inevitable "down times". Inquire about books, tapes, simple projects, etc. Many supervisors mean well, but find that, with all of their other

duties, training can be difficult to work into their schedules. Offer to help your boss with a project that will free his time so he will have more training time with you. And while, you are at it, it wouldn't hurt to ask about home study projects as well-- books, tapes, etc.

3. Show your personality, participate, but don't overstep your bounds. It is ill advised for a new hire to be timid, quiet and unwilling to participate in training or staff projects. On the other hand, many new employees make the mistake of offering too many opinions too strongly and too frequently which very quickly alienates some of their new coworkers. In fact, it's wise to...

4. Listen a lot more than you talk. As the saying goes, God gave us two ears and one mouth so we could listen twice as much as we talk. When it comes to the three p's of policy, process and procedure-- be a sponge. Learn from senior employees. Observe the successful people and copy their behaviors. Pull them aside and ask their advice on succeeding in the new endeavor. In trying to display their knowledge, a new hire may come across as a "know-it-all". It is wise for a new person to avoid trying to give definitive answers in staff training sessions. Senior staffers will quickly be turned off by the new person taking center stage before any worth has been proven through action.

5. Leave the past behind. Don't talk about "how we did it at my last company" unless you are asked for that analysis. The new staff will not bond with a new employee who seems intent on showing them how to do it better. Also, avoid the temptation of reorganizing. Many a new employee tries to reorganize their desk, the sales process, the work flow, etc. without first learning how the new company does it. It is far better to learn the existing system before offering any ideas for improvement.

6. Dive in and do the grunt work. Nothing warms a boss's heart faster than the sight of a new employee immersing himself in the menial tasks of the new job. Nothing is a faster turn-off than sensing an attitude of "I'm too good for that." In sales, start making cold calls. Kick up some dust. Make something happen. Give your boss some situations to deal with; some problems to solve. I have yet to meet a sales supervisor who was turned off by a new employee displaying a sense of urgency to succeed.

7. Socialize with your new co-workers. If they "do lunch," do it with them, at least at first. Join them in a drink after work. Arrive early for bagels and coffee. Get to know the new team. They are anxious to learn if you are ready to help the team meet its goals. If you become an outsider early, you just might remain on the outside. And if they gossip, don't participate. When you hear negative things, choose not to believe what you hear. Make your own observations and don't allow yourself to get embroiled in political situations.

The first 90 days on your new job do have a lot in common with the opening stages of a sporting event. A quick start is no guarantee of a victory. But it does set the stage and create a lot of optimism for future success. Practicing the behaviors stated above is a surefire way to get in your game quickly and avoid that sick, sinking feeling that comes with a bad start.