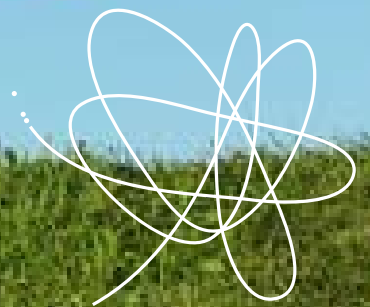


7 Career Mistakes Young Graduates Must Avoid



THINQUE

Introduction

Starting out in a new career is exciting. Finally, it feels like “real life” is beginning! The truth is, though, the things you’ve learned in school haven’t necessarily prepared you for the work world. The skills that are required to succeed in a career are different from those required to succeed in school. Many of these differences include personal and social skills that cause others to like you and want to help you in your career. Others include “tooting your own horn” and aggressively marketing and promoting yourself. Still others are mental habits that you will want to develop and cultivate.

The best time to take charge of your career path is now—right at the beginning. You are certainly smart enough to learn the job skills that your new job will require, but your employer won’t teach you the *most* important factors in launching your career success. Even more important than learning about your new job is learning to avoid career-killing mistakes that can disable you as you enter the workworld. With this in mind, we offer the 7 Career Mistakes you must avoid as you begin your career.

7 Career Mistakes Young Graduates Must Avoid

Mistake #1: Not setting goals.

Mistake #2: Presenting an Unprofessional Image.

Mistake #3: Not branding yourself.

Mistake #4: Failure to communicate across the generations.

Mistake #5: Failure to Develop Emotional Intelligence.

Mistake #6: Not Hiring the right boss.

Mistake #7: Negative self-talk.

Mistake #1: Not setting goals.

“Realize what you really want. It stops you from chasing butterflies and puts you to work digging gold.” —*William Moulton Marsden*

Every achievement in life starts with setting goals. Without goals, you and your career are liable to drift aimlessly, for years. The most successful people regularly set goals, make a plan for achieving their goals, and then work their plan. You must, too.

Goal-setting begins with making a clear decision about what it is you want—out of life, *and* out of your career. There is an old saying, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” The young go-getters in the career world are very clear about what it is they want. So, begin by asking yourself:

What kind of job are you trying to find?

What type of employer are you hoping to attract?

Until you can answer these very basic questions, your career is stalled. You are liable to say, “Yes” to the very first offer you receive, which may not be appropriate for you. Land in the wrong position, and you could find yourself unhappy, unmotivated, and low-performing. This could lead to “fired,” and then you’ll leave without a good recommendation to find your next job. That’s why it’s so important to get it right the first time.

People are, by nature, goal-driven. Therefore, it is vital as you start your career that you sit down and decide exactly what you want in every area of your life. The absence of clear goals will lead to aimless wandering and “wrong turns,” while you watch your peers getting ahead and achieving lives of success and advancement. The fact is, you cannot hit a target that you cannot see. Your goals are your target.

A typical question you are likely to hear on a job interview is, “Where do you see yourself five years from today?” That’s a tough question to answer on the spot, but it’s a good exercise, so right now you are going to take at least five minutes to write down your answer to that important question. In all of the following areas of your life, write down where you want to be in five years.

**Career: Where will you be working? Who will you be working for?
What will you be doing?**

**Financial: How much money will you be earning? How much money will you have saved?
What will your net worth be (everything you own minus everything you owe?)**

**Personal: Where will you be living? What will your home be like? Your car?
Who is with you? What will your lifestyle be like?**

Now, place yourself in that future mentally. Close your eyes and walk around your future office. Mentally perform the work tasks you will be doing five years from now. See your bank statements and your paystubs from your future salary. Drive to your future home and look around, taking in all the details. Now, open your eyes.

What has to have happened during the next five years to make this future your actual reality? This is the place to begin setting your goals. You want to work backward from your future goals, and set annual goals. Break down your annual goals into monthly goals, then weekly goals, and then daily goals. This is how, bit by bit, you take a large future goal and make a plan to steadily achieve it.

Now that you have envisioned your future, you are ready to list your career and financial goals in terms of their priority. List your #1 career goal, your #2 goal, your #3 goal below:

#1 Career Goal _____

#2 Career Goal _____

#3 Career Goal _____

This step is absolutely essential. Every great goal that is achieved is the accumulated achievement of many smaller goals, over a number of days, weeks, months, and years. Think of earning your high school or college diploma. Numerous, smaller goals and achievements had to be reached in order to achieve that final, major goal. Now that you are in the “real world,” however, there is no teacher or counselor holding you responsible for achieving the goals you want in life. It is all up to you. The first step in taking on this role for yourself is breaking your major career and life goals into manageable tasks. For example, if your goal is to find a job that pays a certain amount of money within the next year, your daily goal might be to scan three online job boards each day and send a resume to at least one of them. Your weekly goal could be to call at least two leads, and your monthly goal could be to schedule an informational interview with someone in the field you wish to enter.

For now, we are going to focus on your #1 career goal. Think of three things you could do to achieve your goal. Think in terms of specific actions you can take—not things that you don’t control. For example, redoing your resume or contacting a potential employer is something you control; getting an interview is not.

What I must do this year to be on path to achieving my #1 career goal in 5 years:

What I must do within the next six months to achieve my #1 goal:

What I must do this month to achieve my #1 goal:

What I must do this week:

What I must do today:

Goal-setting shouldn't be a chore or a burden. The process should fill you with feelings of excitement and endless possibility. To make goal-setting really work for you, you will need to keep your goals in the forefront of your mind, and you will want to make all your decisions based on them. Before you decide whether to spend money, engage in an activity, or use your time a certain way, ask yourself: does this move me closer to my goal or further away from it? Then, only do those things that move you closer to your stated goals.

A good way to remind yourself of your goals on a daily basis is to write them on a set of index cards and carry them with you, or put them on post-it notes in your datebook or on

your bathroom mirror. Read them out loud to yourself, and repeat them at night before you go to bed. Don't just think about your goals, but actually visualize them. *See yourself in the job you want.*

You may find it helpful to rewrite your goals, on a daily or weekly basis. This will help them stay fresh in your mind and to help you to recommit to them. Some people even make a goal scrap book or wall display, with cutout pictures representing their goals. This is a great way to stay motivated and to keep your goals fresh in your mind.

There is nothing more satisfying than achieving a goal, crossing it off your list, and then taking time, of course, to celebrate your accomplishment.

The very act of writing down goals begins the process of achieving them. This is because a goal that is written down is real and tangible. So, by all means write your goals down! The process of formulating goals and writing them down also activates your subconscious mind to help you in achieving your goals.

The process of goal-setting requires that you hold yourself accountable. This means you have to determine how you will measure your progress and success in achieving your goal. Write down how you are going to hold yourself accountable for achieving your timetable during the next year.

The difference between a goal and a wish is that a goal has a deadline and a specific plan of action behind it. A wish is something you think would be nice if it were to happen, but a goal is something you are deliberately working towards and making happen.

So, whether your goal is to find your first full-time job, or to move up to your next level of responsibility, remember that each goal leads to the setting of the next goal, with time to savor the accomplishment.

"I don't think there's any such thing as setting your goals too high. The higher you set your goals, the more you are going to work. If you don't reach them, then it's okay, just as long as you set it and then give 100% of yourself." —*Dan Jansen, Speed Skater*

Mistake #2: Presenting an Unprofessional Image

Once you are clear about your career goals, you will want to make sure that your image and behavior match your aspirations. Your image begins with how you present yourself during the job search (starting with your resume) and includes every aspect of how you dress, behave, speak, and carry yourself. Like it or not, people in the workworld are going to form an opinion of you based on these factors. When you present a highly polished professional image, these opinions will work in your favor and speed your career advancement.

“There will be plenty of good jobs and business opportunities out there in the flat world for people with the knowledge and the ideas to seize them.”—Anders Sorman-Nilsson

When you present an unprofessional image, you tell coworkers and management that you are not really a contender for higher levels of responsibility and you are not to be taken seriously. Examples of an unprofessional image include dressing too casually for the job, failing to adhere to business standards of behavior, and producing shoddy or inferior work. Let’s look at some areas of professionalism more closely:

The Professional Resume.

Your resume is a very important tool in crafting a professional image. When applying for a job, this is the first, and probably only, impression that a potential employer has of you. So it has to represent you well.

Your professional resume must be free of all typos, smudges, and grammatical errors. Even little things, like a resume that is off-center, can mark you as an “amateur.”

Don’t try to be cute or funny in your resume—it’s all business. Also, don’t boast; as a young entrant to the job market you are going to have to learn and operate as a junior team member for a while. If you appear arrogant, managers may not want to hire you, fearing that you lack the proper attitude for entry level work. Remember that a resume is written for a specific audience, and that each company has its own “language” and corporate culture. The better you understand that culture, the more you will be able to write a resume that strikes the proper chord. There are many excellent books and websites that can provide you with examples of professional resumes. If you’re still in

school, you should definitely take advantage of resume review services offered by your school's career center. Don't expect to get it right the first time; a resume needs to be refined and polished before it's ready to submit. Finally, it's always a good idea to ask an older friend to review your resume to make sure that it conveys the proper tone and professional image.

Professional Behavior.

Follow your supervisor's lead when deciding on appropriate and acceptable behavior in the workplace. Because "manners" are not taught very well at school, or even in many homes, anymore, it is a good idea to read a book on basic etiquette before entering the professional world. Things that are acceptable in school and in college are simply unacceptable at work, (although the rules are always changing, so make sure you get a recent book.) Beyond basic etiquette, and treating others well, is the challenge of fitting in with the corporate culture, which can vary tremendously from one company or organization to the next. What is acceptable on one job may be frowned upon at the next. Generally speaking, though, you will convey an unprofessional, "not serious" image if you are not putting in enough "face time," showing up late, leaving early, or taking long lunches. Other ways to mark yourself as a "unpromotable" include fooling around on the job, sending or forwarding unprofessional emails, making inappropriate jokes, loud, boorish behavior, poor hygiene, crying, flying off the handle over minor irritations, gossiping, flirting with coworkers, and talking too much about your personal life. Generally speaking, if you follow the rules of decorum and manners and stick to business matters when at work, you will convey a professional image. Also, clearly, how you do your job will determine your professional image. Handing in assignments late, producing shoddy, inferior work, failing to check facts and details—these behaviors will also set you up for career failure. The problem is that many young workers think that the quality of their work is the *only* thing that matters. That may be true if you are lucky enough to work freelance from a remote location, but as long as you are employed in an office setting with coworkers, you will also have to pay attention to your behavior and the message it sends.

Professional Dress.

Although the world has become more casual about dress, at work, your clothes still matter. Like it or not, in the workworld you are going to be judged by your appearance. If you don't present the right image with your dress, you are conveying the impression that you may not be able to perform adequately at your job. Whether or not that's the case, the *perception* is what matters and that perception can sink a very promising career.

The best advice about dressing on the job is to take your cues from your supervisors and those around you. Some organizations and certain career fields, like finance and law, are very buttoned-up. Others are more relaxed, but there are still limits to what is acceptable.

You will want to follow the age-old advice: “dress for the job you want, not the job you have.” It will be difficult for supervisors and decision-makers to envision you in a higher role if you don't already “look the part.” This means investing in a professional wardrobe—including shoes—and maintaining impeccable hygiene. Anyone who aspires to a job in top management should know that personal appearance counts.

This means having frequent fresh haircuts, well-manicured nails, and fresh looking clothes. Quality counts: higher-ups and interviewers can spot cheap fabrics and low-quality shoes and they will make inferences about you based on that. So, consider your business attire an important investment. If you are just graduating from school, ask yourself what is the most you have ever paid for a pair of shoes. Now double that (at least) to determine the minimum you should spend on your “interview” shoes.

It should go without saying that you should have no visible tattoos or piercings (other than for one set of earrings in women.) If a suit is required, this doesn't mean a sport coat and slacks. The fabric you wear should always be free from pulls or loose threads. Shoes should be real leather—nothing “synthetic.” You should not give off any offensive odors (which includes cologne or perfume.)

Your clothes must always fit well (never too tight) and should not be revealing. Women: that means no cleavage, please! Also, women should avoid wearing shoes that make

it difficult to walk or keep up with the men; this reduces your credibility and makes you appear helpless or, worse, sexy. Open-toed shoes are also frowned upon at work, no matter how nicely manicured your toes are. Jewelry should be simple and tasteful—never overpowering.

In short, your professional image is everything you do and say and how you look in the workplace. It can be a difficult transition from the casual dress atmosphere of the classroom to the more polished look required by the workworld, but it is necessary that you make the effort. When you pull together all of these elements into a mature, refined, business-like package, you will be perceived as an equal and taken seriously. You will also be given serious consideration when promotions become available.

Mistake #3: Not branding yourself.

You're graduating from school and you're ready to begin your career. You've got your resume, a business suit, and a new pair of shoes, so you're all ready to go, right?

Well, that's a good start. But even more important than "the suit" is what's behind it. These days, the most successful careers begin with "Branding" yourself—setting yourself distinctively apart from the competition. It is very important to remember that, even if you end up working for a large corporation, you are still in charge of your own career. That means you are "President and CEO" of YOU, Incorporated. You're the boss. This self-knowledge is the key to getting respect in the workworld, getting paid what you're worth, and making rapid advancement.

You and only you are responsible for the successes that you gain in your career. You need to realize that, no matter who you "work for" or who signs your checks, you are still ultimately self-employed. This means you must develop your own strategic plan for your life and for your career. You need to make a name for yourself to stand out in your business. You need to be more than just someone who can do the job; you need to carve out a unique niche for yourself.

So, you need to ask yourself: Who am I, and what specifically do I have to offer that no one else can? The answer to this question is very important, because in order to differentiate yourself and stand out in the workplace, you have to be very clear about who you are.

You can't be just anything to anybody—a "wandering generality" who is easily replaced by another wandering generality. You will not be taken seriously or compensated well or promoted. You want to be a "focused specific;" you have to stand for something. That means narrowing down what you are good at and being very clear about why employers should hire you.

Like it or not, in the workworld you are a "product." And, like any other product, you need to position yourself to get noticed. Think of brands you see in the supermarket. They all seek to be different from each other by selling their special attributes.

What are *your* top three brand attributes? If you were marketing yourself as a product on a shelf, would you be “creative, technology savvy, and visionary?” Or are you more of a “hardworking, reliable, stable” product? Are you “upper management material, with great social skills, and popular?” What do you want to be known for? How do you want others to think of you? How are you different from all your peers, the other “products” employers might buy/hire?

Essentially, your brand is your reputation—what you are known for. Consider these personality attributes and see if they could be part of your brand: “leader,” “caring,” “detail-oriented,” “driven,” “smart,” “highly educated,” “honest,” “organized,” “reliable,” “motivated,” and “able to work independently.” These are just to get you started thinking. The better you know and understand yourself, the better you will be able to communicate your benefits to others and convince them that they need you on their team.

Ask yourself: How will you “add value” to an organization? What do you bring that is special, that no one else can? Write your answer here:

The start of your career is the best time to decide these things, because once you have an established identity, it becomes part of your reputation and it is harder to change it.

Every successful marketer learns that a product needs to have a compelling “unique selling proposition” to get people to buy it. That means, something that your product offers that no one else can match. For Dominoes, that promise is “Pizza in 30 minutes or your money back.” For FedEx, the U.S.P. is “when it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.”

Now, ask yourself: what is my U.S.P.? What is it that I, and only I, can deliver to a business or an employer? This is not an easy question to answer, admittedly. Many older adults would have trouble answering it. However, a young person who knows him or herself well enough to craft a convincing U.S.P. will have a tremendous advantage in the job marketplace. Your U.S.P. or “Personal Branding Statement” might sound like, “I provide reliable and affordable graphic design services to small business with a creative

flair.” Take a moment now to craft your U.S.P. by answering these questions:

I (do what?)

for (whom—what employers are you trying to target)

by (how do you do it like no one else can?)

This is also sometimes called an “elevator speech.” The reason is because if you were ever to find yourself in an elevator with Donald Trump or another important person with the potential to hire you, you’d only have about 30 seconds to convince him or her that you deserved a shot. So, it’s important to be prepared, because you never know when you might get your opportunity!

One of the first ways you “brand” yourself is through your resume. These days, though, a resume is just the start. An employer may be looking at literally hundreds of resumes for a single position.

You also need to establish an online identity. And it had better be a positive one. According to *Business Week* (June 26, 2006), 35% of executive recruiters who use the internet to check out prospects say they have eliminated candidates based on what they found online. So, if you have any juvenile or embarrassing photographs of yourself at parties, or unprofessional, immature comments that are still posted on Facebook or MySpace, you need to take them down *immediately*.

One graduate of an Education program, who completed and passed all of the course requirements, was denied her teaching certificate at the last minute because an online picture of her drinking at a party was deemed “unprofessional.” Don’t let this happen to you.

Have you ever “Googled” someone? Of course you have. Well, then other people have Googled you. Employers will, too. You can count on it. So, go ahead and Google yourself

right now and see what comes up. (This is called Ego surfing, by the way.) If some inappropriate or unprofessional material is coming up, you are going to want to do your best to eliminate that.

If nothing is coming up (or nothing good), there are steps you can take to increase, and improve, your online presence. You need to make sure that you are visible online, so that potential employers can find you. In the new, globalized economy, you are not just competing with people in your same town or city for jobs; you could be competing with people from all over the world. So, being visible online will be a real “plus.” If you don’t show up on Google, it’s like you don’t exist.

Also, is your online presence “distinct?” Is it related to the field you are trying to enter? If your online presence differs greatly from your resume presence, that is going to confuse or put off potential employers. So, if you are seeking a business position, hopefully you will be showing up online as a member of business clubs, or as an intern in a business establishment—that sort of thing. Basically, you want your web presence to be consistent with the key attributes of your “brand.” The truth is, you’re going to need to continue to manage your digital identity, or your “public resume,” throughout your career. It’s an ongoing, never-ending process. In fact, it’s a good idea to Google yourself every week and to incorporate updates and changes into your resume monthly, so that your written image keeps pace with your career development.

Of course, one of the best ways to manage your online identity is through building your own personal website. This can be your personal self-promotion tool. A website can help you to promote your personal brand to employers and also provides a platform to help you express your area of expertise. You should include the right key or tagwords in your website that are related to your career goals. So, if you are looking to enter the field of advertising, you will want to refer to “marketing,” “creative,” “design,” “copywriting,” and whatever other fields you are exploring. Any work that you did as an intern can also be posted as part of a growing portfolio. There are sites to help you do this (one of them is called Brandego.) Your school may also offer opportunities to build an online presence through affiliation with their website or through the Career Services office. Look into and take advantage of these opportunities.

Be sure to blow your own trumpet: any awards that you've won or other honors should be included in the website, along with links to any other sites on which you have a positive presence. You might also consider starting a blog that relates to your field of interest. This is a great way to establish credibility—as long as it's well-written with good content and demonstrates strength of thought. Obviously, you only want to include material that reflects on you favourably.

When you proactively manage your online identity you build your personal brand. You also build your brand with every career encounter you have. Every meeting you attend, every phone call you answer, every report you submit distinguishes you and your career brand. Make sure that the brand is consistent, and—more importantly—desirable in the career marketplace.

Mistake #4: Failure to communicate across the generations.

“The newest diversity issue on the block is generational diversity.”

—Anders Sorman-Nilsson

If you want to succeed in the workworld, you’re going to have to learn how to get along with people of different ages. That’s because the workworld is marked, increasingly, by diversity: not just multicultural diversity, or gender diversity, but also by age diversity.

Right now, the workworld has a wider range of age diversity than ever before. This is happening for a number of reasons, one of which is the fact that people are living longer. It is also happening because of coming labor shortages due to demographic shifts; this is causing employers to offer incentives to try to keep older employees in the workforce as long as possible. Unfortunately, this is causing a real generation gap between employees of different ages who just don’t “get” one another.

As the “new kid” on the block, you are going to have to defer to the older generation in the workworld—at least until you establish your own credibility and can command respect. This means you need to honor their contributions and demonstrate respect for their experience. No older worker with years of experience wants to be shown up by some young hotshot. So, no matter how smart you are or how advanced your technological skills are, you must remember to be careful not to offend or intimidate coworkers or supervisors who have the power to make your worklife difficult.

For example, one technologically savvy young man missed his opportunity to land a big website account because he failed to bridge the generation gap with his potential customer. Having the opportunity to meet with a very successful owner of multiple businesses, he sat behind his computer laptop, clicking the spacebar and leading the customer through a slick Powerpoint presentation. He talked about the website, the links, flash animation, and the clever codes. The problem was, his customer was in her 50s and intimidated by computers. Instead of connecting with her as a person, he bored her with technical data, droning on about technology and his advanced programming skills. Instead of impressing her, he made her feel stupid and annoyed. In the end, she told others about his “rude, disrespectful, and inconsiderate” behavior, which cost him

many more potential clients and income.

“The key lies in moving from generational collision to generational collaboration.”

—*Thinque*

Each generation is different with its own distinct set of values and beliefs, which were shaped by the way they were raised and by the political events, economic conditions, and major crises, or triumphs, of their childhoods experiences. Because members of the same generation share the same basic set of experiences, particularly during their most formative years, they tend to share certain assumptions and understandings. Since you come from different generations, you “came of age” with different experiences which gave you different worldviews. Understanding those differences can help to pave the way for better understanding and communication.

Older managers and younger employees often have trouble communicating. Authors Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas view the generation gap today as being between “geeks” (the younger, digital and “touch tone” generations) and the “geezer” (the older, analog or “rotary dial” generations.) The technology gap between these two generations influenced their different views on everything. In the analog world, thinking was primarily linear and specialization and experience were rewarded. The world was very hierarchical, just like the military, with clear chains of command. In the modern, digital world, thinking is nonlinear and can go in any direction, just like on the internet. Organizations have flat hierarchies with more power sharing. This is a huge difference.

“The most successful people in the 21st century will be genuine Generation Mixers, or Generation Talent—people of all ages who continuously bring to work their enthusiasm, flexibility, and voracious desire to learn.”—*Anders Sorman-Nilsson*

Right now, there are actually four distinct generations sharing the workplace: the Senior Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (also known as “Millennials.”) The workworld has changed so much during the past few decades that older managers are having a harder time than ever understanding and relating to their younger employees. Older generations have always tended to view the younger generation with skepticism and to complain about the younger generation’s poor work ethic. They’re liable to expect you to have to “pay your dues,” the same way they had to.

Older generations in the workforce currently include those who grew up during World War II (born before 1946.) Let's call them the Senior Generation. They grew up during the War years, which required sacrifice and patriotism. Their lives were greatly affected by the military, and they like it when the workworld has the same "command-and-control" style. Most members of this generation value stability and expected to stay in one hometown, with one employer, for their lifetime. These workers currently comprise a small minority of the workforce and they will all be retired soon.

These senior workers were the managers for the largest generation currently occupying the workforce: the Baby Boomers. So, this is the type of management style they used to manage the Boomers and the Boomers still carry this imprint. Boomers in the workforce were expected to pay their dues and be patient, waiting for the rewards that would eventually come. Boomers, by virtue of their numbers, also had to compete against one another in the workplace, so they are likely to view work as a competition. The Boomers are the generation best known for putting in outrageously long hours; this was the way they preferred to compete against one another. By always being available, working overtime, and putting their work ahead of their personal lives, Boomers demonstrated their loyalty and commitment to their jobs. Unfortunately, this loyalty wasn't always rewarded and many Boomers found themselves downsized in middle age during the economic recessions of the late 1980s.

This was around the same time that the next generation, so-called Generation X, burst upon the scene. Much smaller in numbers (born during the "Baby Bust" years between 1965 and 1977), Generation X for the most part had a neglected, "latchkey" childhood while their Boomer parents sought to climb the corporate ladder. Originally viewed as slackers, members of Generation X also recognized that their upward career progress was going to be blocked for decades by the "grey ceiling" of older workers, especially Boomers. So, they essentially redefined what "success" means and decided to succeed on their own terms. Rather than defining themselves in terms of their career, Gen Xers sought to have a more well-rounded life and spend more time with their families. This led many members of the older generation to dismiss them as "slackers" unwilling to "pay their dues." Then, along came the internet and the digital revolution and Gen Xers found their calling. Because these younger employees were much quicker at learning

new software programs and new technology, for the first time ever the workforce saw younger employees teaching older employees how things were done. This was a complete reversal of the age-old, traditional apprenticeship method in which a younger employee was expected to spend years learning from an older one. The workworld would never be the same and intergenerational tensions increased.

That brings us to you, the current generation. Depending on when you were born, you may belong to Generation Y (right after X), or to the latest group which is being called the Millennials. Right now, you are being described as being, “like Generation X, but even more so.” You are the first generation that always had a computer. You are more mobile, more global, and more technologically sophisticated than any previous generation. The Millennials have grown up with “instant” everything, and they are used to staying in touch with everyone through cellphones. They are also used to sharing their opinions (on everything,) on blogs, MySpace accounts, and on personal websites. You are also the first generation with a truly global outlook. Compared to the neglected childhood of Generation X, you probably enjoyed more parental involvement; some older workers might say you were overindulged, and that you always had parents to clear the way for you and solve your problems. Some of these are the kinds of things that elders have always said about the younger generation; some are unique to your generation.

Some would say that your generation’s social skills are lacking, since you probably enjoyed excessive “screen time” as a child and adolescent. Employers may worry that you won’t stay on the job for a long time, so they may be hesitant to give you important assignments or to rely on you. The fact is that younger employees do tend to jump jobs much more often than older employees. You will have to prove that you are worthy of your employer’s investment of time.

The Baby Boomers, who were born in the postwar years between 1946 and 1964, currently make up nearly half of the workforce, although this will be changing very soon as the first of the Boomers begin retiring within the next few years. As their name implies, Baby Boomers arrived on the scene in huge numbers, crowding first hospitals, then kindergartens, colleges, and the workforce. Together, the two younger generations *combined* (Gen. X and Millennials) are almost as numerous as the Boomers. So, you can expect the Boomer mentality to survive in the workforce for a while longer.

The key to thriving in an intergenerational workplace is understanding where other generations are coming from. Patience will also be a virtue in the workforce, but remain optimistic. As the Baby Boomers retire, you can expect to see dramatic opportunities for advancement, so learn everything you can from them. The older generations still adhere to many of the older organizational models and you may find it difficult to gain access to decision makers as a young entrant to the workforce. Don't let this throw you; the workworld will inevitably evolve and change and become more responsive as younger generations move into positions of authority.

“In the end, the cross generational collaboration issue comes down to one thing—understanding.” —*Anders Sorman-Nilsson*

Don't be surprised when older managers yell. This is what they were brought up with. Don't take it personally; it may just be standard operating procedure. Also, some older managers don't think they should have to explain things to new employees. Of course, that attitude worked when the Baby Boomers were so plentiful that if one didn't succeed, there were ten others ready to take his or her place. Speak up when you need more explanation. Also, you may not get as much feedback from older employees. They may have been brought up on the “annual review” and they may think it's obvious to you that, “if you don't hear from me, everything is fine.” Ask for feedback when you need it, but don't overdo it. Don't bombard your managers with emails; they are not used to it and will not appreciate it—especially in the evening or on weekends. Don't assume that they must adapt to what you are used to; you are going to have to do a lot of adapting.

Remember that each generation has unique strengths to offer and unique weaknesses. It is important to realize that you also have strengths and weaknesses, as an individual person and as a member of the younger generation in the workforce!

For the time being, you are going to have to play by the older generations' rules. That means recognizing and understanding where other employees are coming from and honoring their contributions and the workplace experience they've gained. Whenever possible, make your boss look good. When you need to question the rules, do so in a constructive, helpful, and nonconfrontational way. Remember that the older generations have much to teach you about the workplace, just as you have much to teach them about modern technology and new ideas.

Mistake #5: Failure to Develop Emotional Intelligence.

"The levels of cooperation required in the future may mean that emotional intelligence. . . will be valued over the intelligence measured by IQ tests." —*Graham Brown*

Older workers sometimes complain that young graduates have poor people skills—often rightfully so. That may be one price of all the time young people spend on technology or in front of screens, rather than interacting with people face-to-face.

Forget your IQ. To make it in the workworld, you're going to need a high EQ—Emotional Quotient. The term Emotional Intelligence is usually associated with the name Daniel Goleman, who seems to have coined, or at least popularized, the term. Emotional intelligence means having emotional sensitivity and learning healthy emotional management skills.

According to Goleman, high EQ requires having self-awareness and social awareness. It also requires being able to manage relationships. Other researchers say that emotional intelligence also requires being able to recognize and understand the emotions of others, as well as emotional self-control.

It's not enough to know how to do the tasks required by your job description. To succeed, you're also going to have to know how to work well with people and to successfully read and respond to others' emotions.

They don't teach this in school, unfortunately. Some researchers think you are born with this capacity. There may be some truth to that, but it's also true that anyone can raise their level of emotional intelligence.

"A good leader must have a high level of EQ. How else will they inspire the people they lead to give their best? How else can they effectively manage staff, suppliers and clients?" —*Anders Sorman-Nilsson*

A person with high emotional intelligence recognizes his own emotions and the emotions of others, changes behavior based on these emotions (if you are doing something that is upsetting to another person, you will stop), can manage his/her own

or another person's emotions, and will learn from and remember emotions. So, if you learn that something pleases another person, you will do it more often, for example.

Be aware of your own issues and problems, or any unmet emotional needs that you may be bringing into the workplace. These can sabotage your work relationships, if you are not careful. If you have issues with authority, or with trust, or with low self-esteem, don't expect others to care or to solve these problems for you. And please, don't inflict your emotional pain on others. First off, it won't help, and second, it can turn you into a workplace outcast. If you have emotional issues that need to be worked out, you owe it to yourself and to your coworkers to seek outside help from a professional counselor or psychotherapist. Your job may even offer an employee assistance program to help pay for this.

Here are some suggestions for increasing your emotional intelligence in the workplace. First of all, you should always take responsibility for your own emotions. Instead of saying something like, "*You* made me mess up," say "*I* need to do this over." Also, always show respect for other people's feelings, which includes asking how they will feel if you do certain things (or if you don't.)

One of the very best ways to show respect for another person's feelings is simply to listen to what they have to say, without interrupting. That sounds obvious, but it is much easier said than done. People these days are in such a hurry that they seldom stop and simply listen. It can be very difficult to be quiet and allow another person to do all, or most, of the talking, but this is a great way to ventilate problems and find resolutions. Resist the urge to offer advice or to impose judgement or criticism. Just listen.

Chances are, the other person has many good insights and you will probably learn some important information from them. They will appreciate the time you spent hearing what they had to say, and then they will be much more likely to listen to you in the future. Also, remember to ask other people how they feel. Don't assume that you already know. Their answers may surprise you.

When other people do well at work, show honest admiration and appreciation and compliment them sincerely. This will cause others to like you, to want to be around you,

and to associate you with positive emotions. When other people compliment you at work, thank them profusely.

Don't label other people at work. Calling names is never appropriate. Instead, you want to point out the behavior that is causing a problem. So, instead of calling someone a "screw-up," state specifically what went wrong: "When I didn't receive the data from you, I had to submit the report without them. That made my work look incomplete." This allows the other person to save dignity and explain him or herself, without getting too defensive. This is how a leader and a good manager behaves, and if you want to become one, you need to start developing these skills now.

Here's another simple tip to raise your EQ. When you are talking to others, try to start your sentences with the word, "I," as in, "I feel" or "I want." This shows the listener that you are taking responsibility for what you are saying. Too often, it is easy to start sentences with "You," as in "You made me feel bad," or "You were the weak link on this project." This is guaranteed to cause a defensive response and is unlikely to contribute to progress.

"All of the world's greatest leaders have had high EQs." —*Thinqe*

Counselors call these "You messages" and they cause a lot of fights, because the person hearing it will interpret it as a condemnation. The best time to use a "You message" is when the other person is speaking, and you want to convey that you understand. Then, you simply restate what the person has said to show that you have been listening, as in: "You really had a bad day, huh?" Messages like that are always warmly received, because the other person feels that you really care and really heard what s/he was saying.

If you aren't getting paid what you think you are worth, or you aren't advancing in your career, it may be because you aren't pleasant to work with. By developing your emotional intelligence, you prepare yourself for the higher level jobs in the workforce, which always involve handling people.

Mistake #6: Not Hiring the right boss.

“Coaching, mentoring, and facilitation are becoming the catch phrases of choice in 21st century management vocabulary.” —*Anders Sorman-Nilsson*

When you go to an interview, you worry about making a good impression and getting the interviewer to like you. You try to answer the questions the “right” way. You’re worried about them hiring you, but you also need to think this way: *you* are hiring your boss—the person who will have the power to “make” or “break” your career at this crucial starting point.

Remember: an interview is a two-way process; they are meeting you AND you are meeting them. Don’t be so concerned with impressing them that you forget to ask the questions you want answered. At some interviews, you are not going to meet the person who will be your direct boss. That is a mistake. Before you accept any job, insist on meeting the boss. If you lack chemistry with this boss, think twice before taking the position.

Ideally, you want to find a boss who is interested in your career, your personal development, and your organizational relationships. The ideal boss will serve as a coach and a mentor to you, helping you to achieve your personal goals in alignment with the goals of the organization.

Make sure you find out who you will be working for at the interview. More and more, employees are finding that it makes more sense to be loyal to their boss than to their organization. Look for a boss to whom you can be loyal (and who will be loyal to you, in return.)

Before “hiring” your boss, ask about the boss’s reputation. How long have other employees stayed with him? Have employees followed him from other positions or departments, because they are loyal to him?

When you have a great, positive relationship with your boss, you can shave years off your career path and advance very, very rapidly. One of the best ways to foster a good relationship with your boss is to strive to make him look good. Bosses reward employees

who make them look good. Help your boss to advance, and you will advance along with him or her.

Having a bad relationship with your boss is a career killer. If your relationship with your boss is really bad, it can damage your professional reputation. If you are forced to move on, or decide to seek better opportunities elsewhere, you may have trouble obtaining a respectable letter of recommendation.

In many ways, you will have to learn to manage your relationship with your boss. Bosses are managers, and they are supposed to manage those below them in the organizational hierarchy. Many career experts now recommend, however, that lower-level employees learn to “manage up.” This simply means paying attention to and managing your relationship with your superiors. This is important in an organization because, for better or for worse, your career and your boss’s career are linked, interdependently. This means that when your boss succeeds and looks good, you look good, and vice versa. Of course, it also means when your boss messes up it reflects poorly on you, since you are supposed to be helping your boss out. (And if your boss is a loser on the way out, you’d better disassociate yourself from him or her as soon as possible!)

In an organization, you can’t just focus on what’s best for you. You also have to consider what’s best for your boss and for the entire organization. Here’s another important point to consider: your boss is your crucial link to the information pipeline within an organization. Because most businesses continue to be organized hierarchically, that means that they favor a “top-down” approach. This means that orders and information flow from the top, so your boss is going to receive crucial information before you do. If you don’t have an open line of communication with your boss, you are going to be “out of the loop,” which can be the kiss of career death.

Your boss is in the direct line of authority, which means that he has a broader perspective on the entire organization; you need this viewpoint to manage your own career well. Your boss also is better positioned to connect you with other individuals within the organization whom it would be advantageous for you to get to know.

So, how do you “manage up” and build a strong, fruitful relationship with your boss? Well, first of all, you want to recognize your boss’s needs and help meet them. Your boss

has projects, goals and objectives s/he would like to accomplish. Find out what they are, and then ask yourself: what can I do to help my boss achieve these? Your support in helping your boss to accomplish key priorities will be appreciated and remembered and, if your boss is a good one, rewarded.

Often, when you are young in a new career, you are given tasks to do that may not seem very exciting or challenging. However, these are part of an overall bigger picture, and your boss is key to helping you recognize where your contributions fit in.

Don't always wait to be asked for help or to be told what to do. Anticipate your boss's needs and try to fill it; this is how you become essential and irreplaceable.

You should also try to learn as much as you can from your boss. (Of course, since you hired a great boss, s/he will have many admirable traits worth emulating.) What are your boss's greatest strengths? Model yourself after those.

Always help your boss accomplish his job effectively and successfully. Offer your best ideas and insights, without worrying about who gets the credit. (The truth is, your boss will get the credit, but if s/he's a good boss, you won't be forgotten.)

Also, be alert for any information you think would be important for your boss to know about. Since you will be starting out "closer to the ground," you may be privy to some information that your boss is unable to pick up on.

Value your boss's time. Don't bore or distract your boss with inane chatter and pointless, long-winded emails. Keep your commitments and meet your deadlines, since your boss is counting on you.

Also, get to know your boss and his or her preferred work style. Some bosses are formal, others are more casual and informal. Some bosses like to receive written communication; others prefer you to stop by their office and chat.

Never surprise your boss in meetings (say, with new information) or make you boss look bad. It will NOT reflect well on you if you "show up" your boss. That is always a big career mistake and you will pay. Never try to jump the line of authority by taking issues over your boss's head without permission.

When you stay in close alignment with your boss's objectives and the organizations objectives, you can expect to be given opportunities for advancement. When you hire the right boss, you will enjoy a more fulfilling worklife and more rapid career advancement.

Mistake #7: Negative self-talk.

“The only think that stands between a man and what he wants from life is often merely the will to try it and the faith to believe that it is possible.” —Richard M. DeVos

Sometimes, in our careers, we can be our own worst enemies, sabotaging our own success. We all have an “internal dialogue” that plays out inside our heads all day long. If we have low self-esteem, or if we cling to erroneous beliefs or selectively ignore good news, our inner talk can turn very critical and negative. This can interfere not only with our happiness, but also with our ability to perform and to achieve at work.

You must learn to control your own mind, to become everything you are capable of becoming in your career. The first step to controlling your mind is to become aware of your 'self talk.' When something goes right, do you take credit for it in your own mind and attribute it to your hard work, natural ability, and training? Or, do you eagerly dismiss it as a fluke, refuse to savor and appreciate the moment, and quickly begin scanning for the next problem?

Many times, we ignore the many good things that happen to us and then seize upon the very few bad things, magnify them out of all proportion, beat ourselves up over it, and refuse to forget about it. We nurture our hurts and tend to them with the same loving care we would devote to growing a garden, and then wonder why our minds are filled with negative “weeds!”

Your internal dialogue includes self “chatter” and mental images. This ongoing mental activity is the source of most of your feelings and emotions. In other words, It’s not what happens to you, but what you *think* about what happens to you that matters.

You really can change the quality of your life by changing the quality of your thinking. In a way, you hypnotize yourself into certain feelings and beliefs through the thoughts you have.

Here’s important news: you can choose your thoughts. Any thought you don’t want to have, you can get rid of. That’s because you can only think of one thing at a time.

You need to begin to pay attention to your self-talk—the constant stream of chatter that is endlessly talking in your head. Is your inner talk your friend? Does it say nice things to you, encourage you when things aren't going well, and congratulate you when things are going great? If so, good for you!

Or, is your inner voice crueler than your worst enemy, saying things to you that you would never ever say to another living being? Does your inner voice call you “stupid” when you make a mistake? Does it say, “I can't” before you have even tried something new? Does it say, “It will never last” when you do succeed? Does the voice complain all day long, tell you that you can't cope, and rant all day about how “unfair” life is?

If this is what your inner voice says to you, it's no wonder if you're feeling lousy at the end of the workday. You're indoctrinating yourself in misery and failure!

If so, it is time for you to banish this mean, nasty inner voice forever, because it wants you to fail in your new career. If you would not say these things to a friend, then you must stop immediately saying these things to yourself. It is time for you to be your own best friend. This voice is not helping you, and it is serving no productive purpose. You need to get rid of it.

But how?

It is easier said than done, since self-criticism is a habit developed over a long period of time.

First, imagine that that voice is not inside your head. Picture a person following you around all day saying these rotten, negative things to you. How long would you be willing to put up with this treatment before you would turn around and tell this person to “knock it off” “Get lost!” or just plain deck him or her!

Of course, the thing with negative self-talk is that it's sneaky. You might not realize every time you do it. That is why awareness is so crucial to correcting this bad habit.

When you have been saying negative things to yourself since childhood it's harder to notice these self-critical inner comments, but make no mistake. Over time, this negative self talk is having a very powerful and negative impact on your mood and on your

attitude towards yourself and towards life.

Negative self-talk is debilitating and demoralizing and potentially devastating to your career. If you don't fix it now, you risk never reaching your full potential.

A good place to begin is by gently replacing the negative self-talk with positive statements. Luckily, your mind can only think of one thing at a time. So, whenever you "catch" yourself having a negative thought, silently say "goodbye" or mentally throw it in the trash. Sweep it out of your mind. Use whatever mental image works best for you. Then, substitute a positive thought. Since it is hard for a person with negative thinking to come up with positive thoughts, you should make a list of some of these and refer to them. Start with your positive traits, or else make a list of what you want to be or become. Counselors sometimes refer to these statements as "affirmations." They affirm that you are good and that you have many positive qualities.

List some of your most positive qualities here:

Then, make a sentence out of some of your personal qualities that will become your affirmation. Something like, "I have overcome many challenges and I will be a success." When you have an affirmation that you like, memorize it. Write it down. The next time you are having negative thoughts or are beating yourself up mentally, remember: sweep that thought from your mind and substitute your most positive affirmation—out loud, if possible. Or, if you want a more specific suggestion, here is a great, general affirmation that you might want to learn and memorize:

"Every day, I am getting better and better."

This affirmation can be a positive help to you in almost any situation, no matter how difficult. Stating an affirmation once or twice won't make a lot of difference. The power

of affirmations is in their repetition, as you build new powerful habits that will begin to shift your thought patterns from negative to positive.

“The message to all of Generation Y—upgrade your mental software, find your positive meaning in life and pursue it with passion. You are bound to be met with success—however you define it.” —*Anders Sorman-Nilsson*

Remember the “law of attraction,” which basically states that you attract to yourself that which you spend most of your time thinking about. Since “like attracts like,” and since “thoughts are things,” when you focus on positive things throughout the day, everyday, you actually create them, bringing them into existence and into your life. Another good piece of advice is to focus on what you want, not on what you don’t want. So, in your career, be sure to focus on your positive goals and do not dwell on inevitable set-backs.

Before you can begin to manifest good things in your career and in your life, you have to envision good things in your inner landscape. When you learn to control your thoughts and harness the power of positive thinking, you lay the mental preparation for a positive result in all aspects of your life, including your career.

Conclusion:

Your career success is up to you. You have already laid the groundwork for a successful career through completion of your program of study. Now, you must focus your same mental powers on mastering a new subject: career success.

No one is ever going to care as much about your career success as you. Ultimately, you are your own boss and you must live up to your own standards. You must seize opportunities and write your own job description, creating your own opportunities. You must manage your career with the same level of professionalism you bring to your job and to your school and work assignments.

Remember to invest regularly in your own career development through professional training and personal development. Set and re-set your goals, build your brand, present a professional image, develop your emotional intelligence, manage your relationships, and improve your self-talk to ramp up to unparalleled levels of career success. Oh, and enjoy the journey! GOOD LUCK!