Self Study Guide to **Adapting to Corporate Culture**

PRE-READING

Understanding corporate culture is one of the most important tasks of college interns and new hires. The "culture" of an organization refers to the formal and informal rules that exist in an organization: the power structure, the customs around socializing, the way employees dress or speak, and more. Your chances of success will increase exponentially if you keep your eyes and ears open, carefully observe how things work, and try to adapt, while maintaining your own values and integrity. After reading the article, answer these questions:

1. What are some of the characteristics companies want their interns and new hires to demonstrate?
2. What does it mean to "Stay industry smart"?
3. One of the rules of corporate culture is for newbies to "pay their dues." How might an intern or new hire "pay their dues?"

POST-READING

Reflect

1. In what way does academic culture differ from corporate culture? Hint: consider time from an academic perspective (breaks every six weeks with a summer vacation) and a corporate perspective (two weeks' vacation after your first year on-the-job.)
2. Examine other dimensions such as work style, power, socializing, dress, etc.

Apply

Activity

Chad and Meredith have recently been introduced to corporate culture. Take a look at these two scenarios. What indications do you find that they don't yet understand corporate culture?

Chad had just begun his first day as a new intern at Fulton Bank. He wore a clean white tee-shirt and a crisp pair of jeans. As he was introduced to each staff member, he smiled, offered his hand and said: "Hi Dave." or "Hi Maggie." Invited to his first staff meeting, he spoke up with a new idea to promote a product. He had to leave early twice during the first week because his roommate needed the car.

Meredith had worked for Rider Engineering for two months and felt very isolated. She ate alone at her desk each day because there wasn't anyone her own age. She didn't feel that her ideas were appreciated; the team just took them and ran with them. Meredith wore a suit to work every day to be professional, surprised that her supervisor and most of the other staff wore slacks, sweaters, and casual skirts. One morning, one of the staff had a birthday celebration in the break room but Meredith was too busy to attend.

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Extend and Build

Corporate culture is often accompanied by specialized vocabulary or jargon, sometimes called "corporate speak." Test yourself on this jargon. How many did you get right?

Recent corporate jargon:

Stakeholder: A person or group that has an investment, share, or interest in something, as a business or industry. People who have a financial investment in the success of a project.

2.0: It refers to the next generation of ideas. Any major improvement or shift with a product or service.

50,000 Foot View: The idea that you would look at a project or initiative from the broadest perspective, taking in every aspect of its potential impact.

Human Capital: The new way to refer to a company's employees.

Intellectual Capital: Refers to people's ideas and subject matter expertise as an asset.

Boil the Ocean: Refers to trying to do something that just is impossible.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Refers to that moment in time when things really get going.

Out-of-Pocket: Used when someone is unavailable by phone or e-mail.

ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival): Whenever a project or task is due.

Synergy: Refers to the ability of two people coming together to produce a better effect than if there were just one person trying to do something.

Deep-Dive: In-depth exploration.

All-Hands Meeting: A mandatory meeting for all employees.

Bandwidth: The physical and mental limit of your working ability.

Bleeding Edge: Something even more current than the 'cutting-edge'.

Bricks and Mortar: Business with a physical location and building rather than online.

Move the Needle: Increased activity to complete a task faster.

Hard Stop: A definite end.

COB: Close of business.

Guide provided courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

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