

OPCD Podcast: Episode 11 - “Navigating the New Job” (11/6/2014)

Interview with Ms. Shanna Ullmann, *Director of Engagement for the Harbert College of Business*

Voiceover: You’ve interviewed, evaluated and negotiated. Now it’s time for day one of the new job and we’ve got a few tips and tricks that’ll help kickstart that transition from student to seasoned professional.

Understanding how to navigate a new job is, in many ways, a skill. It goes beyond mastering an unfamiliar set of responsibilities to also include a new set of coworkers, expectations and surroundings. And one of the keys to long term success with an organization is understanding how to best present yourself during your days as that new hire. Mrs. Shanna Ullmann is the Director of Engagement here at the Harbert College of Business and she points out that understanding the difference between where you’ve come from and where you’re going is vital.

S. Ullmann: Some of the differences that you will find between college and the work environment are, first of all, college is a very highly structured curriculum. You’ll have lots of programs with very specific and frequent direction given to you. You’ll find in the workplace that you have a relatively unstructured environment and you’ll be given tasks with little direction. So you have to find the direction and define that yourself.

Voiceover: In addition to the fact that your time and scheduling may not be as flexible, you’ll find that the focal point has shifted away from you as an individual and more towards the team that you’re now a part of.

S. Ullmann: You will have a lot of time in college where you focus on your personal development and growth, whereas in the work environment you have a lot of focus on getting results for the organizations.

Voiceover: So let’s talk first impressions. Are they really as important as we’ve been led to believe?

S. Ullmann: The first impression that you make is often the last impression that you will make. You hear many times that “first impressions are lasting,” that is so very true. Everything you do is going to be magnified. Especially when you are the new employee, all eyes are going to be on you. So you want to build a positive professional reputation from the very beginning. You want your coworkers to notice your professionalism, your maturity, your teamwork, your people skills. So don’t be phony when you show up, don’t try to be something you’re not. Be yourself and be your most professional self.

Voiceover: And while it’s easy to get caught up mastering the skill or tasks involved with your work, you can’t forget to get involved to what’s going on around you.

S. Ullmann: Start to build effective relationships in your new job. Pay attention to how people in your workplace communicate with each other and how they work together and find ways within those communication styles to fit in with your co-workers. Teamwork is going to be so important in the workplace and so the more cohesive your team is, the better efforts that will come out of your working together.

Voiceover: Do be careful to stay within certain boundaries though when it comes to the “being friendly” side of things.

S. Ullmann: Something to keep in mind is that you don't ever want to be chummy or too overly familiar with your boss. Always keep the relationship with your boss at a very professional level while at the same time fitting in and getting to know your coworkers.

Voiceover: And here's an interesting thought: while going into a new job may seem like the time to show off how experienced or talented you are, this is actually the time to show off a skill of a different kind.

S. Ullmann: Be a good listener. It's important for us, sometimes, for the people we work with to hear the things that we say. We want to make sure that we get our point across, but it's even more important that we learn to listen and listen to what people say. We learn from the people around us, especially starting a new position. There are people that have been in the industry, in the company for a long time and there's a lot of wisdom there.

Voiceover: So in terms of planning now for the career ahead of you, we've got a few simple steps that will help you think beyond the first day, week or even year.

S. Ullmann: Four things to keep in mind that are the top ways to manage your career. First of all, you want to learn from others. The best way to do that is find a mentor. Secondly, develop a career plan. What is it that you want to be doing five years from now, ten years from now and establish goals on how you're going to get there. Be successful on your job and that is working hard, being a member of the team. And be aware, lastly, of additional educational opportunities. Learn and experience all the good things that are available to you to help make you a better professional.

Voiceover: This is a lot to balance so don't be afraid to ask questions, learn from those around you and keep realistic expectations. And remember, no matter how much you may wish it were the case, there's no way to plan for everything.

S. Ullmann: Always expect the unexpected, meaning be flexible. There are many things that you will find about your job that are not ever what you expected them to be. So we have to learn to be flexible and take things as they come at us. We're going to be expected to work hard, work hard often and appreciate the accolades at the times that they come.

Voiceover: And that sums up not just surviving, but thriving in a new job. If you've got questions or need suggestions on anything we've talked about today, stop by Lowder 101. Seminars that cover this very topic are always available and that idea of seeking out those with more insight and experience starts now. Thanks so much to Mrs. Ullmann for spending time with us here today and I'll be back with you next time here on the OPCD podcast. Have a great week and I'll see ya then!