Transitioning into the Workplace (Part I)

Dr. Deanna Davis
Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8cvOB19Qno
Objectives

• Identify
  • how the professional environment differs from graduate studies

Discuss

• skills & attributes valued in the workplace
• key features of the professional environment
• strategies for the successful transition into the workplace
Life as a Grad Student

Compared to graduate studies the professional environment has...

• greater distinction between professional and personal lives
• greater separation between work and social spaces
The professional environment has...

- diversity in educational qualifications
- and credibility is not won through credentials alone
The professional environment values punctuality.
The professional environment requires both soft and hard skills.

*Hard skills* = technical expertise, education, previous work experience
*Soft skills* = interpersonal skills, attitude
Think, Pair, Share

Q: What do you think employers value more—soft skills or hard skills? Why?
The professional environment values soft skills over hard skills

- 60% soft skills
- 40% hard skills
• Educational Background
• Professional Training
• Previous Experience
“Our entry-level employees are expected to gain experience and technical knowledge on the job and through training. However, core competencies such as initiative, communication skills and resourcefulness must be present during the selection process.”

Soft Skills Attributes

- Communication
- Courtesy
- Flexibility
- Integrity
- Interpersonal Skills
- Positive Attitude
- Professionalism
- Responsibility
- Teamwork
- Work Ethic

Soft Skills—Hard Skills Reflection
The professional environment has a strong emphasis on **team work** and **collaboration**.
The professional environment is a diverse environment...

- Backgrounds, experiences, views of the world
- Multicultural
Canada’s Multicultural Work Culture

- Multinational companies
- Cross cultural business interactions
- 338,221 Temporary foreign workers
- 23.9% first generation Canadians
Alberta’s Multicultural Work Culture

• 68,319 Temporary foreign workers
• 1 in 6 born outside of Canada
• 4th highest population of visible minorities in Canada
• 91% of visible minorities live in Edmonton and Calgary
By 2031, Statistics Canada predicts that 30% of Canadian population and 25% of Alberta’s population could be a member of a visible minority.
The Canadian Workplace

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n8z2-zKrp8
“Culture is a system for creating, sending, storing and processing information.” Hall (1989) Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans
How do I prefer to communicate? (directly/indirectly)
How do I like to give and receive feedback?
Culture

• precedes human behaviour, values, and assumptions
• determines what we perceive, how we react to situations, and how we relate to other people
• visible elements and invisible elements
Edward T. Hall’s Context Cultures

Context
- is the information surrounding an event
- it is tied to the meaning of that event

Events & context combine to varying degrees depending on culture
High Context Cultures

Information received implicitly

Low Context Cultures

Information received explicitly

Germany
Scandinavia
United States
Australia
Canada
France
Britain
Eastern Europe
South America
Middle East (Arab)
Korea
Japan
High Context Culture

Most info in communication based on shared knowledge

- implicit communication, relationships, harmony important
- careful attention to non-verbal behaviours and cues
- trust /rapport needed before business
Low Context Culture

Most of info in communication/message is in message

• explicit communication important
• relationships compartmentalized
• work & personal relationships separate
• trust /rapport needed before business
Think
Pair, Share

What issues do you think could arise in the intercultural context?
Yumi, from Japan, had been at her company in Vancouver for several months. Whenever her boss asked for her input on a project, Yumi either avoided responding or would say, “this is just a suggestion, but….” Her boss became frustrated and asked Yumi, “Are you uninterested in giving feedback? Can you give me some clear input? I need to get all the pros and cons out on the table so I can make the right decisions. You either refuse to give me feedback or never tell me anything negative, but I know there are some problems with this project.”
What do you think is going wrong in this situation?
Organizations have a culture too that impacts...

• how power is distributed
• the communication style
• how decisions are made
• how tasks are completed
• how people interact with one another
Get the lay of the land...

• What are the underlying values, goals, strategies, and philosophies that shape the organization?
• How is the office set up and what does this say about how employees relate to one another and the organizational hierarchy?
• How do employees relate to one another?
Get the lay of the land...

Look for patterns in your organization

• Pace
• Rules guiding behaviour
• Processes and procedures
• Organizational hierarchy
• How are decisions made
• Communication style
• Leadership style
Get the lay of the land...

Understand why you’ve been hired
• To do a particular job
• Make changes
Get the lay of the land…

Observe your organization’s dress code.

Get the lay of the land…

Observe your organization’s clock
• Attitudes around punctuality
• Start and end times
• Flexibility
• Interruptions
• Recognize the intercultural context
Some Final Thoughts....

- Recognize that there are spoken and unspoken rules
- Work to build rapport
- Build credibility though trust and respect
- Be a team player
- Demonstrate a positive attitude, respect, integrity
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Images

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Questions!!