SUCCESS STRATEGIES
WORDS OF ADVICE FROM NEW ENGINEERS

The Capstone to Work (C2W) team studies students' experiences in the transition from capstone engineering design courses to the workplace.

TAKE INITIATIVE

ASK QUESTIONS

BUILD A NETWORK

KEEP LEARNING

GO ALL IN

PURSUE QUALITY

VALUE YOURSELF

Themes and advice come from more than 100 engineering graduates at four institutions.
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ASK QUESTIONS

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions and admit that, "Hey, I don’t know something." ... They don’t expect you to know everything right off the bat.”

“Learn to talk to other people to get information. Not everything is in a book.”

“Expect a really steep learning curve and ask questions. Don’t be nervous about asking questions.”

“I have noticed that, if I make the effort to ask the questions, that often my boss will take note of it, appreciate it. ... It has never been a waste of time to ask a question in a meeting.”
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TAKE INITIATIVE

"Going out and trying to seek the answers seems to be received a lot better than acting like I know things about things I don't."

"Focus on two big things: showing initiative and communicating well."

"Ask for the sort of work you want. ... It took me a while to realize that I had that capacity to say, 'I'm interested in this. If it comes up let me know.'"

"Take advantage of all the opportunities at work. ... Even if it doesn't apply directly it's still learning something different."

"Show initiative and a positive attitude working, try to go above and beyond, show that you care."
“Take everything you do seriously, even the little jobs, because it’s all a reflection of your work.”

“There is nothing that goes away when you finish it... if you half ass something or it’s close enough but not quite right, ... it just comes back and you’ll just have to fix it eventually so you should just do it right.”

“Focus on quality of work rather than deadlines, because in the working world, projects get delayed.”

“Make sure that you’re doing your due diligence in your projects and at work, because it does kind of make a huge difference in how people perceive you.”

“Being in a job is kind of like being in a class where the homework isn’t graded, or even collected.

I mean, you’re basically expected to understand what you’re doing, and if you don’t,... it’s your own fault.

And all you’re doing is hurting yourself.”
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**BUILD A NETWORK**

“Keep an open mind. There are a lot of people out there that know a lot of stuff. Don’t take anybody for granted. ... I’ve talked to a lot of operators and machinists that have this idea of engineers always talking down to them.”

“Talk to as many engineers as you can. I think the biggest transition from being a 22-year-old college kid to a 22-year-old professional engineer is the maturity.”

One of the best ways and easiest ways to mature is by being around and talking to people that are in the profession.”

“[Build a] group of people where you can look for resources and ... get to know how to just communicate with a lot of people from a lot of different disciplines.”

“Get to know the people at your work on an informal level and network with them.”
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KEEP LEARNING

“it’s gonna be a learning process.
...You can’t expect to go into any job knowing what you’re doing, especially as an engineer.”

“You’re just going to have to keep learning
...If I had been given that advice, I think I would have been a lot less frustrated...going into this job.”

“Be prepared to not know anything.
You’re going to be taught new tools, you’re going to be taught new concepts.”

“Be very spongesque with information absorption,
be able to retain that, and be able to apply that.”

“It’s like a continuous fire hose...
There’s always so much to be absorbed. I think [in] two years, you should learn a lot, but I don’t think you can be an expert at anything until you’re at least 40 and [have] done something for a while.”

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GO ALL IN

"Give it your all and be available as much as you can. Try to go beyond what's expected of you, because that will get you not only ahead, but that will also set you up for success."

"You can be an ass%&# at your job, but you have to be the very, very best."

Or you can be just okay at your job, and just show a willingness to learn.

You can do one or the other. But you can't be like a stubborn ass%&# and then only do an okay job."

"You don't have to be right all the time, as long as... you're making the effort and you're showing that you want to be right, and you want to be doing well."

"Go in open-minded and willing to be taught. ... People are much more receptive to someone that is down to earth and excited to be there, and that really just wants to learn."
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VALUE YOURSELF

“If you’re excited about your job, good. Stay excited about it. Don’t get discouraged by not knowing things and absorb as much as you can.”

“There are gonna be good days and bad days, just let go of the bad days. ... Just kinda roll with the punches a little bit.”

“You can still be a good engineer even though you don’t have much experience and that experience will come.”

“It’s really important to take care of yourself outside of work... Take care of your health and your emotional well being. ... Go to sleep on time.”

“Understand that you have a very different mindset than some of the people that are 40 and 50 years old, so figure out how to leverage yourself.”