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BRING YOUR STYLE HOME Fall 2004

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Congratulations! After a few years of earning your keep, you've finally hit your stride in the professional realm. Yes, it's taken some time (and you're still working through some kinks!), but your work life is looking up. To keep the momentum going, there are some things you should do—banishing those less-than-professional #TBT photos from your Facebook profile being just the tip of the iceberg. Whether you're on the path you've always dreamed of or are still finding your way, these 15 good practices will pay in dividends down the line. Read on!

- **Set up your Facebook privacy settings** so your colleagues aren't seeing your party photos—and anything else you don't want shown to potential future employers or coworkers. Facebook allows you to create customized friend lists so you can choose who sees your check-ins, photos, and other details about your personal life. Be sure that every time you accept a new friend request you're adding your contacts to the appropriate list. On a similar note, unless you want all of your tweets and photographs shown to the world, make your Twitter and Instagram accounts private.
- **Maintain a digital professional address book.** Doing so makes it super-easy to find contact information when you need it (so you don't have to go searching through old emails). And, perhaps even more importantly, it will also make it a cinch to export when you leave your job. The relationships you build during your career can be even more valuable than your title itself, so it's essential to stay in touch. Get in the habit of adding business card information to your address book every time you receive one.
- **Build out your LinkedIn profile**, but don't spoil the surprise completely. Treat your LinkedIn profile like a summary of your greatest hits—reserve some more recent projects for the interview to present an element of surprise. As you make new contacts throughout your career, add them on LinkedIn so you can always have a pulse on what they're up to.
- **Update your résumé every 6 months.** Whether you're looking for a new job or not, it's important to keep your résumé updated with new experience, skills, and projects. Details become blurry over time, and you don't want to forget an important facet of a project when you finally sit down for your next annual review or to apply for a new position.
- **Maintain relationships** with old colleagues and/or professors when you move on to new opportunities. A simple "just wanted to say hi and see what's new" every six months or so to people you've developed a rapport with is all it takes. You never know how someone may be valuable to you later in your career!
- Working in a creative field like design or writing? **Establish a cohesive and vibrant online presence.** Create a portfolio website where you can show off your work, and allow your personality and expertise to shine bright from behind a computer screen.
- **Always send a thank you or follow-up email** or note after a meeting with, or gesture from a business contact. Gratefulness and manners will always be remembered.
- **Know your worth.** By this time, you may have had a few jobs, taken on some projects, and conversed with others in your field. Assess your skill set and become familiar with the space so you can become confident in your value the next time you're due for a raise or job offer.
- **Be to the point—yet always polite.** Nothing is worse than an email with tons of fluff that requires a recipient to dig for your question, request, or response. A succinct,

no-frills email conveys confidence and pointed expertise. Hone your language, and be specific.

- **Seek mentorship** from those you admire. Ask questions and listen carefully. Know someone on the path you might see yourself walking 10 to 20 years down the road? Do whatever you can do to learn from and emulate them; a quick coffee exchange is rarely declined if you express your admiration for someone's work.
- **Learn how to network,** while still expressing your genuine personality. You shouldn't have to feel like a shell of your real self in professional environments. Depending on your industry and work environment, the line may differ; know, and tread it carefully.
- **Always show up 10 minutes early.** Think of this as more of a life lesson than anything—but punctuality is among the most important of professional habits to adopt. It's an honest indicator of your organizational skills and overall reliability.
- **Get, and stay, organized.** From your iCalendar to your computer's desktop to your **physical workspace**, a neat and tidy environment communicates professionalism and organization.
- **Respond to emails within 24 hours**, sooner if your reply is necessary for workflow purposes. And if you're swamped, a simple confirmation of receipt will go a long way. Heading out on vacation? Don't forget to set an out-of-office response telling people when you'll be back in touch.
- Have an arsenal of **work-appropriate clothing** choices and **dress for the job you want.** We all know that clothes can be an important form of nonverbal communication, so do your best to avoid those side-eye glances.

Do you have any bits of professional wisdom to share? Tell us in the comments!

Photo by Chris Patey