



# Welcome to the Real World

## Finding Your Place, Perfecting Your Work, and Turning Your Job into Your Dream Career

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## Rating

**8** 8 Applicability  
7 Innovation  
7 Style

## Focus

Leadership & Management

Strategy

Sales & Marketing

Finance

Human Resources

IT, Production & Logistics

**Career & Self-Development**

Small Business

Economics & Politics

Industries

Global Business

Concepts & Trends

## Take-Aways

- As you launch yourself in the world of work, welcome challenges. You need them to evolve as a person.
- Never limit your thinking or what you try to accomplish.
- Accept rejection. Understand that it's part of getting to where you want to be.
- If you don't know how to do something at work, find a solution.
- Network by creating relationships inside your company, and by seeking and nurturing them outside your company.
- Work hard to build a strong connection with – and also steadily demonstrate your loyalty to – your boss.
- But don't ask your boss to be your Facebook friend without permission or invitation.
- Mentors guide and aid your career. Network to find one.
- Maintain a strong, positive presence at company activities and on your office's online social platforms.
- You are your own personal brand. Own it, treasure it, and work it.

# Relevance

## What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) What guidelines millennials should follow to get ahead in business and in life, 2) How to embellish your personal brand, 3) Why millennials must network, and 4) How to balance your professional life with your private life.

## Review

When you start at your first entry-level job, you may be uncertain about how to do it well or how to handle the many new challenges you face. You are not alone. Lauren Berger, a millennial and accomplished spokesperson for her generation, offers sound, practical advice for your debut in the world of work. Her online audience of millennials – particularly young women – will love Berger’s book, which features a strong female slant. However, since she focuses on the special needs and wants of millennials and workplace novices, baby boomer readers may find that her advice and cultural references bypass them – unless their kids are millennials on the cusp of entering the workplace, in which case, they, too, should read on. Berger provides millennials with helpful ideas and tips on how to handle their work and personal lives and how to balance the two. *getAbstract* recommends her clear, practical, humorous manual especially to the people for whom she wrote it: millennials at the beginning of their careers.

# Summary

## Your First Job

Young people receive little or no preparation or guidance for the real world of work while they’re in the protective bubble of college. They don’t learn to manage their affairs, to prioritize, to handle work or, in general, to take care of themselves. Millennials should adopt these proven guidelines for success at work:

- **“Confidence is king”** – With confidence, all things are possible. But don’t be cocky. To develop confidence, live your life to the fullest and experience all you can. As you discover how strong you really are, genuine confidence will follow.
- **“Get comfortable being uncomfortable”** – To become a more competent, aware, profound and impressive person, push the envelope every day. One counselor explains, “When you are out of your comfort zone...you grow the most as a person.”
- **“Think big, follow through, execute”** – When it comes to the projects you want to develop and implement, don’t limit yourself and don’t hesitate, even if other people warn that what you want to do is impossible. Execute your ambitious plans as professionally as possible and do the necessary follow-up on any project you begin.
- **“Think about the consequences”** – Whatever you do will have consequences, big and small. Before you act – before you even send an email – consider the potential results.
- **“Never settle”** – People tend to linger, even three or four years, in jobs they dislike. Don’t sell your talents short and don’t stay in a job you hate for the sake of security. “Go after that dream life.”
- **“Learn to love rejection, seriously”** – Rejection is a fact of life in business. Rejection does not mean no; it only means “not right now.” Use rejection as motivation to prove that the people who rejected you were wrong. Create a “rejection playlist” of songs that inspire you to stay strong and listen to it until you feel better.
- **“Don’t take things personally”** – “Your personal life is not your work life.” You will never know what fuels most upper-echelon business decisions that affect you, but few

*“Don’t settle for an OK job – go after your dream job. Don’t settle for an OK life – go after your dream life.”*

*“The person who is better at their job isn’t necessarily the one spending more time in the office, it’s the person getting more out of their time in the office.”*

*“Everything you are responsible for at work should have a system, and you should make these systems your own.”*

*“When you...mess up...take a moment, reflect on what went wrong and learn as much as you can from the situation.”*

*“Don’t worry so much about winning [co-workers] over; focus on performing well and putting out great quality work, and you’ll be surprised how quickly an uncomfortable situation can turn into an OK one.”*

*“You can easily get so swept up in the madness of your first job that you forget to make goals and keep yourself on track.”*

of them will take your personal feelings into account. Keep your emotions private and get on with your job.

- **“Bitches aren’t cool”** – Maybe the mean girls and boys ruled high school, but you’re not in high school anymore. Be nice.
- **“Try to stay balanced”** – Longer hours don’t mean better work. You must play and rest, or you will burn out. “Work is part of life, but work isn’t life.”

### Adopt a Systems Approach

In an entry-level job, systematize your work by being prepared. Create a map for your work by developing efficient, reliable processes. Know the main players in your office. Use etiquette on the phone and online; be polite and personable. Keep your emails as brief and to the point as possible. Be prepared. For example, gather the materials and information your boss needs in advance of a meeting or conference. If you are called on to run a meeting, develop a “power agenda,” a well thought-out plan with all the important elements you’ll need to cover.

Your desk should be neat and uncluttered. Keep any necessary items available in a drawer, including your cellphone, laptop, iPod and all necessary chargers, your wallet, at least five pens, a small notepad, business cards, any medication or vitamins you take, and the personal care items you need to freshen up for unexpected events. Develop a sound “calendar system.” Synchronize your datebook to your cellphone. Monitor your inbox. Answer all your emails every day. Maintain a good filing system. Prioritize your work to get the most important tasks out of the way first. Use sticky notes to alert you to urgent matters. Set clear goals.

Take charge of your time, develop original concepts, and work to transform them into practical realities that add real value. And, if you don’t succeed initially, remain ready, willing and able to give it another try. Adopt a “figure-it-out” approach. If you don’t know how to do something, be resourceful, do your research and use your intelligence to come up with the best solution.

### You Are Your Own Brand

Today, everyone is their own personal brand. Miley Cyrus’s brand is in-your-face sexy; Justin Timberlake’s brand is luxurious confidence and Taylor Swift’s brand is “classic girly.” Like them, you have a brand. Everything you do – from the way you file papers, to the way you sit at your desk, to how you answer your phone – forms your personal brand.

Your appearance is a crucial component of your brand, so look good. “Dress for the job you want, not the job you have.” Consider a few general wardrobe rules: Don’t wear jeans if they aren’t allowed. Never wear ripped jeans or leggings. Casual Fridays don’t also mean casual Tuesdays or any other casual workday. For young women, the “naughty secretary” look is a big no-no. Besides your dress, also watch your attitude. Millennials do not enjoy a good reputation. Many people see the Gen Y cohort as entitled and refer to them with disparaging names, such as, “the trophy generation” and “the microwave generation.” So, as a millennial, you are always engaged in an uphill fight. To avoid negative stereotypes, act with humility and demonstrate gratitude.

The way you express your brand through online social channels also matters. Avoid any compromising photos. Don’t, for example, post images of yourself or colleagues drunk. Don’t try maintaining one Facebook page for work and another for your personal life. Be careful with the commentary you post on your wall. Don’t ask your boss to be your

*“To be successful, you have to first decide what you want to do, and then constantly put yourself out there, telling people what you want to do.”*

*“You should be networking...by building relationships inside the office and within your company, and externally, by building relationships with people outside of your company.”*

*“We spend so much time doubting ourselves and feeling insecure about our skills, our appearance, our goals, our way of getting things done [that] we just can't seem to find the confidence within ourselves.”*

*“Success means being happy in the way you're spending your time every day.”*

Facebook friend unless invited. Create a great biography on Twitter, which you can use to promote your work activities. LinkedIn is also a productive place to post your résumé, which can be as long as you like. Join the most appropriate LinkedIn groups, including those that executives you want to emulate have joined. For Instagram, upload “at least two to three photos per week.” Utilize hashtags. For Pinterest, maintain “at least one pinboard for yourself.” However often you change jobs, your personal brand always stays the same. Only you can raise or lower its value. Post only those items that fit your professional brand.

Develop good time-management skills. Get out of bed early, so you can start your workday and get the jump on everyone else. Allow yourself a “power hour” for handling emails and assembling your to-do list.

### **Networking for Fun and Profit**

You can't get ahead in business if you don't meet regularly with other people to build relationships and to network, to hang out, and, in other words, to schmooze. Think about building those person-to-person links people often cite when you ask how they got their great job. You can't develop relationships with the people who count in business unless you first understand – and can deal effectively – with office politics. This doesn't mean you should play politics. However, you must know how to protect yourself from those colleagues who do. Be friendly with everyone at work, not in a phony way, but with genuine and unaffected warmth.

When you network, your goal is to become friends with as many of your colleagues as possible. Carefully observe what takes place in the office, including who gets promoted and who doesn't. Quickly develop a set of allies inside the office, people who will watch your back when needed. Save your opinions for outside of the office. Always limit your drinking with colleagues.

### **Get Close to Your Boss**

Your relationship with your boss is one of your most important connections. You want him or her to speak well of you and to recommend you for profitable opportunities when they arise. Work hard to build a strong relationship and steadily demonstrate your loyalty to your boss. Don't fret if your supervisor has a bad attitude. Some people are naturally unhappy or grumpy. Don't look for or expect praise. Keep your boss fully informed about your activities. Be the first to arrive at work and leave the office only after your boss leaves.

Seek out and develop a mentor – not your boss – who can show you how to get ahead. Find someone who isn't in your “reporting chain.” Linking up with a mentor is particularly important if you work at a large firm, where levels of authority and power are not always clear. Don't try to find a mentor at the top of your company. Look for someone in middle management. Don't develop a one-way relationship with your mentor; be helpful in return if you can.

### **Dating at Work**

Be careful about dating your colleagues. If your relationship doesn't pan out, you will still have to see and work with that person every day. The negative implications of this uncomfortable situation are obvious. Some companies have rules that don't permit romantic relationships between co-workers. Even if it is all right to date a colleague at your company, don't date the interns. “Often, you'll be in charge of giving them assignments, so it could be viewed as an abuse of power.” Remember, “wherever there is an intern, there is a parent close behind.”

*“The chain of command...goes up pretty high, and you never know who your mistakes might be affecting.”*

*“It’s in those moments – those embarrassing screw-ups where you think your world is coming to an end – that you learn the most.”*

*“You are a business inside of a business.”*

### Internal Networking

Use Google Alerts to flag any public references about your bosses and their bosses. If good news arrives, and you have an appropriate working relationship, send a congratulatory note. Keep personal stationery handy so you can send thank-you notes to colleagues. If you can’t network with the top executives at your firm, network with their assistants. Be available to collaborate with your co-workers. Show up as often as possible at company events. Participate in company sports and social activities, like, for example, softball teams and discussion groups. Maintain a strong, professional presence on your firm’s social platforms.

### External Networking

To build connections, don’t ask, “Where can I network?” Instead, ask: “Where can I build relationships with other people?” Options include college alumni events, your sorority or fraternity, your house of worship, meetings of local networking groups, business conferences, organizations for young professionals, business panels, and your health club.

Recruit friends to join you at external networking events. Take everything you might need, such as business cards, notepad and pen, money, and little extras, like mints. Travel to the event in a clean car. Check the guest list in advance to target the people you want to meet. Plan on making at least five new contacts at each event. Establish eye contact during conversations. Don’t fiddle with your cellphone when you speak with someone. Don’t ask, “What do you do? Instead, ask, “Where did you go to school?” or “Where are you from?” Show interest in everyone you meet. Networking is crucial and ongoing. To psych yourself for it, “channel your inner entrepreneur.”

### Life Outside the Office

Your life after college is not just about work. It also is about...your life. This includes how you handle money and finances. Your rent should be no more than “30% to 35%” of your total monthly income. Set up a budget. Watch your expenses. Dine out no more than twice a week. Become your own cook. Pack a lunch for work. Don’t go overboard with credit cards. Use QuickBooks Online to manage your finances. It is never too early to plan for your retirement.

Work will keep you super busy. Nevertheless, find time for the mundane errands in your life, for example, trips to the bank, the post office and your physician. Make time for regular workouts. Join a gym – and go regularly. Devote a scheduled portion of your time to yourself. Use it to read as much as you can. Stay in touch with your family and friends.

Keep your home clean and well-organized. Find time for occasional walks to clear your mind. As far as new relationships go, use your head and don’t play games. That may have been OK during college, but you’re not a kid anymore. You’re a young professional. To act like one, fix any problems you cause. If you made a mistake with a professional contact, apologize. Saying you’re sorry is often the best response to a wide variety of mistakes, as is accepting responsibility. Mistakes happen, so assume culpability, say you’re sorry and move on. You’ve got places to go.

## About the Author

**Lauren Berger** is the CEO and founder of the InternQueen internship website. Her first book, *All Work, No Pay*, is a national campus bestseller.