

How to Keep the Job You Just Started

Congratulations ~ You got the job, now what?

You presented your written materials well, managed the interview process successfully; your references supported you and now you've been offered the job.⁽¹⁾

You are excited to be the person chosen to do the work. You feel the opportunity looks promising. You show up early on the first day, keen to get to work and become a useful member of the team.

What happens to you will largely depend on the "organizational culture" and most importantly on the attitude towards people of the person with whom you will be working.

⁽²⁾ Douglas McGregor in his book the [Human Side of Enterprise](#) in 1960, summed it up as the difference between Theory X and Theory Y. By the time you have reached the end of this article, you will have worked out what some of the differences are that McGregor identified. Organizations tend to be one or the other. Although one finds exceptions among individual managers, the organizational culture will dominate.

Scenario 1

"Oh, Who are you? Oh yes you start today. Well, that's good, we're really pushed. Here is where you will be working, just start, you'll work out what has to be done, Joe will help you if he has time."

You may have had some hints of the way things were done during the hiring process, but you need the job, right?

This is an organization that tends not to give much thought to its people resources. This type of business values "Learning the hard way, after all that is what I - the manager- did". Individuals will tend to be impatient with your not being able to complete the tasks assigned, even without training. "After all I hired you to do the job, not train you how to do it."

This is an organization where communications and working with others may be sneeringly referred to as those touchy-feely things other people need; but here, by golly "We've got a business to run, not a therapy group."

To make the most of the opportunity what are some of the strategies you need to pay attention to?

Let's use traffic lights as a guidepost. You know how they provide us with instant recognition of how to behave at intersections. Work offers many similar situations to arriving at an intersection you have not been to before.

Red - STOP

- What and who count round here?
- What is rewarded and what is not.
- How do things get done, through the formal or informal organization, does anything actually get done?
- Who are the "leaders", whom do you need to know
- Keep your opinions to yourself until you have a track record, loose lips sink ships.
- Be clear about what your boss expects you to do and where your authority limits are
- Try to find the landmines
- Understand the unwritten rules of behaviour and decide how to manage them

YELLOW - PREPARE

- Work out where your support might lie
- Don't rock the boat
- Try out your idea in tiny steps, edge through the traffic
- Watch your back

GREEN - GO (Carefully!)

- Push off gently but be ready to back up, yield
- If you get through, check in your rear view mirror for someone coming up behind too close for comfort
- Carry on driving defensively
- Make small steps towards your goals; never make other people wrong.

Scenario 2

"Hello, we are really pleased you were able to come and work with us. This is Kim calling. You'll remember we met at your second interview. Before you start, we want to make sure you have all the information you need. You said you would be driving so a parking pass with a little map is on its way – that way you will be able to park in the right place.

When you arrive at 8.30 a.m., check with Joe at the reception and he will get me. We'll be spending the first part of the day walking around the plant getting to know the building layout, where things are and meeting some of the key people. Then you will get a chance to take a look at your work area and one of your coworkers Pat, whom you also met, will spend the rest of the day familiarising you with some of the important things you need to know about the job. We will be giving you more and more information each day, so don't worry if you feel a little lost at the beginning. We all take time to learn new things. See you Thursday."

What a difference! You have chosen to work with an organization that believes in spending quality time making sure it hires the right people and then take the time to keep them once its got them.

Being successful in your job here is in some ways easier than in Scenario 1. However, you will also be expected to take more personal responsibility for what you do, be part of the team and work cooperatively with your colleagues to help the organization be successful. This type of organization hired you probably because it saw those qualities in you. Using those traffic lights again, let's follow them through the process. All the others apply from the first scenario, but there's less "mind-reading" to do....

Red - STOP

- Take time to learn about the organization, what it values
- How is success measured?
- Respect others - put your mind in gear before your mouth in motion
- Appreciate the importance of each person

YELLOW - PREPARE

- What behaviour is considered acceptable;
- Consider the end result of what you plan to do, say.
- Will you ideas be beneficial to the organization and in what ways?
- How can you best put your ideas forward?
- Aim to become a productive team member quickly


GREEN - GO (Carefully!)

- Take responsibility for yourself
- Seek to make others successful so you will be too.
- Learn from your mistakes – seek feedback
- Look for opportunities to add value
- Keep going

What do you think were some of the main differences that Douglas McGregor identified between Theory X and Y? McGregor posited that behind every interaction there are assumptions about human nature and behaviour. Theory X the Traditional View of Direction and Control – you don't want to work, take responsibility, etc. so I will treat you accordingly.

Or Theory Y, the Integration of Individual and Organizational Goals - you want to work towards meaningful goals, will take responsibility, etc. and so I will treat you accordingly.

You may hope that since he wrote nearly 40 years ago, we would have got it right by now. Unfortunately, Theory X is alive and well. Dilbert's experiences cartooned by Scott Adams speaks to it clearly!

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|  | <p><i>What are the assumptions you make about other people? Join Jane next month when she continues on the this theme and takes a look at "Improving our skills in Working with Others"</i></p> <p><i>Jane Durant is a workshop leader, consultant and coach and to a wide variety of organizations in North America and the United Kingdom. A supervisor herself for many years, since 1985 she has worked with hundreds of supervisors in customized programs.</i></p> <p><i>The ideas for this article came from Jane's second publication "The C o l o r s of Supervision", a book about working with others. She will be talking about "The Colors of Supervision" at the IFTDO Conference in Kuala Lumpur in October this year. Jane's first book "Don't You Have Anything Better to Do" also speaks to some of the areas covered above and can be accessed through Jane's website at www.janedurant.com.</i></p> |
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Notes

⁽¹⁾ For job, read contract, opportunity, etc. Everything in this article applies to those who work for others either as employees or contractors; it makes little difference. When you are freelance, it is easier for the client to "fire" you.

⁽²⁾ Theory X and Theory Y
Douglas McGregor, the [Human Side of Enterprise](#), (1960, McGraw-Hill Book Company).

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