



**Thrive**

## Thriving as an Engaged Professional

You’ve invested time, effort and energy into discovering, preparing and securing your chosen opportunity. Now is the time to thrive in the experience. Thriving encompasses applying the skills gained through your career development process to establish a strong base and grow into your profession. By thriving, you will take steps toward being a life-long learner while managing your personal and professional success.

Recommendation	Purpose	Path
Plan ahead for your first day in your new role by clarifying important newcomer information before your first day on the job or in your academic program.	Knowing the details of what to expect and what you need in advance of your first day in a new experience can relieve first-day jitters and provide you the information necessary for building a great first impression in your new workplace or academic program.	<p>Prior to beginning your new role, visit with your supervisor, the human resources manager, or your program coordinator and ask about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paperwork to be completed in advance of your first day.</li><li>• Your expected arrival time and typical schedule.</li><li>• Where to park and where to report.</li><li>• Type of validation needed on your first day, such as an employee or student ID or other documentation.</li><li>• Appropriate attire.</li><li>• Materials, supplies or equipment needed for day 1 productivity.</li></ul>
Ease yourself into a new personal routine.	Your new work or academic environment will likely be very different than your previous college environment with regards to time demands and schedules. Making the shift to a new routine abruptly can leave you zapped of energy and irritable, which is not conducive to a great first impression or a strong initial performance. A better option is getting adjusted to the new routine before your first day.	Layout your new daily and weekly schedules, including commuting time to and from work or school, time for your morning routine, hours on the job or in class, and allotments for other commitments like exercise, community activities, grocery shopping, connecting with friends, etc. The National Sleep Foundation, the Center for Disease Control, and the National Institutes of Health recommend seven to nine hours of sleep per night in support of optimal health and chronic disease prevention. Once your schedule is laid out, determine how you will fit these hours of rest into your new schedule and put the new plan into practice at least 10 days before your first day in order to acclimate yourself to it.

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<p><b>Gather supplies for your new work or study space to support your productivity and integrate some of your personality into your new experience.</b></p>	<p>While some general supplies may be provided by your new employer or program, there may be other supplies not provided that you prefer. A small handful of personal touches or preferences can bring a smile to your face and help you feel at ease in your new environment.</p>	<p>When considering personal supplies, think first about organization and workflow management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you need a separate file folder for every project?</li> <li>• Would color coding make files more easily identifiable?</li> <li>• If you record meeting or class notes by hand, do you need separate notebooks for different meetings or classes, color coded flags to delineate subjects, or colored pens to differentiate action items?</li> <li>• If you prefer using technology, what is the best app to help you with file organization, note taking, task or time management and other productivity needs?</li> </ul> <p>Beyond personal supplies for productivity, gather up some other needs like a good water bottle and/or coffee mug, a candy jar and a small number of professionally appropriate inspirational or personal pictures. Each of these items can be an illustration of your personality or style and a generator of conversation with coworkers or classmates. Taking the time to refill your mug or bottle or to grab a piece of candy can also provide a brief mental break in the midst of a long day.</p>
<p><b>Begin before you begin by thinking ahead and reviewing your coursework.</b></p>	<p>Chances are the degree you recently completed serves a greater purpose than a decoration for your wall. The hours spent studying, projects completed and lectures attended have provided a foundation for your future. If the foundation is built, it makes sense to construct your success by using it. Revisiting your collection of old course materials related to your new role could help you refresh your relevant knowledge and speed up your ability to contribute. A review can also help you identify knowledge gaps to discuss with your supervisor or advisor in developing a training plan.</p>	<p>Read through the details of your new job description or peruse the course descriptions for classes listed as a part of your new academic program. Make a list of past courses completed where you believe you gained knowledge or skills important for your success in your new role. Pull out your old notes, textbooks and reports. Review them, make notes about their relevance and write down questions that arise.</p>



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<p><b>Prepare yourself to continue learning. Ask questions and keep detailed notes.</b></p>	<p>The one constant in life is change. While you can be confident in the quality education you received from the Oklahoma State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, you did not learn everything as a student, and some of what you did learn will inevitably be a part of that change. A willingness to learn and ask questions demonstrates active engagement in your new experience, a desire to learn and contribute, and a proactive effort toward avoiding confusion and mistakes. Be a life-long learner, and you will thrive in your new experience.</p>	<p>As you contemplate the experience you are about to undertake and as you assume your new role, identify your shortcomings. Have a conversation with your supervisor or program head about their perspective of your deficiencies and their expectations for professional growth. Develop a learning plan with specific benchmarks identified to measure your progress. Think of thoughtful questions to ask along the way, and keep detailed notes of the answers so you can draw upon them later to take action or make decisions on your own. Regularly communicate or schedule periodic check-ins to develop a strong relationship with your supervisor or program head, and work together to evaluate your progress and establish new learning goals.</p>
<p><b>Find a mentor or mentors in your new role.</b></p>	<p>According to Merriam-Webster, a mentor is “someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.” Mentors often benefit their mentees by helping them understand the culture of the organization, including written policies and processes as well as unwritten practices. Mentors also serve as experienced sounding boards for different perspectives on ideas, challenges and decisions.</p>	<p>As you begin your new role, investigate if a formal mentoring program exists in your new organization and sign up if it does. Also look for mentors beyond formal programs. Seek out those familiar with your new role and able to give you the “inside scoop” on your new environment, provide you with guidance, serve as a role model of integrity and encourage your growth as a professional. A supervisor, more experienced co-worker or classmate, or even the person who previously held your position may be a good choice for a mentor.</p>

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<b>Identify and build relationships in your new work or academic environment.</b>	<p>Research indicates employees and students with high levels of engagement are more satisfied and more productive in their roles. Of the 12 questions identified by Gallup Inc. as measuring the most significant elements of engagement, eight are related to relationships with co-workers and/or managers. Developing relationships with others in your new environment is clearly important to your success.</p>	<p>Make an effort to develop relationships with others at your level, as well as those above and below you within your new organizational structure. Invest time to have conversations. Get to know others in your new environment, and allow them to learn more about you. While demonstrating a personal interest in others is key to relationship-building, keep conversations appropriate for the professional environment, and avoid compromising productivity by draining significant chunks of the workday with never-ending chatter. Remember, nothing is “off the record,” and words travel at lightning speed. Refrain from career limiting conversations, such as gossip, snitching, complaining, and/or debating controversial topics or opinions.</p>
<b>Embrace challenge and opportunity by saying “yes” more than saying “no.”</b>	<p>The greatest barrier to embracing challenge is often fear of failure. However, a willingness to challenge yourself and pursue unfamiliar experiences related to your new role demonstrates initiative and enthusiasm for your position as well as increases your prospect of gaining valuable knowledge, skills and/or connections in support of your career success.</p>	<p>Be purposeful about placing yourself in situations where trials may be encountered and different opportunities may arise. Be flexible and adaptable, willing to adjust your plans to take advantage of an unforeseen opportunity or to attempt a different approach to a challenge. Be optimistic about experiences, even if the outcome isn’t what you intended. Reflect upon your undertakings and transform all outcomes into valuable learning experiences.</p>
<b>Maintain a realistic perspective about your role.</b>	<p>In today’s high-tech, fast-paced, rapid-change society, expectations of quick results and strong impacts are prevalent. However, expectations and reality may not coincide. Your new role may not provide the bold opportunity for you to immediately change the world. There will likely be some aspects of your new role in conflict with your definition of a “dream” experience. Preserving a practical perspective can help you accept the “bad” with the “good” and value the new experience as a foundational experience for your future impact. This perspective may also deter you from making any rash decisions about an early exit from a valuable step toward career success.</p>	<p>Be patient. While the promise of your new experience may have been a perfect match with your goals while you were working to secure the opportunity, there may be some less-than-thrilling steps and necessary lessons before you can get to that promise. You may also discover some unpleasant or tedious supporting tasks associated your dream. Evaluate your situation, consider the factors you have the ability to influence or change, and take action on those elements. Avoid dwelling on the factors not under your control. Celebrate the small victories that help you move closer to your goal of what you imagined your role to be.</p>

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<b>Evaluate the impact your new role has on your financial standing and develop a revised financial plan.</b>	<p>According to the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors, 56% of U.S. adults lack a budget and 39% have no non-retirement savings. These statistics are a recipe for financial disaster in the event of a life emergency. Taking charge of your finances will prevent you from contributing to these statistics and will provide a measure of security in the event of an unexpected financial need.</p>	<p>Using your net income figure and knowledge of expenses, develop a monthly working budget. Include a regular financial commitment to both emergency savings and retirement savings in your working budget. Pay down any debt and manage your credit responsibly. Leverage the abundance of online financial resources and smartphone applications to help with your planning and organization. Consider visiting with a financial planner and/or investigate if your employer or institution has financial education or planning services available.</p>
<b>Get engaged in your new community beyond your workplace or institution.</b>	<p>Much like co-curricular activities in college help students build social connections and serve their college community, active engagement in your new location can also provide outlets for connecting with new friends and fun as well as leading and serving your broader community.</p>	<p>Seek out community organizations or teams to join and/or programs in need of volunteers, such as an adult softball league, community band, youth mentoring or coaching program, civic club, or other activity. Register to vote in your new community to be an active participant in local, state and national decisions. Attend and participate in community activities and events such as town hall meetings, holiday celebrations, fairs and other activities. Maintain your “orange connection” by joining the OSU Alumni Association and finding an alumni chapter in your new location.</p>

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<p><b>Take the necessary steps to maintain your physical, mental and emotional health.</b></p>	<p>The most successful professionals master self-care in addition to mastering professional demands. This well-rounded mastery contributes to a greater sense of well-being, and greater well-being is correlated to higher career satisfaction, fewer sick days and reduced chronic health concerns, as well as decreased accident occurrences.</p>	<p>Obtain copies of your medical, dental and/or vision records from your previous providers. Ask your mentors for suggestions of providers in your new area, and review your insurance coverage to determine providers affiliated with your plans. Schedule time to meet with and decide upon your new medical, dental and/or vision care providers.</p> <p>Incorporate physical activity into your regular schedule. For adults, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend 2.5 hours of moderate intensity aerobic activity per week in addition to muscle-strengthening activities on two different days of each week. This activity time may be divided into time chunks as small as 10 minutes to prevent you from being overwhelmed.</p> <p>Work with your supervisor or program director to plan time away from your work or school. Using your vacation days or taking advantage of academic breaks for a timeout from your new role may provide a valuable mental rest, contribute to a sense of renewed energy, and refresh your commitment to productivity.</p>



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