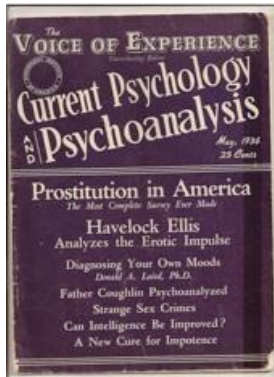


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“Keep that Job”

Often, the important learning goes far beyond the specific content being presented.

This article was taken from the May, 1936 issue of Current Psychology and Psychoanalysis. Written by “The Voice of Experience,” Contributing Editor.

Getting the job doesn't end the troubles of job-hunting. Keeping the job, a sadly neglected subject, has a technique all its own. What that technique consists of is explained...By the Voice of Experience, eminent radio counselor and Contributing Editor of Current Psychology and Psychoanalysis.

Much has been written on the subject of getting a job. Judging from the mass of carefully formulated rules, the number of books, pamphlets, and treatises on the topic, one might well believe the problem of job-hunting is solved when the prospective employer says, “Very well, report for work on Monday morning.”

But having carefully sifted the valuable and workable rules from the chaff of intricate but fruitless formulae for job-seeking, one finds a paucity of material on the equally important question of holding the job. Somehow our writers of success stories have been singularly reticent in this respect.

Certain factors, however, are quite obvious. For example, the first consideration is to know the job thoroughly when you get it; or, if you are taken on as an inexperienced beginner, to learn it as quickly as possible. Remember that you might be able to bluff your way into an organization, but once accepted you are expected to live up to your claims. It behooves you, to be candid about matters in which you are not experienced at the start. Your frankness will be appreciated by your employer and will greatly expedite your training. You will be saved the embarrassment of attempting to “pick up” the necessary knowledge on the sly, and your employer will be saved the expense of your blunders.

You will greatly strengthen the good impression which caused you to be hired, if you will consider your training period as highly important. I am thinking, at the moment of two young men just out of college who started to work in the business office of a large firm. Both of them

lacked certain knowledge essential to the work. But the different ways in which they set about acquiring it were an immediate indication of success for one and failure for the other. Jack was easy-going, inclined to carelessness and “scattered” thinking. He had been informed that he wouldn’t be expected to do perfect work for the first few weeks and he took full advantage of this leniency. He believed that the knowledge would come to him if he just took things easy for awhile. So he made little effort to absorb the numerous details of the work. Edward C---, on the other hand, went into the matter thoroughly. By the time the allotted training period was over, he not only had a through grasp of the knowledge he was supposed to master, but he had obtained a valuable background of general information about the business, and had set his active, calculating mind to work on methods of improving its efficiency.

When Jack was dismissed during a subsequent reorganization of the staff, he attributed the misfortune to his “usual luck” and let it go at that.

A Consideration of Efficiency

Having proven your adaptability, your next step is to discover the easiest and best way of doing your work. Each job may be done in a number of different ways, but one of those ways will be the most efficient for you. I know that the word “efficiency” has been overworked. I know it stands in bad odor as an excuse for driving employers. But it is true that the finest people in every profession are those truly efficient individuals who do a workman-like job of every responsibility entrusted to them. The efficient doctor makes a through diagnosis. He does not make a slipshod cursory examination and jump to a hasty conclusion. When he has finished diagnosing a case he knows what ails the patient and why.

The efficient stenographer sees to it that she is comfortably seated, table at the correct height, and stationery, carbon sheets, envelopes and stamps in orderly arrangement so that her work may go forward smoothly without confusion. She keeps her note book and pencil in readiness for dictation, thus saving herself a flurry of hurried searching each time the bell summons her to the employer’s office. She has a competent working knowledge of the office files, and she is the one called upon when an important letter or contract is needed at a moment’s notice. Her calendar of engagements, interviews, and “reminders” is always an orderly record which enables her to see that her employer keeps his various business appointments on time, and permits the adaptation of her day’s routine to whatever emergencies may arise.

I know the interesting story of one woman’s rise to a lucrative and responsible position with an advertising agency of note. She entered the organization as a filing clerk; and during her training period discovered a method of facilitating the work. Impressed with her ability, the manager made her the head of the filing department. She was interested in layout work, and spent her evenings studying that and copy writing. When new orders for advertising copy came through, she would make up a number of layouts at home, just as if the assignment had been given to her. She made it her business to become familiar with the particular needs of each client, studying products and advertising mediums as if she already held the position she wanted. Presently she began submitting the results of her “homework” to the head of the firm. He saw in them the promise of excellent advertising writing, and encouraged her to keep on with her study. But it was not until she sold, in the fee-lance market, an idea which she had not seen fit to use, that he

realized how rapidly that promise was becoming an actuality. That young lady, today, is one of his most valuable employees, holding a position she could never have reached had she not gone about her work with an efficiency which not only expedited the business at hand but enabled her to grasp and utilize the opportunities it presented for advancement.

“PETTY POLITICS”

It is well to avoid playing petty office politics, or mingling in the personal affairs of other workers. Never try to gain self-advantage by belittling or ridiculing a fellow employee; succeed or fail on your own ability. You will find that these measures insure you not only self respect, but the respect and liking of your employer and your fellow-workers. Never forget the necessity of remaining on congenial terms with all who work with you, whether they be shipping clerks or vice-presidents of the firm. The man who is admired by his office boy possesses qualities which recommend him to his superiors in business. They realize, you see, that his curiosity and kindness are ingrained, not merely donned for conferences with the boss or interviews with the important customer. They know that his attitude elicits efficient service from those who work under his direction, and prompts him, in turn, to give his best efforts to the job at hand.

The “tyrannical” boss presents a trying problem to the individual who wishes to hold his job. Contrary to the opinions of many meek souls, the best policy in such a case is to maintain one’s own integrity and independence. Never violate your personal integrity; if you stoop to the tyrannical boss he will lose his respect for you. That respect will be measurably increased, however, if he sees that a browbeating, domineering, overbearing attitude does not impress you with fear and trembling. He does not want a “yes-man.” What he is looking for is an individual capable of thinking constructively, and possessing the courage and independence of soul to stand on his convictions. He wants a man who is willing to take the responsibility for his own acts, and unafraid to admit his fault when he is wrong.

Are you one of those individuals who could be replaced at a moment’s notice, or are you the main who seems indispensable to his job? Look around you now. In every department you will find a number of employees who would scarcely be missed if they dropped out of the organization. It doesn’t matter how responsible, or how minor, the job may be. One file clerk might be easily replaced within a day or so by another girl, but the file clerk who had been alert for new ideas, who has organized her work and knows exactly how and where to find any material which may be called for, has made herself important to the firm. Because of her efficiency the machinery of the organization moves more smoothly. She is making herself indispensable to the job, and she doesn’t have to worry about being “laid off” when retrenchments are in order.

THE SENSE OF HUMOR

How about your sense of humor? That’s a mighty good safety valve, you know, when you are inclined to take yourself too seriously. What about that little slight you suffered this morning? Did it spoil the whole day at business, and send you home in a grouchy mood? Or did you have the saving grace to step back a bit and see how trifling and unimportant was the source of your misery? If you can realize the sheer insect-smallness of incidents which have been ruffling the

calm of your day and impairing your efficiency, you will have in your possession the most powerful weapon against them.

The rules we've been discussing aren't complicated. As a matter of fact, they simply embody the general rules of common-sense demeanor among our fellow beings. To keep your job, you must know it well and carry it out with the confidence that comes from such knowledge. That is your first and most important obligation.

You must maintain a sense of fairness which admits of consideration for your fellow employees, realizing that a congenial atmosphere makes for greater cooperation and a smoothly running organization. You must at all times maintain self respect and personal integrity, for only in this way can you keep the respect of others.

And you must keep alert for new ideas, making yourself so valuable to your employer that your name will not come to his mind the moment someone must be dismissed. There we have summed up the four vital rules of "job-keeping." Study them again, and discover your own rating. If you will put them into practice, you need not worry about losing that job of yours.

Comment

So you see, not that much has changed in the last 70 years (except the carbon paper), and it's not as complicated as some people might like you to believe. In many areas we know what should be done, i.e. what constitutes "good teaching," or "keeping a job." The difficulty appears more in the actual "doing," than in knowing what should be done.

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