

8 Powerful Career Lessons They Should've Handed Out On Graduation Day



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It has been 7 years since my graduation day and I still remember the excitement; I was relieved that the "exam phase" of my life was over; I looked with enthusiasm towards my first job. Little did I know that the "working world" would require an extraordinary effort and loads of other skills!

My journey on the career ladder would have been smoother, had I known a few important lessons. While there are many "on the job" lessons, some things in life must be experienced, to be truly understood. What follows are 8 such career lessons, I wish they'd handed out to me along with my diploma.

1. Your career is not your life. Many of us rely heavily on our careers for satisfaction in our lives. We get immersed in the day-to-day rush of our work and discover that we no longer have the time, energy or inspiration.

For some people (my former self included), it's as if our jobs are part of our bodies, and if we don't see ourselves as successful in them, we feel almost physically unhealthy. As a result, we question ourselves when things aren't going in the direction we hoped.

Consciously separating your self from your career allows for a greater perspective on both.

2. Be indispensable (at least one area)

There are certain things that you can do, or that you can learn to do, that can make you extraordinarily valuable to yourself and to others. Identify your special areas of uniqueness and then to commit yourself to becoming very, very good in those areas.

Take stock of your unique talents and abilities on a regular basis. What is it that you do especially well? What are you good at? What do you do easily and well that is difficult for other people? Identifying what separates you from those around you, and concentrating on those skills will make your unique skill set invaluable and hard to replace.

3. Don't grow stale in your career. We live in a world where technology is evolving rapidly. This has a direct consequence on your career. Stay up to speed on the latest happenings in your field. Read various articles and books to keep your mind sharp. Attend seminars at your present job if offered. Seek out mentors who can advise or educate you. Don't become comfortable with the status quo or complacent about things you are already good at – you can always be better, so take the time to find out how.

4. Guard your time like a hawk. At work, we often find ourselves bombarded with 'urgent' requests. All of these urgent requests can disrupt the thinking processes. Sometimes it may take twice as long to get something done, simply because of the interruption. Learn to say No (with good reason!) and prioritize your tasks.

5. Polish your people skills. You may do your job well, even so well that no one can complain. But you never seem to get ahead. Sound familiar?

People issues can be one of the main reasons people leave jobs. It can also be a cause for dissatisfaction and reduced productivity. Bottom line: you need people skills to move up.

6. Communicate effectively. No matter what career path you choose to follow, you have to have good written and oral communication skills to get ahead in your career.

Make a real effort to listen to everything that's being said to you. Observe and learn from others who make it seem effortless.

7. Keep your cool. We sometimes forget that we are in a professional environment and tend to curse and behave like a teenager. Whatever happens, don't explode or throw your arms up in resignation. Keep your mind clear at the worst of times and you'll be able to handle anything. There's nothing more respectable than being calm under fire. So take a

deep breath, or a walk around the block, and find away to diffuse your frustration before you address whatever the problem is.

8. Shield your reputation. The people you hang out with will add value or break your good name. Also, if you spend time with people who gossip and tear others down, you are likely to catch it too.

So, identify ways to develop and maintain a professional image that is positive and genuine. Surround yourself with positive people who seek to grow and improve. Looking back at your career, what has been most responsible for your success? Any lessons you would like to add to this graduation day handout?