

A guide to creating a successful transition from Graduate to Professional

So ... you have just found out you have a new job! Congratulations!

How are you feeling about getting a new job or going out into the world of work as a professional for the first time?

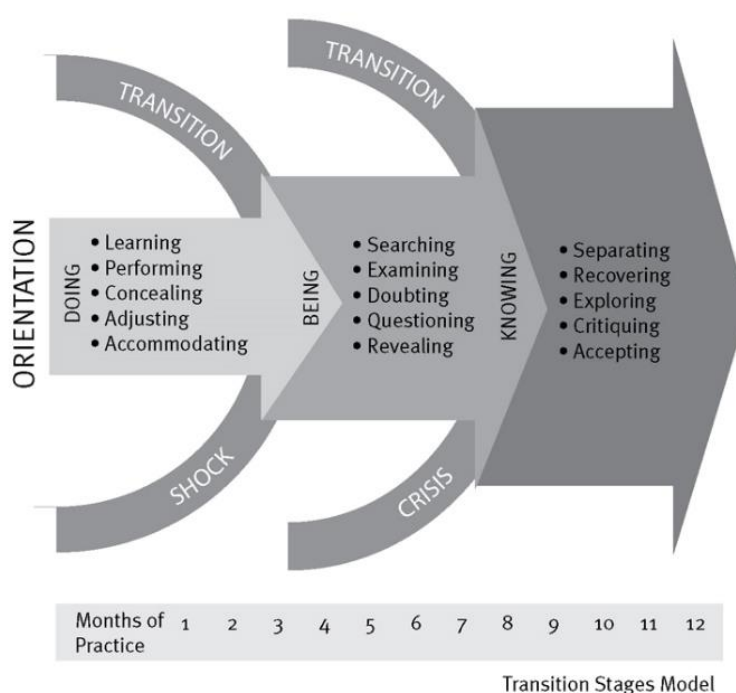
Leaving the security of regular lectures, daily routines, familiar faces and entering the big wide world of work may feel a little overwhelming to some, especially if you haven't obtained relevant work experience in your field before.

New Graduate Transition Model

While you may be thinking you are the only Graduate out there that is potentially feeling a little nervous... be rest assured you are not! Everyone can feel a bit of the old 'Imposter Syndrome' from time to time.

However, there are theoretical models to prove that the transition into the 'real world' is a real process, in which Graduates move through several stages (from novice, advanced beginner through to being proficient and an expert – Benner 1982) to feel competent and confident in their new environment. So, breathe easy ...

This useful Transition model below is based on the 'Professional Role Transition for Nurses', by Judy Boychuk Duchscher and is a helpful way of feeling reassured and not overwhelmed. Employers are not expecting Graduates to know everything as soon as they enter the job. There are certain stages Graduates will go through and gain skills while they travel through each one, from first entering the workforce as a new Graduate to progressing to an established employee.



Source: Duchscher n.d.

How do I make a good first impression from the “get-go”?

- Be on time and turn up every time – this may seem obvious but don’t underestimate how important this is to a team and your manager.
- Be professional and courteous with everyone, including the people you share the elevator with, word will spread fast ...
- Look professional - it takes 2 seconds to make a visual impression and 30 seconds to confirm it.
- Be mindful of your body language – it will speak volumes without you even knowing. 50% of your communication is through your body language.
- Go the extra mile, take on responsibilities, and give it a go even if you haven’t done that task before – be keen!
- If you don’t know the answer to something – ask. Remember it’s ok to ask, you are new!
- Be curious and ask people questions, build genuine connections.
- If you come across a potential problem and need to talk to your manager, think of possible solutions before you go into your meeting.
- Think of outside-the-box approaches that haven’t been thought of before.

Once you have transitioned successfully into your new role...

Think about your ongoing development and the future goals you want to achieve. Remember, it is no longer just up to the company to look after your professional development – it is down to you too. For your ongoing development, here are some ideas:

- Develop a mentor relationship/s whether that is within your present organisation or outside of it.
- Join a professional association, attend events and network.
- Network through colleagues and personal contacts.
- Attend work social events e.g., take part in the social netball team.
- Look for opportunities to upskill or gain skills in areas where you think you are lacking or see what skills are required in the future.
- Keep up to date with the latest developments by reading industry websites and resources relevant to your field of expertise.
- Keep a record of what you do that contributes to the team/organisation – handy to keep this list for when you have a review with your manager.

What if?

Sometimes things do not go according to plan or as well as you would have hoped ... so what do you do? How do you know things are not working out for you?

- Recognise and acknowledge when you are feeling stressed and find ways to deal with this. A little stress can be ok, but feelings of being overwhelmed and not being able to cope are not – seek help. Often companies have confidential well-being support services, such as EAP, which is free for staff.
- Get information and know where to go for support within your organisation. Talk to your mentor, HR department or someone you trust.
- Keep records and a diary of your achievements.
- Constructive conflict resolution – understand how this process works in your company.
- Know your rights – look at your contract as well as employment websites (e.g. www.employment.govt.nz)
- Decide whether you are going to try and solve the problem or potentially move on to a new job.
- Start looking for a new job and ensure a smooth transition to a new job – remember to be professional. NZ is a small place; you don’t want to ‘burn your bridges’ and you may require a referee from your current place of work.