

Employment survival guide: Adapt, stand apart and play by the new rules

Written by Julie Desmond
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Survival of the fittest has not always referred to employment survival. Today, getting a job is no small feat. If you've succeeded in getting hired, strategize effectively to keep the position you have. You will need to call in all your personal resources: your talents, your skills, your connections. And with competition as fierce as it is now, you can add three new tactics to your game plan: adapt, stand out, and choose your own rules.

The ability to adapt and evolve has serviced humankind since day one. Make a commitment to learn something new and try something new on the job every day. Building your knowledge base and adding new skills will demonstrate to others that you are interested in your work and able to handle whatever challenges arise.

Standing apart is what sets leaders ahead of the pack. "Everyone's doing it," means anyone can do it, which means you can be easily replaced. Search for ways to add value by utilizing your unique gifts – both the technical and the human talents that set you apart from the crowd. Becoming the go-to person for certain issues gives you a niche and a leadership perspective. You are less easily replaced when your co-workers need and appreciate what you bring to the team.

The new rules? Create your own. Punching a clock and going through the motions of work just for the money isn't enough to give you the energy and edge you need to keep a position for long. What else can you add to maximize your efforts? Do you have a moral motivator? For instance, are you working for money, but also to help others through your work? Or do you have a success motivator? This would be a goal around fame or achievement. What are you working for? Create a framework for reaching your personal mountaintops.

To be clear, you must be ethical and all that. But you will achieve more, faster, when you approach your work from new perspectives, take chances and push yourself for purposes beyond money alone. "We've always done it this way," is no more plausible than, "Everyone's doing it." Decide for yourself what the right way is and then follow it through to the success you, personally, value.

Send your career planning challenges to julie@Insightnews.com .