

In a Fox Cities MINUTE

Tips for Success

To be sought out and sought after, that is the dream of a jobseeker. To be recruited into a lucrative position, that is the victory of a good reputation.

Then comes the first day on the job, and it's time to get to work.

In today's market, the buzz is about creating a workplace aura of being cool and attractive to young workers. But the flip side is that once a jobseeker becomes a jobholder, they accept not only a paycheck, but the responsibilities and parameters of both the position and the corporate culture.

In a conversation with Monica Vomastic, president of Landmark Staffing Resources, Inc., several points of advice surfaced that she indicated were based on comments coming from clients and local employers. The tips are suggestions intended to help young workers understand and be successful in the workplace. If an employee is uncertain about internal protocol or expectations, the best place to turn is the individual's immediate supervisor.

- The adage "dress for success" is good advice. While guidelines in the workplace may have relaxed greatly, there will always be appropriate attire for the job at hand. In addition, personal appearance can help you make a positive impression. It may be a good idea to inquire in advance about guidelines for piercings, jewelry, facial hair, and other grooming considerations. Accepting a job with a company means you have accepted their dress code standards.
- Ask for clarification not only on the duties of the position, but also the hours you are expected to be at work. While workers may value flexible hours, customers seeking solutions still expect prompt service. The important thing is that your responsibilities are covered at all times, and that you are available and willing to help your team.
- Follow guidelines when requesting time off. Your absence affects workflow, and consideration should be given to how work gets done in your absence. Plan ahead; asking for time off isn't always a given.
- Whether your firm provides one or not, consider teaming up with a mentor. Learn not only procedures and problem solving skills, but also that individual's strategies to succeed and advance in the workplace. Once you become more experienced and knowledgeable, consider exercising your leadership skills by guiding a newer employee.

Breaking Out of the Silo

By Kathy Coopman Voigt, Editor

Kristin Hundertmark is a boomerang, but she's one boomerang who knows how to work it. When she returned to the Fox Cities and started a new job, her employer suggested she hook up with Pulse, the Fox Cities Young Professionals Network, to meet others her age and learn about the community. She took that advice and attended an event where she was personally greeted and introduced to other participants. She's been attending Pulse events ever since, even after changing jobs. She's now with Coalesce Marketing and Design.

Kristin is exemplary of a young worker new to the area, looking to meet peers in similar circumstances and others who already know the ropes of the job market and the community.

New to the professional marketplace and the adult social scene, these young workers are tentative about attending events for the first time, and appreciate a welcoming hand. Once they lay the base for a network, they gain confidence and eventually reach out to welcome others.

"Pulse has a great opportunity to reach out to people who are new here," says Clarissa Wells-McNamara of The Post-Crescent, "and to make them feel welcome." The fact that such young professionals networks exist in Wisconsin is a great worker attraction tool for the state, she adds. "It helps (young workers) see value in places like the Fox Valley. They don't see this as a 'big woods' kind of place. Pulse kind of helps them break through that initial impression, which is difficult if you don't know the ropes."

A variation of this worker type is one who joins a large organization and gains an instant network of peers and some level of internal networking. But experience shows that unless these young people branch out beyond the corporate culture, they will eventually leave not only the organization but also the community, as they fail to establish roots.

Joining Pulse is the next step for these workers, who seek a broader experience and more activity outside of the workplace. They are fed not only by a more varied social network, but also by professional development opportunities outside of their field. Interestingly, these new acquaintances serve as new career bench markers.

"Seeing what others are doing is a good gauge of where you are in your career," Hundertmark says. "It gives you perspective on where you could be."

Brent Schuettpezel of Fox Valley Technical College, took what he learned through outside contacts back to his workplace to help him grow within the organization. "It helps you break out of the silo. It pushes me to a higher position and beyond what I am doing now," he says. "It taught me to work more like an entrepreneur within the college. It was more of a real world experience."

If young workers have strong support systems and feel challenged, they are more likely to stay in this community, says Heather Vander Heyden of Fox Communities Credit Union. "If they know about Pulse and join, we are more likely to retain them," she explains. "If they stay in the same clique of people they work with, they won't stay around." Wells -

McNamara adds that "seeing the informal activities like the Search for Perch reinforced the social aspect of Pulse. But we will only retain them with the professional aspect."

Kristy Zach of Time Warner Cable cites last year's CEO forum event for offering access to business leaders who have achieved more advanced levels of success and esteem and who openly shared their strategies and values with the young workers.

The organizations that sponsor Pulse view their fee as an investment in attracting talent to the area, and keeping these workers engaged here. And, says Schuettpezel, they aren't necessarily looking for a bottom line impact. Rather, they are engaged as partners in undertakings that have positive impact on the local economy and the community. "There's maybe not a direct benefit to us as a college," he explains, "but it helps the community and that helps us extend our reach in the community. If we are not partnering with economic development efforts in the community, we are not going to do well. Our organizations take a leap of faith to build a better community."

"Our company is already engaged," says Vander Heyden. "This group is a target audience for Fox Communities. We help them learn about managing their finances, buying their first house. We help them get established in their lives.

Hopefully they will stay here in the Fox Valley."

Pulse committee chairperson Kip Golden of Keller, Inc. sees a direct payoff for his firm. "Young professionals are the ones who will someday be the presidents and CEOs of our local businesses and in turn will be responsible for keeping the Fox Cities economy growing. A growing economy means more building projects which helps Keller and all businesses for that matter. I feel Pulse will help in retaining and attracting this young talent by connecting them with others in the community and also by helping them learn what it takes to be the leaders in business and our community as a whole."

"We have had a good experience with bringing in more professional development along with personal development, and we intend to get more involved with other young professionals groups in the New North.

"I think we have a great group on the steering committee. There's more of an energy now. They're taking more responsibility, helping to plan events and come up with ideas. Personally, I wanted to help direct where we were going, and taking a leadership role on the committee was one way to do that. I believe strongly in what Pulse stands for and what we are trying to do."

For those who stay or who are planted, Pulse is an entrée that feeds their

professional need to grow. "It's like an internship for networking," says Schuettpezel, "an internship for working with people. So when your boss wants to give you a new responsibility, you can do it because you have had a chance to try out how to do it" and learned from those who are more experienced.

Pulse is a springboard to a higher level of involvement in the Chamber, too, the young leaders attest. Their expanding circles of associates in the business community draw them into the larger business community and encourage a greater involvement on committees and at events.

In terms of their own professional development, these Pulse leaders are looking to the organization to develop a mentoring network to connect them one on one with more experienced business leaders, reflecting what some businesses are already doing for their promising young executives.

"Some of the idea for enhancing the group is getting an ambassador group off the ground," says Zach. "We'd like to see a mentoring program where we could get Chamber members involved in working with Pulse members who want to advance so you don't have to go it alone."

Hundertmark and Schuettpezel were chosen to represent their employers, who sponsor Pulse. **END**



Kristin Hundertmark



Brent Schuettpezel

Kristine Zach

Kip Golden

Heather Vander Heyden