

EDITOR'S CORNER

Food Science Graduate Seminar — November 15, 1994

**How to Survive a a Food Science Professional — A Personal Experience
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Career Goals

1. Short-term goals: reevaluate occasionally
2. Long-term goals: reevaluate occasionally

Your Job Description

1. Know EXACTLY what you are supposed to do.
2. Know PRECISELY who is your BOSS and who is your BOSS' BOSS.
3. Have EVERYTHING in writing; verbal agreements mean very little in a dispute.
4. Know all your benefits: health insurance, life insurance, vacation time, consulting time, stock options, retirement plans (Who thinks about retirement at age 25? It comes faster than you think.), sick leave, escape clause, etc.
5. Know about the reward system in your job.
6. Know about the promotion opportunity and how it is accomplished.
7. Know about salary increment status. Be very careful not to ask for more than you think you deserve. Nothing irritates a boss more than an employee who keeps asking about a pay raise.

Self Improvement

1. Never stop learning. Read newspapers (even the Collegian); journals; books; magazines; trade books; watch TV; listen to radio; open your eyes, ears, and your mind. No one is too young or too old to learn.
2. Excel in your field. Remember you are hired for your particular skill (whatever the skill may be). You must be the best in whatever you do. Keep improving EVERY DAY. Once you stop improving, you are already behind.
3. Be organized. It is easier said than done. Just look at your professors' offices! BUT, believe me, even the most unorganized professor has a system unique to his/her situation! You seldom see a true professional not able to find some important documents during "crunch" time.
4. Be efficient. My wife told me once that, "A piece of paper should pass our hand ONLY ONCE". (1) Do something about it, or (2) File it away properly, or (3) Throw it away. A half done job is a job not done.

5. Be active in your profession. Besides your daily job, you need to have a great network in your profession. The best is to be active in your professional organization. EVERY profession has its own niche and group. Would you believe there is a Society of Cosmetic Microbiology? I gave a talk there once and had the most beautiful audience in my life. Be an officer. Be a volunteer. Organize a meeting. Do something in your organization.
6. Networking. I always tell my students that in five years time you never know who needs who in life. I may be asking my former students for a recommendation for an award, or a job referral for another student, or perhaps even a job for myself! Never forget your friends. Always keep in touch.

The Work Place

1. Survey your environment as quickly as possible. Immediately make friends with your secretaries: they are the most important links between you and your clients. Their typing, recording, copying, messages, tactful fending of your situation, timely completion of your work, providing a smile, or a thank you note are all very important for your daily happiness and survival. Be nice to your secretaries. The reward is immeasurable.
2. Your colleagues. Know the roles of everyone. Always respect the "territory" of each worker around you and DO NOT step on someone's territory. You never know the consequences. Always be courteous to your coworkers. Support them as much as possible and ask for advice as frequently as necessary. Team work is essential for success in any job. Always give an encouraging word to your coworkers. We all have good days and bad days. A happy greeting can make a bad day a little bit better.
3. Find a mentor. Somehow in the work place you will notice that there is someone who looks after you. That someone is your mentor. Usually it is an older person in the organization who, for whatever reason, thinks highly of you and will do almost anything for you to improve your job advancement. It will be a sad situation if you do not have a mentor. How a mentor-mentee relationship develops is a mystery. Consider yourself very fortunate if you have a great mentor.
4. Work hard and be productive. I always say to my group, "Work hard and work smart." Some people work hard but do not accomplish very much. Work hard for the RIGHT activity! Be creative and innovative in all you do. Also be modest. Your great discoveries and successes may be threats to someone else's position. It is always hard to balance this issue. You do not want to be too modest, but yet you should not be too "loud."
5. Bargaining. Occasionally you will find yourself needing to bargain with your boss. You have a job offer from somewhere, you are not happy with your job situation, you are not satisfied with your salary, someone is mad at you

or you are mad at someone, etc. Confucius said, “**THINK THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU MAKE A MOVE.**” Once you open your mouth, you may never be able to retrieve what you have said! Unless you are willing to **ACT**, do not even bargain. Never say to your boss, “If you do not give me a raise, I will quit!”, unless you really can quit! Most of us, I hope, do not have to bargain all the time. The most important time to bargain is **BEFORE** you finalize your job appointment. Your “honeymoon” period in a job is about six months. After that, you are a part of the family and will be treated accordingly.

Enjoy Yourself

A job is not only a source of financial security; it should be fun. Make your work a hobby. The happiest workers I have seen are people who **LOVE** their work. They work day and night, weekends, holidays, etc. I call these people **WORK APHILIC** and not workaholic.

These are only one old professor's concept of survival in a job. Everyone is different, and everyone must face his/her daily life as best suited for his/her situation. I have survived so far; I hope to survive even longer.

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