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Jill Haney Cincinnati.Com » Jill Haney
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Get to know the culture of your workplace

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Business casual has become a professional norm, but an unintended consequence can be the too casual and too familiar attitude that goes along with it. Regardless of the dress code, professional courtesy and fitting in with the corporate culture of the office is a key component to success.

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What is corporate culture?

The values, beliefs, and

behaviors that set one company apart from another. Whether you are a new employee or a seasoned veteran, adapting to the culture sends a powerful message to the powers that be.

The best way to make sure to fit in with the corporate culture, especially if you are a new hire, is to watch how employees interact with one another. Assimilating into an organizational culture is not about giving up your individuality, but it is about understanding a set of behaviors that are valued.

I often hear that younger employees can feel entitled and too familiar with their new surroundings. New employees need to build credibility and therefore need to be very tactful in their interactions with other employees.

Here are some guidelines to help employees be aware of and adapt to the corporate culture.

Respect rank.

This is not only important for a new hire, but also for the veteran employee. It is far too easy to become too familiar with executives in a company, especially if employees are on a first-name basis. Be mindful to respect the position of the higher-ranking leaders and treat them with respect. Maintain your professionalism by not engaging in such casual gestures such as back slapping, referring to others by their last name, propping feet up on the desk, or calling out to employees from across the room.

Build relationships with colleagues, team members, and everyone in the direct-report line. However, don't confuse a business relationship with a deep meaningful friendship. Yes, in business, colleagues will engage in casual, non-business conversation, but do not assume the relationship has turned into a true friendship. Keep personal information private. Business is about building relationships, and successful professionals value the importance of establishing professional friendships with co-workers.

Be wary of office gossip.

Live by a no-gossip policy at work. Listening to gossip is just as unprofessional and damaging as the act of gossiping. A simple statement such as, "I have a no-gossip policy at work" and then excusing yourself from the conversation is the best way to stay out of the fray. Although having a great sense of humor can be advantageous in business, be very careful with jokes. What is funny to one person can be offensive to another. Jokes that deal with sex, race, politics, and religion are taboo.

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Understanding the organizational culture of each office can aid employees in meshing as part of "the team."

I recommend that you read the "about us" page on your company's Web site to learn more about what behavior your company values.

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