

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Clarifying Expectations and Understanding Job Requirements

Continuing layoffs in the workplace today are forcing many people to begin new employment and others to take on new jobs within their companies, as they absorb the responsibilities of laid-off colleagues.

Starting a new job brings many emotions—from excitement to stress and even sheer fear. It is normal to feel a little vulnerable and nervous as we venture into what is essentially the unknown—and herein lies the key to success. The more we can learn about the new job requirements and expectations, the faster we can master the unknown and become comfortable and successful within the new job environment.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

A new job brings new challenges along with opportunities to gain new skills and new experiences. Make sure you are able to take full advantage of these new opportunities by ensuring you have a clear understanding of job requirements and expectations. Here are some great tips:

When You Start

- Ideally before you even start work, set up a meeting with your new supervisor to discuss job requirements and expectations in detail
- Get your job description in writing
- Ask whether there are any set time frames for the work you will be doing
- Check if you should be reporting progress in any specific way or format
- Check how often you should report on progress
- Ask whether you should always report to your boss, and/or if there are other people you should be checking in with regularly
- Check whether there is a co-worker who could answer any further questions you have, or whether you should go back to your boss
- Set up a time to meet again to review your job progress, preferably within three months

Confirm Agreement

- Before you leave the meeting, briefly recap what has to be done along with timelines
- Make sure that you and your boss share a common understanding of all that has been discussed
- Suggest that you write a brief memo back to your boss, confirming what you have both agreed

As You Settle In

- Check actual job requirements against your job description, and list any differences

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- If you are having difficulties, consider whether problems are due to new skill requirements or work overload
- Talk to colleagues in similar positions to compare how they manage their responsibilities
- Assess whether you could gain any required new skills from company-sponsored courses
- Keep communication lines open with your boss, and be positive; don't bring up problems until you have identified what is at the root of the issues and have a few suggested solutions ready

Progress Review Meeting

- Take a positive attitude with your boss
- Review goals that have been successfully met
- Review positive aspects of your job before you move to negative aspects
- Discuss any discrepancies between your written job description and the actual job requirements
- If the discrepancies are manageable, suggest that you rewrite your job description to better reflect actual requirements
- If the discrepancies are not manageable, problem solve with your boss
- If skill upgrading is required, go to the meeting prepared with a proposal for courses or on-the-job training, along with a rationale for how this upgrading will make you more effective
- Before you leave the meeting, review what has been discussed and agreed
- Suggest that you write a brief memo back to your boss, confirming what has been agreed
- Set a time for your next progress review meeting

By clarifying expectations and understanding the requirements of your job, you lay the foundation for continued success at work. See also articles on formal job descriptions in this library. Time spent having the sometimes difficult conversations about the particulars of what’s expected of you—and what you can expect of your boss—will pay valuable dividends toward your success and the success of your organization as a whole.