

Focus on Your Job While Managing Your Career

Landing your first job is just the first step on your career path. It's important to keep your job-search and work-related skills up to date, even when you're happy with your employment. After all, U.S. Department of Labor research indicates that the average worker will hold eight to 10 different jobs during his or her employment lifespan—and the greatest turnover happens before a worker reaches the age of 30.

So how do you make yourself a valuable employee and prepare for your next career step?

Keep yourself on the cutting edge of your field—because it will make you more valuable to your current employer and it will help you move along your career track without missing a step.

Follow these simple tips and you'll find it easier to weather all the career course changes that come your way.

1. **Think of yourself as an entrepreneur.** You are the product that is being offered in the job marketplace. Continue to develop and market your strengths and interests.
2. **Learn and earn.** Take advantage of every opportunity to learn something new—by helping out on a new project, volunteering to “cover” for an employee who's on leave, or attending seminars and workshops that the company may offer. Some employers offer tuition reimbursement, so take classes in your field. Don't allow your education to become obsolete.
3. **Keep your records up to date.** Keep a record of your accomplishments, perhaps even a portfolio. Be able to demonstrate the value you add to your organization. Include contact names and references in your portfolio, along with a resume that's updated on a regular basis.
4. **Take “It's not my job!” out of your vocabulary.** Volunteer to take on new responsibilities and think of every new assignment as a learning experience. Look for other ways to contribute. Being cross-trained will make you more valuable. If you have to work some extra hours to help with a special project, do so willingly. It will be remembered.
5. **Dress up your attitude.** Even when doing the most unpleasant or routine tasks, do them with style. Deal with everyone on a professional basis, from the receptionist right up to the CEO. You are all partners in creating a dynamic and cooperative workplace.
6. **Seize the opportunity!** Don't wait to be told to do a job or take on a responsibility. Ask “May I help?” If you see something that you think should be done and would help make the company better, offer to handle it.
7. **Make the team.** Employers want employees who can work together for the goals of the company, instead of promoting their individual goals. Having personal goals will help keep your career on track. Just make sure you're in line with the employer's goals as well.
8. **Bond with the boss.** A good relationship with your supervisor will endure—in the form of good recommendations and networking in the future.

9. **Make change your perspective.** Every employee should acknowledge—even embrace—the changes in the workplace. If you're not a part of the change, you'll soon find yourself left behind. Demonstrate that you have the ability to perform well in changing circumstances and difficult situations.
10. **Keep your technology skills cutting edge.** Take any technology-related class or seminar offered by your employer—even if it's a class offered after hours. You don't want to have to play "catch up" while looking for a new position or trying to secure a promotion.

Courtesy of the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#).