

# ***PART I***

## ***Making the Transition from Education to Work***



## Leaving School, TAFE or University

**"Education is what you learn after leaving school" – Robert Kiyosaki**

Kiyosaki is making the point that the grade on your certificate that you received when leaving formal education is not a passport for life. It doesn't entitle you to anything other than the ability to open a few doors.

Whether these doors lead to a brilliant career or a miserable existence is pretty much up to you now.

You may think that because you have poor ranking on your school certificate, your whole life is marked by that result. Not true. The truth is that a poor school result will only hold you back from reaching your capabilities if you let it.

Also, if you are under the illusion that a great score on your certificate has set you up for life, think again.

You need to know the rules in this new landscape.

The good news is that if you got good grades, you will probably pick up these rules quickly.

What you become in your working life, and especially how happy you are at work, is entirely a result of what you do after school.

Let's discuss what has changed in your new work landscape.

### From Educational Institution to Work

Whether it's leaving school or university or college the challenge for you is the same.

Your formal schooling is over, now you are beginning an education about work and life.

You are in a different game where the object is to make a living. So what's changed?

- There is no curriculum to follow. No longer do you have teachers or schoolmates to help you with your development. It's all on you now to decide where you want to go.
- No longer is anyone watching to make sure you don't fall too far behind in your goals. Falling behind? Not happy you have to do everything for yourself? Too bad.
- Forget about your educational qualifications. It's all about business results now.
- Forget about people being polite and encouraging. You are going to have to deal with criticism (fair and unfair) and some of the rudest people you will ever meet - sometimes called the general public.
- Forget about timetables. Your boss now has a claim on your time 24/7.
- Forget about getting a chance to redo your homework and correct your mistakes. You'll be judged on your first effort, so better make it good.
- Forget about being friends with your workmates forever. You're at work to get the job done, and although working in a team is important, friendship is optional.
- Forget about fairness.

# ***PHEW!!!***

*You'll probably have figured out by now that you have just had a whole load of responsibility thrown on your shoulders.*

## ***UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?***

*Then read on to find out the stuff you need to know about starting work, and discover that there are huge rewards out there - if you learn the ropes and find out the things that maybe they didn't teach you at school.*





## Education grades – important but not life threatening

You'll have worked out by now that people are different. Right?

Some people do well at school where much of the “education” is spoon fed, basically using memory to get them through their schoolwork. A good memory that gets you through exams is among the LAST things an employer is looking for!!

Worklife is not about using your memory, so these people will need to learn new skills. Fast.

Others may do well at university where you are expected to be more independent, and are left more to your own devices. These people might love the thrill of finding things for themselves and that is a skill you will certainly need at work.

That's why on average the lifetime earnings in Australia are as follows:

- \$1.7M if you drop out of high school
- \$2.1M if you finish grade 12
- \$2.4M if you reach diploma
- \$2.4M if you get a degree
- \$3.2M if you get a post graduate qualification

You need to know that NONE of the above figures are guaranteed because you have the qualification. It's because on average the people who get these qualifications have learnt the skills that are valuable to an employer.

You'll find the skills an employer is willing to pay for in these pages.

Others will start work after leaving school and have heaps of enthusiasm and optimism to learn everything about their new job. Their enthusiasm may lead them to see an opportunity to become a small business owner. They may have no formal qualifications – but they will have learnt the skill of turning their effort into something of value, perhaps without the academic knowledge.

Others will leave school and methodically work their way up the company ladder to become a leader or supervisor. Most people do this by “step by step” progression. How much quicker would they move up the ladder if they knew the rules sooner? Others are late developers, maybe without high educational qualifications, but go on achieve great success by being really interested in what they are working at, perhaps returning to formal education or other self-improvement techniques.

It might surprise you to know that work and happiness are NOT opposites.

Some people actually love their work (although they might never admit it).

It's true that whatever you achieve at work surely the most important thing is to be happy at work. You are going to spend a lot of your time at work, so better make the most of it.

Some people are happy in relatively low paid but very meaningful jobs; others are miserable in highly paid but highly stressful jobs.

Whatever formal educational level you have reached, this book will help you achieve your potential at work, and hopefully lead you to the job that makes you feel rewarded and gives meaning to your work day.

Too many school leavers believe that their SAT/OP marks have determined their course in life for the next 30 years. That is certainly not the view of the members of my Rotary club.

In this book you'll find true stories from our Rotary club members.

Here's Fred's story:

- Left school with no qualifications
- Joined the Army by mistake
- Discovered that he had a passion for sport and fitness
- Left the forces
- Bluffed his way into his first job
- Found that competition not so tough
- Became regional manager
- Became CEO





## Think you are ready for work?

Maybe you have had some work experience and think you have this whole work thing worked out?

Or maybe you are saying to yourself “Let’s see what happens.”

But the fact that you are reading this says that at least you have the curiosity and the drive to improve yourself – which is a fundamental skill you’ll need for life.

Because the facts say that you are NOT ready for work, and I hope this book will not only show you the ropes and get you ready for work, but will inspire you to achieve your dreams, and to find that role in life that makes you happy, and gives you a sense of worth.

In a 2015 survey by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, students and employers clearly didn’t see eye to eye on how well prepared the students were for work.

Where did the employers say that students were not ready?

In oral communication (“ie. talking and listening”), 62% of students thought they were pretty good at communication. Unfortunately only 28% of employers thought they were “OK”.

So more than 6 out of 10 students thought they were doing a good job of talking / listening to bosses, customers or co-workers – and they were wrong!

Students are not dumb, so something is going on here. I suggest that the problem is the one mentioned earlier between education and business expectations. There’s a journey to be had between your formal education and being excellent at work.



Here's some statistics to prove it:

- Working with numbers and statistics. 55% of students thought they were OK, bosses thought only 28% were OK.

So even in areas where you would think students who have spent years doing math would be able to do work calculations, there is something missing.

- Teamwork is an important part of work. Few jobs get done in the workplace without some involvement from another person. Did the students think they worked well in a team?

Sure 64% of students thought they were OK, and were working well with their co-workers. What did the bosses think? They said only 37% were OK.

- What about applying that knowledge and skills that the students had learnt to the real world? Again nearly 60% of students thought they were OK at applying what they had learnt at school to work.

The bosses thought about 1 in 4 or 23% were able to apply what they had learnt at school. Say what? Only 1 in 4 students (of the ones who thought they were doing OK) were actually making the grade!

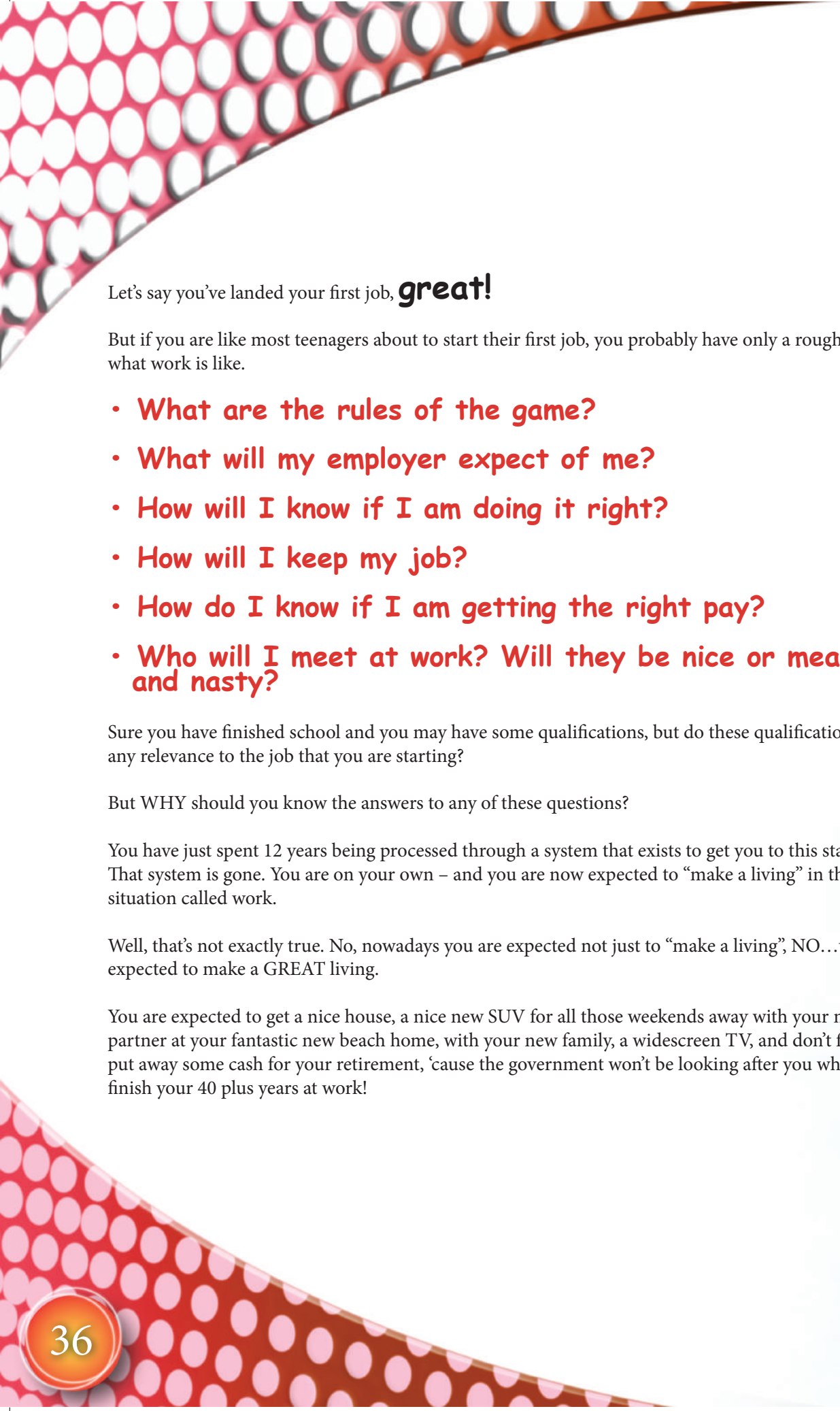
So this does not include the ones who accepted that they needed some more training.

- What about helping the boss analyse and solve complex problems? Maybe the students and bosses could agree on this? Nope.

About 6 in 10 or 59% of students thought they were OK, bosses thought only 1 in 4 or 24%. Again only 1 in 4 of the students who thought they were doing OK was up to the task.

In almost every case the students thought they were better prepared than they really were: for the most part students thought they were OK or better, but the employer said they weren't: Unfortunately, the employer is always right! No "ifs or buts."





Let's say you've landed your first job, **great!**

But if you are like most teenagers about to start their first job, you probably have only a rough idea of what work is like.

- **What are the rules of the game?**
- **What will my employer expect of me?**
- **How will I know if I am doing it right?**
- **How will I keep my job?**
- **How do I know if I am getting the right pay?**
- **Who will I meet at work? Will they be nice or mean and nasty?**

Sure you have finished school and you may have some qualifications, but do these qualifications have any relevance to the job that you are starting?

But WHY should you know the answers to any of these questions?

You have just spent 12 years being processed through a system that exists to get you to this stage. That system is gone. You are on your own – and you are now expected to “make a living” in this new situation called work.

Well, that's not exactly true. No, nowadays you are expected not just to “make a living”, NO...you are expected to make a GREAT living.

You are expected to get a nice house, a nice new SUV for all those weekends away with your new partner at your fantastic new beach home, with your new family, a widescreen TV, and don't forget to put away some cash for your retirement, 'cause the government won't be looking after you when you finish your 40 plus years at work!

# Sound familiar?

For most of us, the only way you are going to get a decent living is through hard work.

Later we'll see what work means, and what are the rules of the new game.

For now, let's think about the changes that are continuing to occur at work, and how these changes will accelerate in your work career.



## Just what is work and how has it changed since mum and dad's time?

Going back a few centuries to the 4th century BC, Aristotle believed that only slaves and animals should have to work. The thinking at that time was that life was for leisure, and provided you had food and shelter, you could go about more enjoyable pursuits such as sport, painting, travelling etc.

Then for about 2,000 years people lived and worked on farms and in small villages. Work was carried out privately in the home or village with little significant change.

Fast-forward over 2,000 years to the industrial revolution.

Public work (i.e. work in factories, offices etc.) has replaced work at home, and farms have become huge food growing factories with few farm workers looking after large farms.

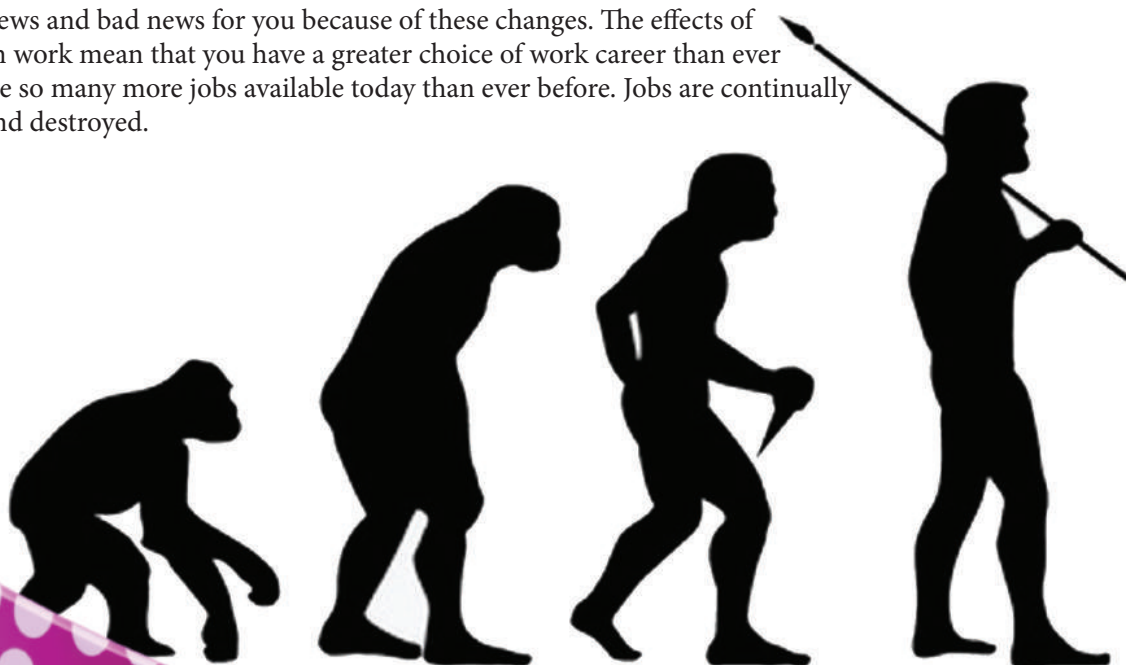
In other words where people used to work to feed and clothe themselves, we now work in ways that have nothing to do with providing the basics of life. (Food, water, shelter)

In today's office, you will see people clicking keyboards, attending meetings, chatting in "break out" rooms, making conference calls, adjusting their workstations, posting things on the net, checking out their Facebook accounts etc. etc. Sometimes it's hard to see how their work activities are generating value in their job. (More about value adding later in the book.)

The very nature of work has changed. As Elaine Glaser says in "Get Real" (2012)

**"Work is surreal. So many jobs are unrelated to the specifics of sustaining life."**

There is good news and bad news for you because of these changes. The effects of these changes in work mean that you have a greater choice of work career than ever before. There are so many more jobs available today than ever before. Jobs are continually being created and destroyed.





It's good because IF you can work out what you are good at, then the chances are you can work in an area where you are best suited and which might bring you the most rewards and happiness.

It could be bad because it translates into more pressure on you to find your “dream job”.

There is a trend nowadays for people to switch jobs and careers more than 5 times in their life, in search of something better. This change is brought about either because the person is unhappy in their job, or because the job they had has disappeared.

Whatever the reason, the lesson for you is that you need to be ready to make the change, preferably on your terms. This means that you have to gather the resources and skills to make the move while you are still in work.

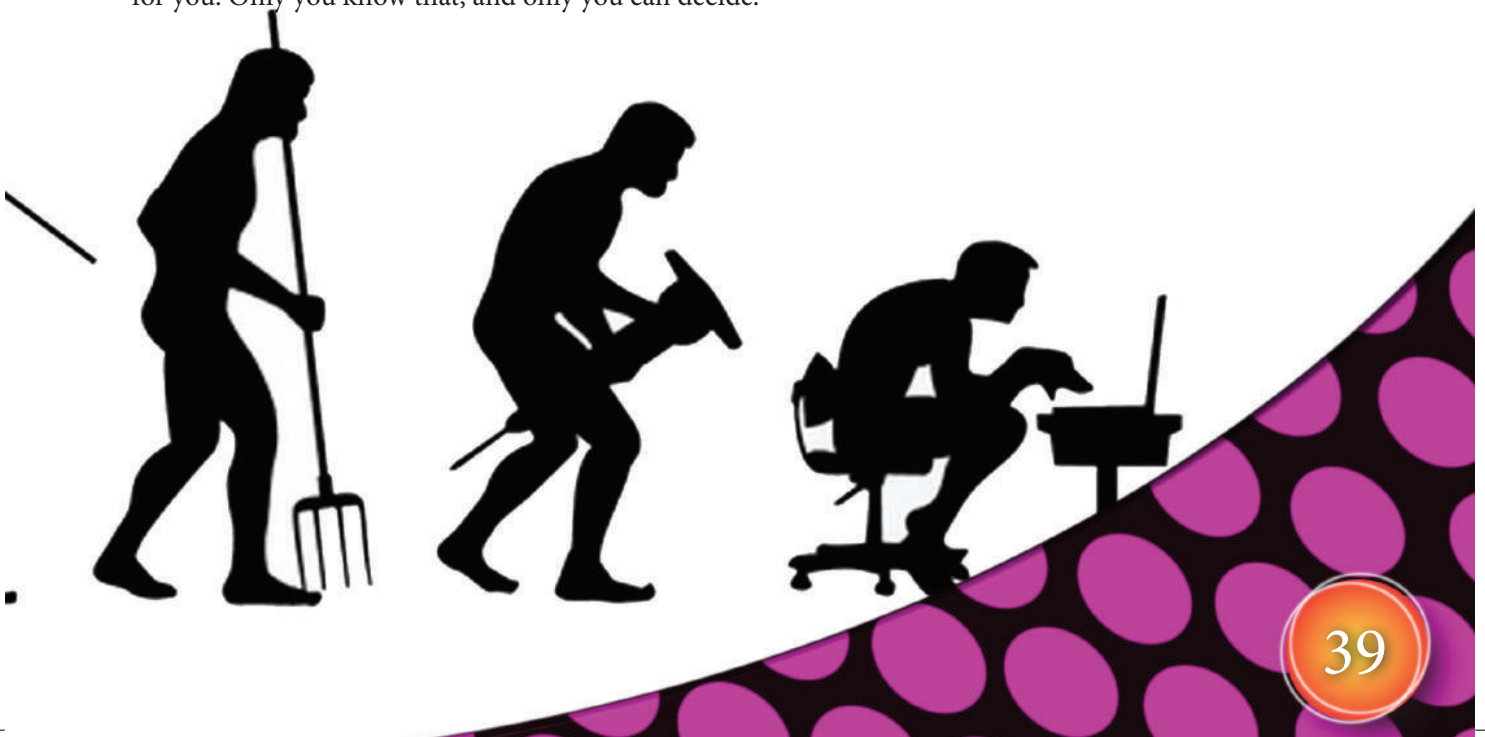
When your mum left school the career options were pretty much limited to being a teacher, secretary, nurse, hairdresser, or stay at home mum. Now there's greater opportunity in terms of numbers of different careers, but there is also added pressure to find the “right career”.

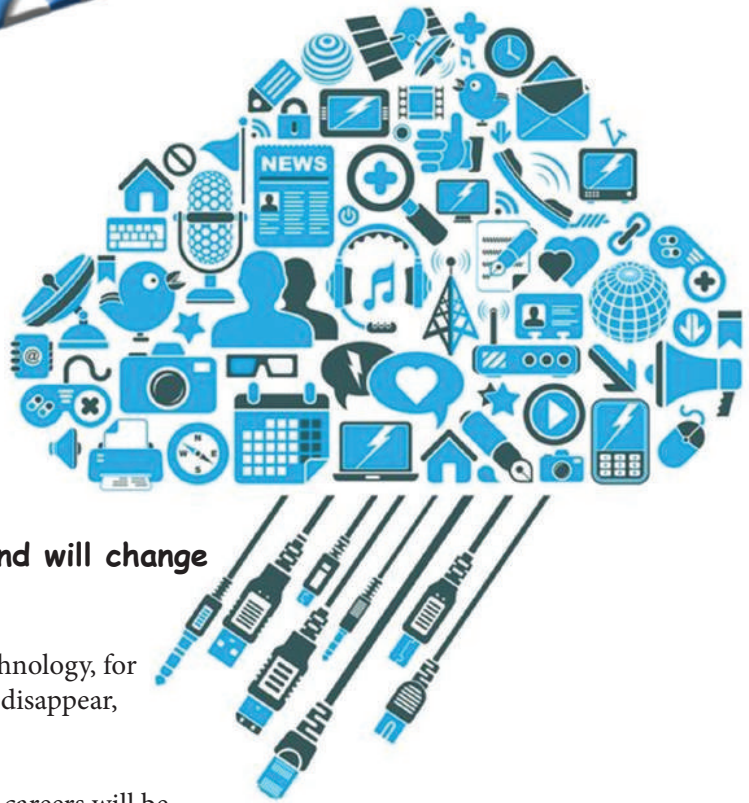
Not only to work, have kids, get ahead, but you are also expected to be happy at work and live the dream – while keeping your mobile on 24 hours, in case the boss wants a chat.

So maybe you've avoided the “work” question for a few years by going to university? Great. That means that you can make your career choice later, but there's absolutely no evidence that graduates are any better prepared for work than school leavers.

This could be because there is so much choice, or because technology is changing jobs, but mostly it is extremely difficult to know what you want from work without having all the information.

This book will help you do well at whatever you decide to do, but it won't tell you what career is best for you. Only you know that, and only you can decide.





## **How technology changed work, and will change YOUR work and life**

Some of these changes will be driven by technology, for example: working from home, old jobs will disappear, new jobs will be created.

Some of the changes will be cultural: Fewer careers will be involved in “making things”, more jobs will be in servicing others, and providing specialist services.

All the changes will affect you socially. You will need to be adaptable, and will probably have several job changes in your working life.

## **John's work experience**

About 40 years ago I started my first “career” job in an engineering office. On my first day the receptionist took me through to see the engineering manager. On the way, I passed by the telex room with the telex operators inside, through to the project office where two comptometers were calculating the quantities and costs for the engineers, and past the drawing office where the draftsmen were transposing Letraset to project drawings.

All of the jobs that I passed by on that first morning at the engineering office have now disappeared. Gone.

Technology was supposed to reduce our working hours. In 1930 economists were predicting a 15 hour week by the year 2000.

What happened? People are now actually working longer.

And of course technology has made it possible for the boss to stay in touch with employees 24/7.

So even when you are not in the factory or shop or the office, even if you are on holidays - you can be “at work” and on call to the boss.

In Madeline Bunting's Book *Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our lives* she says that technology has invaded your previous leisure time, effectively increasing your working hours. So instead of technology reducing our working life, it has actually increased it!!

**But changes in the workplace go deeper.**





## **How work has stolen your leisure and your identity**

**"The blurring of work and leisure is complete"** Elaine Glaser

Not only careers have changed, but the WAY we do work has changed in the last 30 years. Your mum or dad's work was relatively straightforward by comparison with what you are about to experience.

In their day most people went to work at a fixed time, and finished work at a fixed time. Most blue collar workers generally had the view that you could work for the same employer for your whole working life.

That's not true anymore, and we'll explain the differences through this book.

Work is changing and in 30 years time will be unrecognisable.

As you enter the work stream, you are starting off on a journey where the difference between work and leisure is becoming blurred, even in relatively junior jobs. Right now, you probably see the difference between work and play as clear as black and white. And a few years ago it was. But with the increase in technology, things have changed.

Would it surprise you to know that 33% of Americans don't use up their holiday entitlements! So people are now either enjoying their work so much (or scared of losing their job) that they are not taking holidays that they are entitled to!

Don't assume that people don't take holidays because people are scared of losing their job. There is very little evidence of this. People may say that but the bosses spend much of their time telling their workers to go on holiday, strange as that may seem.

This is because the other change in work is that it has become more social. Nowadays, work is has subtly become part of your identity. Now you are NOT described as a worker, rather you are a team member and you are part of a crew, or team, not a distant, faceless company.

What could be better than heading off each day to your place of work to help out your teammates!

Employers (and employees) have created an inverted reality when work is marketed as being more pleasurable than leisure time. What could be nicer than hanging out with the team after hours, eating pizza, and kicking around a few (work) ideas on how to improve the business?

(This is a particular problem for young mums, because dad would rather stay at the cosy air-conditioned workplace after normal work hours while mum feeds and then puts the kids to bed. Only then dad can come home to peace and quiet!!)

When modern companies like Google set up ping-pong and leisure areas, these are to lure the employee to staying at work. To make it more attractive to stay rather than go at knock off time. So why not stay at work for longer, when the choice is a home journey to an empty nest or crying kids?

Here's a last example on how much work has changed since Aristotle's time.

In 2010 a coalition of British unions organised a campaign, under the slogan "The Right to Work". This was in response to massive public sector cuts. But at a deeper level, what it shows is that everyone wants work, craves it, not just for the dollars, but because it provides so many of our social needs and gives us a sense of who we are.





## What does this mean for my worklife?

It means you need to learn to love your job, because it's going to be a large part of what you are.

Your work and your job will influence how your friends will judge you. It will determine who your friends are, what company you keep - it may also influence who your life partner will be. Many people marry someone they have met through work.

Your job will also determine what doors will be opened for you, what opportunities you will have in life, what experiences, countries you will visit, the kind of home you will have, the education that your children will receive, and ultimately how long you will live for. (Shift workers have shorter life expectancies than day workers, and there are other examples of work choice influencing your lifespan.)

It is no exaggeration to say that to a large extent, your happiness in life is strongly influenced by your job.

A very wise man said:

**CHOOSE A**  
**JOB YOU** **LOVE**  
**and you will**  
**NEVER** **have to**  
**WORK**  
**another day.**



## Work experience examples

Let's see what happens at two work experience situations.

Most students turn up for work experience full of enthusiasm and generally this happens:

### Student 1

Arrives keen to start. The employer is unprepared for you. Some work crisis has developed overnight requiring the employer's immediate attention.

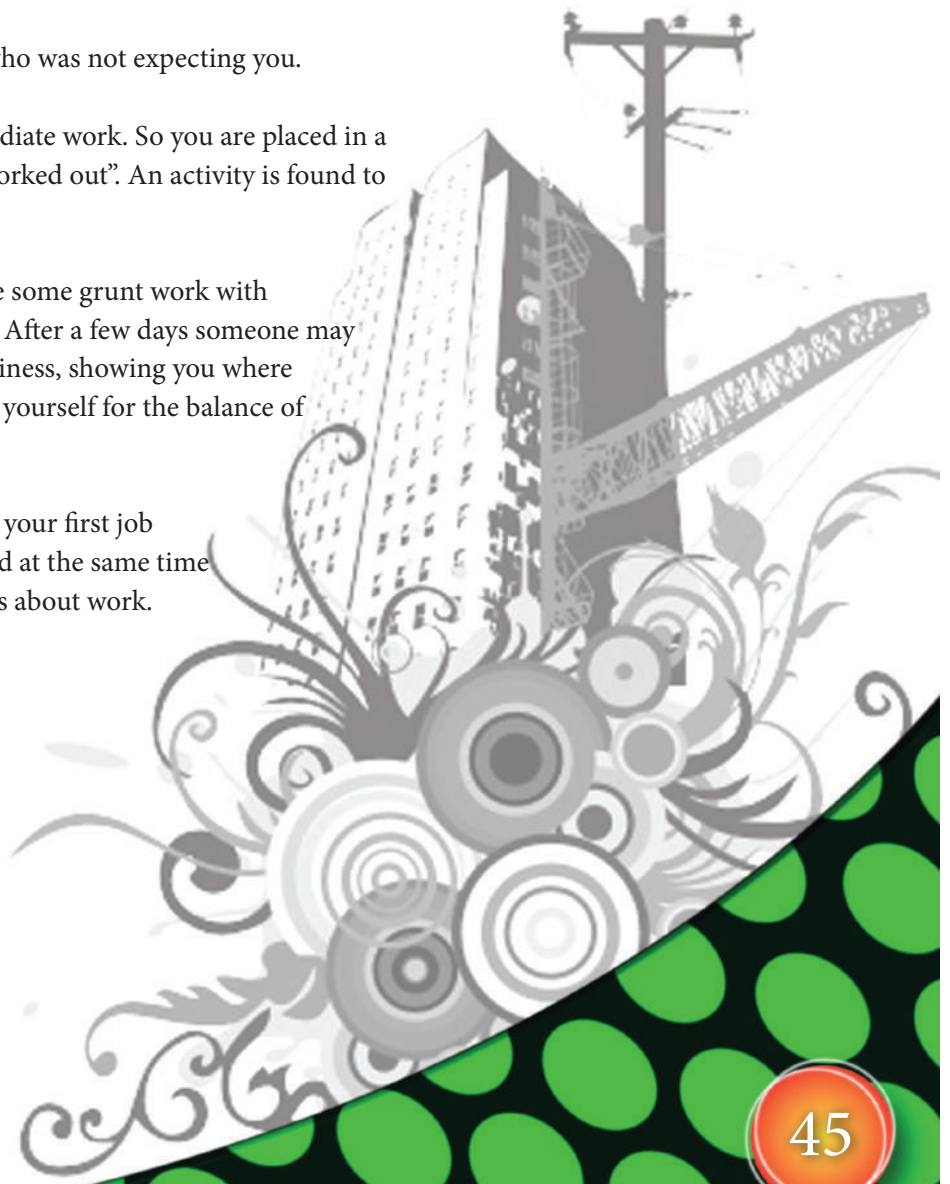
You are shuffled off to someone who was not expecting you.

Consequently they have no immediate work. So you are placed in a backroom, while "something is worked out". An activity is found to keep you busy.

Generally this activity will involve some grunt work with repetition and hours of boredom. After a few days someone may give you an orientation of the business, showing you where things are. You are left to fend for yourself for the balance of the work experience period.

So you will be looking forward to your first job hoping that it will be different, and at the same time harbouring some negative feelings about work.

The student is left deflated.





## Student 2

Arrives keen to start. The employer is expecting you and you go off straightaway to induction and orientation. Your supervisor picks you up after induction. The group you are going to work with is expecting you, and has some tasks to get you started. If it was “good” work experience you will have been given really meaningful tasks, and an explanation on how these tasks contribute to the business.

You may have been mentored by an enthusiastic co-worker and be able to look back on your work experience with a sense of achievement and pride in what you have achieved.

You will be feeling positive about your abilities and your worth and be looking forward to entering the workforce.

Unfortunately more work experiences will be like Student 1, not Student 2.

For most students work experience can be a “tick the box” exercise for them and for the boss. Both you and the boss are just doing the minimum to get it over with.

This work experience may leave you with feelings of confusion about work, perhaps the experience has caused you to question your abilities, maybe left you with feelings of worthlessness, blaming yourself for the bad experience, not having the skills to contribute, perhaps thinking you have been used as cheap labour, or that work is not meaningful or rewarding.

The experience of students in work experience is important, and it is a concern that so often it is disappointing. Especially when it is recognised that a student’s initial work experience often influences future expectations.

If a student enters a workplace and during the work experience program is not nurtured, or worse, is exposed to bad work habits, then it is only natural that the student will see these behaviours as the norm, and continue them in later working life.

As a footnote, as recently as 1st and 2nd of December 2015 the Australian Parliament debated the value of the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that are largely responsible for providing work experience and training for first time workers.

Politicians are very disappointed in the results that these training schemes provide to their clients i.e. YOU in terms of sustainable results. The allegations of “cheap labour” and “meaningless work” continually surface in these situations. So politicians are looking for ways to improve your experience, because they recognise how important the early stages of work are in setting future directions.

### **So what can you expect from your early work career?**

Good news and bad news.

Blue collar workers who had no career aspirations starting work before the 1990s had an expectation that they would stay with that employer for their entire working life.

This had a number of implications for new starters at that time.

Employers had more time for training. You were expected to learn mostly on the job in the employer's time, usually from your co-workers. You would be gradually exposed to tasks that the business required. You would not be expected to contribute to the business profitability in any meaningful way, until your training was complete.

Nowadays employers are under pressure to keep labour costs down. For new starters this is doubly bad news.

Firstly, your productivity is expected to generate profits for the business quickly.

Secondly, training is often regarded as an overhead, a cost to be cut when times are hard. So any training you receive to achieve improved productivity is likely to be minimal, or regarded as your responsibility.

The boss is likely to be finding it more and more difficult to keep his business going and he needs all the help he can get. The boss will be looking for employees who can cover their wages as quickly as possible.

You are going to have to hit the ground running, and contribute to the business as soon as possible.

So you will need to be clear about the employer's expectations, and the important ways you can add value in your job. You'll need to know the questions to ask, the behaviours to show, and to demonstrate the attitude and communication skills that the employer expects.

**More on this later in Parts 2, 3 and 4.**





## How long will you be working?

If you think that work is a pain, here's more bad news: not only are workers at work for longer every day, but the length of time they work before retiring is getting longer too.

In terms of working hours:

“In the UK the number of people working more than 48 hours per week has doubled since 1998” (Get Real-Elaine Glaser)

So while there is much talk about the 40-hour or 36-hour week, in fact, people in full time employment are more likely to be working a 50-hour week.

In terms of years at work, that is also increasing. People are living longer, so they need to work longer. Even if you manage to save enough money to retire, you are likely to continue working, because of the social impact of work. That is because you are bored, lonely etc.

Basically you have been trained to work for over 40 years, and it's difficult to un-train yourself in your 60s.

The “official” retirement age in Australia will be 67 in 2023 and 70 in 2035. This is the age when you are eligible for the state pension, and is generally considered the proper retirement age.

Currently many people need to work after retirement age, usually for financial reasons.

Many more retirees have emotional difficulty in retiring because their identity is tied up with being at work.

So how long will you be working? For most people leaving school / university you will be working for over 45 years.

## What if you don't like your job?

Larry Winget is a famous work-life coach, describes himself as “the pitbull of personal coaches”. He prides himself on saying it like it is.

Larry doesn't pretend that there is an easy solution to improving yourself at work. His advice on work and happiness?

### **“If you don't like your job - QUIT”**

In reality many young people can't quit and so end up in jobs that will never make them happy. I'm a great believer in not burning your bridges. Unless your work is really bad, don't quit until you have another job to go to.

The sad fact is that if everyone who was unhappy at work were to quit, there wouldn't be many people left. Most people settle into a state of acceptance of work satisfaction.

Some unhappiness at work is inevitable. But if it gets too much, then prepare for the move and make the move as friendly as possible.

The important thing for a new starter at work is to know that the standard of acceptance of work conditions is usually set in the early years.

If a new starter is not shown how to enjoy work, not given good mentorship and practical help in their first steps in to the workplace, then it is likely that they will accept poor experiences as normal.

Worse, they may give up looking for the “perfect job” because they assume that “all jobs are like that”. The new starter then lowers their expectations - perhaps accepting a fairly ordinary work culture. But this need not be the case.

By applying some of the practices in this book, you will start off with high expectations, and achieve higher levels of work happiness.

**In summary, you will spend a long time at work, so it is better to be happy then time will go more quickly and you will achieve more. You will have a greater sense of satisfaction and you will probably earn more and have a healthier life.**

## How to love your work

Later I'll show you how to do your job well. However, doing a job well is not the same as being happy doing the job. It's not the whole picture.

You can be completing your work tasks tremendously well, but still not be happy and loving your work.

In his book *People Glue* Ian Hutchinson studied what makes people happy at work. He found that what makes us happy at work is a mix of 4 things:

- Personal relationships
- Work relationships
- Financial well being
- Meaningfulness

As each of us is unique, the importance of each of these 4 things will be different for each of us.

But to achieve enduring happiness at work you need to be attending to all of these things, as any one of them has the ability to cause work unhappiness.





## The Work Situation

### Work relationships and process

At school and university you probably experienced a situation where you had the right result, but got it the wrong way, or didn't show your workings.

Results are important at work. But just as important is HOW you get those results.

Generally there are two sides to any task.

1. The result
2. How you get the result

Why is HOW you get the result as important as the result?

Think about this situation with the boss. He needs someone to run an errand to get a parcel. He needs it done urgently.

1. He can just order the receptionist to do it. "Forget what you are doing at present," he says, "drop everything and hurry up about it."

The receptionist runs the errand. But how do you think she feels about her work before and after this conversation with the boss?

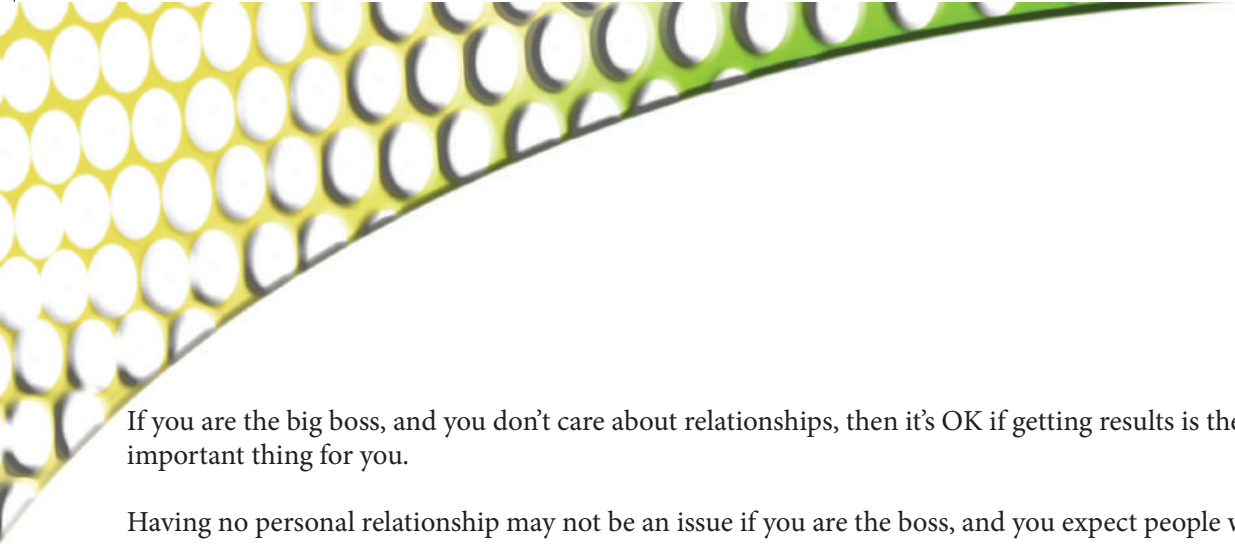
2. Or he can have a chat with the receptionist, explaining what he needs done, and why it is important. The receptionist offers to drop everything and get onto it straightaway.

How do you think the receptionist feels about her boss and her work now?

The result is the same. The boss gets the parcel. But the outcomes are very different.

In the first situation, the boss has lost the respect of the receptionist, and will probably pay for this at some later situation. In the second situation, the receptionist feels the boss respects and listened to her. She gives some loyalty to the boss in exchange for this consideration. The boss will get the benefit of this later.

At work you will almost certainly be working with bosses and co-workers. You'll be part of many teams, some small as two, some much larger, whether it's called a team or not.



If you are the big boss, and you don't care about relationships, then it's OK if getting results is the most important thing for you.

Having no personal relationship may not be an issue if you are the boss, and you expect people will always do what you tell them.

If you ignore the value of relationships, it's not without issues though, and it's not unheard of for employees to follow the unfeeling boss's instructions blindly, even when they know it will lead to disaster!

But for the rest of us mere mortals, the way we get things done can be just as important as getting results. This is crucially different from the school achievement process where you achieve much on your own, or in an artificial team environment.

As a student you have probably collaborated as a team or with co-workers on school projects and the like. This has given you some experience of working with people to achieve outcomes. Did you realise when you were doing these team exercises that the result was important, but that the way you got the result even more important?

Because relationships with co-workers matter.

Even in this artificial "team" situation at school, you may have noticed some traits that will exist in the workplace. Here's a snapshot of the people who will be your team members:

### **The achiever/ leader**

*You are a results orientated person.*

*This is fine for simple or short tasks. Enthusiasts like to take over and get the results, without the involvement of others.*

*But generally team "work" tasks are not short or simple. So the achiever will probably have difficulties in relationships at work, especially if the achiever does all the work for the team. The achiever may be seen as overriding the feelings of others or of "not being a team player".*

*Also you can't shoulder all the work in the workplace - unless you want an early grave. So the achiever better learn some skills about teamwork, both as a contributor, as well as some tips on negotiation, delegation and communication to bring other team members along with you.*

## The bystander/ spectator

*At the other end, there are the lazy sods. Co-workers who are lazy usually find themselves frozen out, overlooked for more meaningful work, and generally lead very boring lives at work.*

*As a new starter, don't get upset with the lazy people you will find at work.*

*They are actually doing you a favour. You should be happy to find these people! They are leaving opportunities for you, and making you look good! They'll still be stuck in a rut with boring work when you are getting the meaningful work that keeps you engaged and happy.*

So in a real work situation, you will find that getting collaboration from team members and co-workers is a lot harder than for a school project.

You will be dealing with co-workers who:

- Have no interest in whether you succeed or not
- Are willing to help, but it's not a priority for them
- Prefer that you went away and left them alone
- Would be pleased to see you fail
- Want to steal any praise that you may be entitled to

If you as a new starter ignore how to achieve results, and don't care how to get results, then you'll soon be having difficult relationships with your co-workers.

Pay continual attention to your personal relationships at work. Being excellent at work means respecting relationships.







## **Professional and personal relationships in worklife**

At school or university your peers surrounded you. You are likely to have found some kindred souls to share similar issues and your growing pains.

At the workplace you may be the only new starter and you may find it difficult to establish rapport with others. There's no easy solution to this. Unless you establish some sort of personal connection at work, you will be unhappy.

Everyone should be professional at work. That way the work gets done effectively.

A common misunderstanding among new starters at work is their attitude to co-workers.

The natural inclination is to want your co-worker to be a friend, maybe a best friend. This is a carry over from school. But work is different. Your co-worker does not have to be your best friend, in fact it's probably better if he/she is not.

The trick with work is to find a happy balance in the relationship, without the entanglements of close friendships. Remember that one day you may have to instruct or discipline your co-worker. That is harder to do if friendship gets in the way.

Two possible workplace relationship scenarios you should be aware of:

### **New Starter 1**

Co-workers are helpful towards the new starter. They are patient, and supportive. You respond to this support by helping out in other ways that your co-workers appreciate. You are happy and look forward to work each day.

### **New Starter 2**

Co-workers are resentful of you and your new job. You receive little support from them. You are unsure of your allocated tasks. You are reluctant to ask for assistance and unsure where support resources are.

Scenario 2 is not uncommon, and there are helpful strategies discussed later.

## Rewards of Work

Research has shown that families argue most about money, or lack of it. You're not working for fun, and dollars are important.

Later I'll talk about budgeting and living within your means. But it's clear that if you are not getting paid what you think is the proper pay rate for your job, you are never going to be happy.

As a new starter you are likely to be on a low pay, so living within your means and budgeting are important. But so also is being aware of opportunities to earn more in the short and longer term.

In the short term, the ways for increasing your income are additional hours of work, or a second job.

In the longer term, maintaining your health, your choice of career and self-improvement are critical.

Some new starters will enter into careers that pay well in the early years, only to reduce later in life. These are generally careers where some sort of physical skill is required. sports, construction etc.

Other careers may not pay so well initially, but will provide greater financial support later in life where experience is required. medicine, law, etc.

## Meaningfulness

Unless you believe you are doing something meaningful at work happiness is going to elude you.

Employees who believe that they are doing meaningful work try 57% harder and 87% more likely to stay with an employer. (Corporate Leadership Council)

Meaningfully engaged employees

- Generate more income
- Give better service
- Promote the organisation
- Align their individual goals with business goals
- Create improvements at work
- Reduce risk for the business - identify potential problems
- Get less stressed - are less likely to get sick

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Meaning can come from a number of areas. Some people get meaning from the nature of the job itself. Perhaps the work is nursing, or helping the community and others in some way. Others may find meaning in their work by working for an organisation that helps the community, although their job may not be hands on. For example a secretary may get meaning in working for the Cancer Council as opposed to a law company.

Others may get meaning from recognition of their efforts. It may be very important to them to receive regular feedback from co-workers or the boss. Others may look for financial rewards to provide meaning.

## How many people actually love their work?

Ok we have covered a lot of information in this part; let's do a reality check and find out what the real world actually looks like.

A recent survey came up with the following figures for a number of businesses.

20% of employees are actively engaged

60% of employees are coasting at work. Could do better if pushed.

20% of employees are actively disengaged. They are toxic to their co-workers and the business.

So straightaway we know that the competition to do a good job is not so tough. Only 1 in 5 employees is doing their best to do a good job and get ahead.



That doesn't mean that the 20% actively engaged are happy at work. Most people don't think of themselves as happy at work. In fact, often the only time that people will say that they are happy is when faced with leaving through forced redundancy!

It's just not done to express any affection for your work (even if you do like it). It's accepted practice to complain about the job or the boss, rather than say that you really like your work.

The same survey investigated why people stay on their job:

1. Rewards
2. Job Fulfilment
3. Worklife Balance
4. Leadership - likes leaders
5. Purpose - organisation has purpose
6. Opportunity - feel hopeful and positive about their future
7. Relationships - open, positive, collaborative

The same survey looked at why people left their job:

- 90% of managers believe that people leave for more money - in fact only 12% leave for financial reasons
- Job dissatisfaction is biggest reason
- Loss of trust in leadership is also major reason

So we know from these studies that financial reward is not key, more of a satisfier. That is, it's not something that provides incentive or motivates.

A sincere and personally given "pat on the back" or recognition reward is more likely to motivate and keep employees in work.

The ideal job, mix of skills, challenge, meaning and reward will be different for every person. Think about your personality, and the things that motivate you – these things are important at work.

## Your first job and future jobs

**"The secret of getting ahead is getting started" Mark Twain**

Nowadays there are many common work careers that apply to many industries. This is a good thing for you - because if you decide to make a career as a secretary, accountant, mechanic, customer service manager, logistics officer, payroll officer, etc. then these types of jobs are readily transferable between companies and industries with very little re-training for you.

This is just as well, because most of today's school leavers will work for several different employers and probably have at least 3 and possibly many more careers in their work life.

So you can take some comfort from the fact that what you start off doing after you leave school is unlikely to be your final career.

Now let's look at what goes on within each job.

### Adding value

There is only one reason for the existence of a job, and that is to contribute to the value proposition of the business. Each job adds value. If a job does not create more value than the cost of a job, then it shouldn't exist. If it does exist without creating value, then it won't last.

As a new starter, you are likely to be in some sort of support role. You will likely be helping your supervisor complete a set of tasks. So you don't have to worry about whether your job is "valuable" or not, your task is simply to carry out your allotted tasks to the best of your ability.

Now some tasks in any job description are more value adding than others. These are sometimes called "critical tasks".

You need to understand what these critical tasks are, and make sure that - no matter what happens - they get done.

Other tasks will be not so important, maybe could be described by your boss as something he "wants" you to do, not necessarily something that you "must do".

Sometimes the "must do" tasks are menial. Critical doesn't mean **EXCITING** or even **INTERESTING**. It could be as menial as making sure the office is locked up at the end of work. This adds value because it reduces risk to the business of loss.

In the later example of a waiter. You will see that critical tasks are all about customer service, as there is a clear value minus if customers are not well looked after.

Even in work where you are not directly bringing in cash, your job will add value in some way. For example, it could be in reducing costs, maybe your job uses a lot of materials, and if your task allows you to reduce the amount of waste, then it can add value in that way. So value adding can be about cost reduction too.

Also value adding can be about doing things more quickly. For example, if you are a receptionist and your job is to pass on messages, you may be able to make better use of another employees' time by getting messages to them as soon as practical, so they can better organise their work.

And we know from experience that about 80% of the tasks will be boring and mundane, whereas 20% of the tasks will be adding value.

By now, I hope you appreciate that your job should not be measured simply as a cost to the company, but as a value adding stage.

But for now, let's evaluate what the job value adding needs to be to justify the job position. It's not simply the cost of your wages. It is a lot more.

Consider the cost of a poor employee providing bad service.

There is a relationship between the number of customers who will tell a friend about bad customer service, and the number who will tell a friend about good customer service. The ratio is about 22 to 1. In other words, a customer will tell 22 people about your bad service, and only tell one person if you give good service.

Hardly sounds fair, does it?

However, that's life. Deal with it, and be happy that your good customer service is avoiding 22 people getting a poor message about your business.

## Work Examples

### **Jill has landed her first office job.**

Jill has got a job as a trainee accounts clerk in a local office. She is delighted but is worried that she may not be able to do the work. At the interview they said that no experience was necessary, just a good head for numbers and a good attitude. This will be her first full time job.

It is a small office and is a family run business. Jill will be the first trainee they have taken on and the only young person in the office.

What things should Jill expect, and how can she do well in her new job?



### **Advice for Jill**

It's only natural to worry about a new job. Even the most experienced people have some concerns when they start a job. The good news is that she has the right attitude and is good with numbers.

The fact that it is a small family run business means that employees have to be flexible. This means that work will come up from time to time where Jill will be expected to help out, although it may not strictly be in her job description.

For example, she may be required to pick up the mail, or water the office plants, make the tea, things that have little to do with the accounts but a lot to do with helping the office run efficiently. So Jill should be on the look out for these little jobs where she can add more value than as a straight "trainee accounts clerk". This is what the interviewer meant by having the right attitude.

In regards to work relationships, working for a family business can be tricky. Often it is not clear who is the boss. For example, if it is a husband and wife team, Jill may find herself with two bosses, and she may have to juggle priorities.

Similarly it can be hard to maintain a professional relationship if family issues creep into day-to-day activities. So Jill will need to try hard to focus on the work to be done and not be drawn into family disagreements.

Also, being a small business, it is unlikely that there will be a formal training scheme, so Jill would be well advised to keep a notebook of work processes that she is taught. She should take these notes then go over them at night and then with whoever is training her, to confirm that she has understood her task.

### **What Jill should NOT do:**

- Be precious about doing accounts work only
- Make friends with members of the family
- Expect that the training will continue indefinitely. She should expect to be shown once, and understand what she has been taught
- Engage in any gossip about anyone associated with the company, including customers



### **Johnny has landed his first factory job**

Johnny has been taken on as a trainee operator at a local furniture factory. It's a big factory and they take on about three trainees every year. Johnny is good with his hands, but is not very academic and has trouble with complex calculations and is worried that he will not do well in this new job. He also has a standing commitment as a volunteer with the surf club and wants to keep that going while he works. He is worried that the company will mark him down if he is not available for overtime on the days he wants to do his volunteer work.

### **Advice for Johnny**

Again, it is quite normal to worry about being able to do the new job. Johnny should take some comfort from the fact that the company is used to trainees. So he should expect or ask for an outline of the training that he will receive.

He should also look out trainees who have been through the course and ask them how their training went and if they can give him any advice.

If the company has not given him a numeracy or literacy test at interview stage, then he should assume that he would be OK. Otherwise there will be opportunity to improve these skills during the training. If necessary Johnny may need some tutoring outside of work, and he should be prepared for this.

In regards to his voluntary work, if this has not come up at interview, he should try and bring it into conversation with his trainers, without expressing any view about overtime, which may or may not eventuate.

It's a good idea to maintain a positive attitude until any real difficulties arise.

### **What Johnny should not do:**

- Be concerned that he can't do the work
- Approach the trainer or any co-worker with restrictions on his work time
- Take each training day as it comes. He should have a clear view on the program and the expected outcome



## 1 Key Messages from Part 1

- ☐ You are going through a transition from education to work. Do it well by gathering help, such as this book and course.
- ☐ Your results from the education system are important, but they are by no means the whole story. Don't sit on your education results (good or bad).
- ☐ Your education should continue for the rest of your life.
- ☐ On average, an additional year at school will add \$1m to your life earnings.
- ☐ People make up these averages. Those who do better than average will be the late developers, and the self-improvers.
- ☐ Employers say about 75% of work starters are NOT ready for work. Chances are that means YOU. Get help.
- ☐ Work is important. It will have a huge impact on your lifestyle.
- ☐ The difference between work and leisure time is disappearing.
- ☐ Work has changed in the past, and will continue to change. But you will almost certainly work longer.
- ☐ Rely on yourself to succeed at work. Not your employer.
- ☐ Work success comes from learning to work with others.
- ☐ Your first job is important. Learn from it.
- ☐ Work doesn't have to be a drudge. You can learn to love your job.



