

Transitions: Life Skills for Personal Success

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ON THE JOB MODULE

Learning how to prepare for the workforce doesn't end once a job has been secured (Morem, 2005). In fact, the learning process will continue all the way until you accept the gold watch at your retirement party—from learning how to fit in with different groups, avoiding burnout (Smith, 2003) and balancing work/life issues to sharpening your leadership skills—there is a lot to learn!

So how does one prepare for the thousands of hours of work during one's lifetime? First, we recommend utilizing our Module entitled: "On the Job."

The On the Job Module in the Transitions Program was designed to meet the expectations of employers from ANY industry—as well as arm our learners with the tools they need to get employed, stay employed and enjoy a prosperous career.

Our lessons and activities were painstakingly developed to ensure our learners would experience true to life situations that elicit the on the job behaviors that employers expect and demand. In addition, we formulated a sequence of high-powered topics that begin with the fundamentals for success and culminate with the acquisition of skills that exceed expectations.

We begin the On the Job Module by guiding our learners on the process of settling into their new jobs. We don't mean that we are going to teach them what to do or how to do specific duties. Nor can we help them find the quickest way to the cafeteria; what we will do is teach them how to identify and navigate political systems in the workplace. No, not Democrats and Republicans, but rather, strategic alliances established by two or more people in order to help them do their jobs, attain resources, gain more followers, block out evil doers or simply have access to the best parking spaces in the front lot.

As a new employee, fitting in depends upon one's ability to identify the positive political alliances that are in place to help others become part of the "system." Conversely, it is equally important to learn how to identify the negative political "games" in order to avoid them and stay out of messy and confusing situations. What do we mean by "messy and confusing situations?" We not only explain them in detail, but we also teach learners how to participate in positive, ethical politics. Once our learners have been taught how to align themselves with folks at work who can support them and vice versa, they will be well on their way to fitting into the culture of that workplace.

The next lesson is called: "Go With Your Gut! Following Your Instincts in the Workplace." Here, we introduce our learners to everyday situations that will require them to follow their instincts when a supervisor is not on hand for guidance or if/when the learner has been put in a position which requires quick decision making skills. The point is, with a solid foundation of political savvy, and the integrity and

humility coming up later in this module, one's gut instinct is more likely to be correct and as a result, the lack of mistakes will build confidence and develop a consistent framework for future decision making.

We then turn our lesson towards the direction of working in group dynamics. One area in which employees spend a significant amount of their work time is in meetings, so our lesson on Meeting Etiquette is a two-part must see! These lessons cover such important yet enigmatic questions as: What is involved with leading a meeting? For what reasons should a meeting be organized? How does one know who should be invited to a meeting? What should go on an agenda? And what are the roles that people play in meetings? Our learners will get a chance to explore all of these topics!

Next, we teach our learners how to handle a situation that, if left unattended, quite often turns into a horrid form of negativity that can literally ruin a person's career. We are referring to "entitlement." In our three-part series called: "You Owe Me! The Myth about Workplace Entitlement," we introduce our learners to a topic that is not widely discussed in school but is critical to on the job success. Our learners discover that entitlement comes in a variety of forms: a student with a high GPA expects to be treated as a "smart" and "gifted" person at work; a star college football player expects to be revered for his all-star accomplishments; an "old timer" who has worked for a company for 30 years expects she will get the next promotion handed out by the CEO; and even the boss might expect to never make her own coffee because, well, she's the boss. The fact is, entitlement can and does get many employees in trouble. New employees especially must remember a crucial rule: no one owes you anything—no matter who you are or what you can do or where you come from. Remember to be humble and grateful for what you earn through hard work, and a sense of entitlement will never hold you back.

No on the job success lesson is complete without teaching folks how to multitask and manage chaos. In our lesson entitled: "Spinning Plates and Juggling Bananas" we help our learners explore and cope with the multifaceted complexity of work and understand the value of multitasking.

Next we focus on a topic that should never be compromised, even in a chaotic situation: integrity. In our two-part series entitled: "How Do You Act When No One is Looking?" we not only help our learners understand the immense value of integrity in the workplace, we let them develop solutions to negative workplace temptations—solutions that will help them throughout their careers!

This brings us to our final topic: "Talk the Talk and Walk the Walk: Consistency in the Workplace." These activities teach our learners how valuable predictability and "transparency" in the workplace really are. For example, most managers like to know exactly how an employee will react, respond and perform in any situation they request. Managers don't have confidence in people who are "loose cannons," who can go off in any unpredictable direction at any moment. Think about working on a group project. Would you like to work with people who you know will do their jobs well and try hard? Or would you rather work with someone who may or may not do a decent job because it all depends on his mood at that time? The point is, human

nature feels comfortable with predictability and predictability comes from behaving consistently over time.

This brings us full circle once again. Our lessons for this module teach our learners how to manage themselves in groups, in ethical situations and in times of work flow chaos--time on the job never seemed so productive and fulfilling!

References:

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