

Dean Lazar's Golden Tips

Golden Tip # 1: You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit. (Aristotle) You decide your level of effort and your attention to detail. You will learn the most if you try your best to do A+ work, *even if it is not recognized or rewarded by others.*

Golden Tip # 2: Use the Resources Available to You. If you are already out of school, go to the library or a local bookstore. Look around for mentors and advisors in your workplace and community. There is wisdom and experience all around you.

Golden Tip #3: You Drive the CAR in Your Career. Cultures and families are different, and some people feel obligated to pursue the profession chosen for them by their families. Whether or not you are paying your own college tuition, you are the person who will be living your life, and you must drive the career car.

Golden Tip #4: Be Intentional and Strategic. The world doesn't care if you succeed or not, so the burden is always on you

- To focus your attention,
- To continually motivate yourself, and
- To take steps that enable you to grow and prosper in your career.

Golden Tip #5: Think Globally, Act Locally. The world needs you to care about social and economic justice, about natural resources and climate change, and about creating opportunities for everyone in our communities to live decent lives.

Golden Tip #6: You Join an Ecosystem of Opportunity by Communicating With People. Networking and socializing are the keys to finding your niche in the work ecosystem of your choice.

Golden Tip #7: Build Your Own Personal Social Capital. As you grow your professional network, your challenge will be to leverage these contacts. Don't underestimate the power of weak or loose ties. Build your own *personal social capital* by continuously investing time and attention in socializing and networking.

Golden Tip #8: ABC = Always Be Connecting. There is no substitute for face-to-face socializing when it comes to creating professional options, because your next opportunity can emerge directly or indirectly from someone you meet at an event. You invest in yourself every time you exchange contact information with someone new.

Golden Tip #9: Practice Small Talk with Strangers. Use any opportunities that present themselves to you to hone your small talk skills. Practice chatting

people up on the line at the grocery store, on the bus, or in a waiting room. Smile, try to engage and be prepared to be rebuffed a few times – the times when you do get a positive response will more than make up for the times when people are not interested in talking with you.

Golden Tip #10: Build your personal board of directors. Find people willing to guide you in the future by being authentic and hard working in the present.

Golden Tip #11: Safeguard Your Reputation. Think about the impacts of your words and actions BEFORE you speak or act. Here are two examples of the advice of sages, old and new:

- *“Regard your good name as the richest jewel you possess – for credit is like fire; when once you have kindled it you may easily preserve it, but if you once extinguish it, you will find it an arduous task to rekindle it again. The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear.”* Socrates (469 BC – 399 BC)
- *“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.”* Warren Buffet

Golden Tip #12: Read, Read, Read. Read widely in the professional journals in the fields you are interested in, keep up with relevant websites and blogs (does your professor write one?) and have some idea of what is happening in the world. Do not rely on television for your news.

Golden Tip #13: Influence What Employers See About You Online. Make a checklist of the adjectives you want employers to think of when they review you as a potential hire, use those words yourself when appropriate, and post things that will inspire others to use those words to describe you.

Golden Tip #14: Copying Others is OK When It Comes to Keywords. When you are completing an online profile you want to use a lot of keywords so that computer algorithms used by employers and recruiters will find you. Copy the keywords used by those who have the job(s) you want!

Golden Tip #15: You can’t turn down what hasn’t been offered. You have to get in the game, and pro-actively seek out opportunities that you are qualified for and interested in. Don’t spend time worrying and deciding that you won’t get picked and talk yourself out of applying.

Golden Tip #16: Use your Minutes. You may feel that your time is constrained by school, family and/or work commitments, and you may imagine that you are never free to “do what you want to do,” but it is almost surely the case that you can control some portion of your time. *Be intentional and make good choices with those minutes, however few they may seem to be!* Over time, you can accomplish a lot working just a few minutes a day or week on a project or an idea. You can always learn something new – even something

that seems insurmountably hard - if you break it into steps and apply yourself diligently over time.

Golden Tip #17: Never wear new clothes (especially new shoes) to an interview. To be authentic and natural, you need to relax, and new clothes may be uncomfortable or cause you to move awkwardly. On the other hand, you certainly don't want to look scruffy or unkempt! Every season, region and workplace has a dress code - make sure that you only deviate from it in tasteful ways that do not inadvertently cause you to lose status.

Golden Tip #18: To Fail to Prepare is to Prepare to Fail. Don't sabotage yourself by neglecting to prepare for every interview. Focus on the things you can control: **learn** about your interviewer/the company/the industry, **plan** a conservative outfit and make sure it is clean and ready, **prepare** your best answers to likely questions relating to your academic studies, your work background and your interest in the position.

Golden Tip #19: Express Appreciation Using your Words. Thank you notes help you build your social vocabulary, and are an important part of building your personal social capital. Stay in touch with people who have met with you and helped you. Sending thank you letters is part of stepping up and taking responsibility for how people will remember you: were you sincere? Did you follow up?

Golden Tip #20: It's Who You Know + What You Know. We all know the cliché that getting ahead in life is all about who you know. While this Guide emphasizes networking to get ahead in your career, the truth is that building a great career is *not* only about who you know: *it's also about what you know*. All the networking in the world won't help you if you don't develop some real expertise and the capacity to make a contribution to the work of others.

Golden Tip #21: Cultivate Your Curiosity. Everyone always says you need to pursue your passion, but what if you aren't sure what your passion is? Don't worry about your passion and instead, cultivate your curiosity! Always be learning and engaging the world on your own terms, and you will make yourself into an interesting and successful person.

Golden Tip #22: You are joining a show already in progress. There is a shared history/narrative in the workplace you are joining – be sure to learn your role in the ongoing production so you can demonstrate what a good fit you are for your job. Except for new start-ups, you will join an organization, a team, a hierarchy. Make sure you understand who is officially in charge, who has the real influence and what part you are playing in the show.

Golden Tip #23: Think of It As “Me, Incorporated.” Successful careers are deliberate creations. You must take a business –like approach to your career, anticipate the obvious challenges, make decisions rationally, and take pro-

active steps to ensure your success, happiness and financial well being. Think of it as building a company that is called “Me, Inc.” If not you, then who?

Golden Tip #24: Life is Random, Your Response is Not. Life may be a series of random occurrences of incalculable odds, but how you marshal your intelligence and your energy to respond to life’s challenges is totally up to you.

Golden Tip #25: You are on their team but they are NOT on your team. Remember: It’s Me Inc., no matter what your paycheck says. While the employer paying you rightfully expects your professional loyalty, this does not mean that you should trust them with any of your *personal* dreams, plans or ideas. Never share your thoughts about a potential job change, a move out of town or overseas, or plans for going back to school - until you are literally ready to resign.

Golden Tip #26: You Are Not A Robot. Only robots work 24/7. Take vacations, spend time with friends. No one can or should be always on, always networking, always seeking their next opportunity. There are going to be days, weeks and months when you should just do your job and create good work that impresses your supervisors and showcases your abilities.

Golden Tip #27: You Get What You Give. Is the glass half full or half empty? Are you an optimist or a pessimist? However you feel about the world, remember that when you are interacting with people, they see and react to what you show them. If you offer a positive outlook on life, a can-do attitude, and a smile, you will generally get a better response than if you scowl and present yourself as critical, disappointed or disillusioned.

Golden Tip #28: Remember ABC: Be Authentic, Be a Builder, Be a Collaborator. Being authentic in the context of work means talking the talk and walking the walk of a *builder and collaborator* who respects the contributions of others. One mark of a team player is that they never take all the credit for the work of their group – they talk about *our efforts* and *our success*.

Golden Tip #29: Be Punctual, Prepared and Present. Employers actually do notice the staff who are eager to do well, and often offer special opportunities to team members who are in the office early. Being *present* means listening actively when you are talking with someone: *listen with your eyes* and *smile to show you are getting the point*.

Golden Tip #30: Don’t Let Fear Sabotage You. Everyone has insecurities about presenting themselves as an expert - everyone suffers at one time or another from so-called *imposter syndrome*. It is important to face the future without fear so you can find the inner strength to face challenges and seize opportunities when they present themselves. Over time, you will become more confident as you live and work in the world. As the Nike slogan, says, *Just Do It*.

Golden Tip #31: Dysfunctional Organizations Defeat People. It is a universally recognized rule of business life that *when a highly functional person meets a dysfunctional organization, the organization wins*. Don't take it personally – as soon as you realize the problem, decide to learn whatever you can in the situation and get yourself a new job as quickly as you can!

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