

Office for Financial Success – Financial Tip of the Week  
A service of the Personal Financial Planning Department  
College of Human Environmental Sciences  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
(04/10/2009)

[Career Success](#)

We talk a lot about financial success, as that is part of the name for our Office for Financial Success (OFS). At the OFS, we provide free peer financial counseling to students, both live and through emails; campus and community financial workshops; financial counseling for the public (a small fee that is reduced for lower-income households); and tax preparation for moderate-income households through our nationally recognized MOTax program. Often, when counseling students, while it is a financial issue that brings them to us, it becomes apparent that there are some critical areas that they need to address to improve their trek through life (career). Some of the ones that come to mind are below.

Ethics – We probably don't need to remind you of the importance of ethics in one's professional life. Today, while the antonym of "ethics" is "Madoff", we need to ask ourselves what ethics means to us on a daily basis. As a start, carefully observe the people that you hold in high regard and ask yourself if you are similar to them in your ethics. Take note of their honesty, values, and work-ethic and, if possible, try to emulate them. Yes, finding that person whose compass always points to "true north" can be very valuable, as you work through life. Importantly, the world does not stand still but, if we have a sound ethical base, we will make decisions that mold that world in a positive direction. For you old Boy Scouts out there, think about how the world would be different if everyone followed the Scout Law. While Boy Scouts aren't perfect, I recently read a piece by a mediator on how he employs the Scout Law in his work. (Regardless of your occupation, you might find it interesting:

<http://karpmediation.com/resources/ScoutLawforMediators.pdf>.)

Solutions – Problems follow us, wherever we go, and being able to work toward solutions is an extremely valuable skill. At work, we often find repetitive processes that "have always been done that way" and could be improved if we adopted a new technology, changed the management of our workflow, and recognized the impediments that keep our business from fully achieving her goals. Try to stop blaming others for problems. Instead try to imagine what can be done to prevent the problem from happening and ask yourself how you can demonstrate leadership in making that a reality.

Technology – The future is now. Every day it seems like there is some new process being employed by the university that requires me to learn something new. Graduate students find out about our program on the computer, apply on-line, and may take our courses via the internet. We may never see them face-to-face. We need to keep in contact with all of our students and we find that they respond to text-messaging much faster than they do a phone call or e-mail. For you that are younger (which is most of you) this probably sounds a little corny but, trust me, there will be more, many more, changes in technology. I ask you to embrace all that is

good about these changes and to keep your distance from the rest. (How you make that decision is why I put Ethics at the top of this list.)

Sales – You have to be able to sell yourself and win over others to your point of view, in order to achieve financial success. You cannot have too much practice in communication skills. Take more courses that require you to talk to others. Practice speaking in front of large groups. Listen carefully to those you consider to be great speakers and “steal” a practice from them to use in your own communications. The main thing is to not be afraid to try to improve in this arena. John Ford, the film director, once said, “You can speak well if your tongue can deliver the message of your heart” .....seems we’re back to Ethics, again.

- Robert O. Weagley, Ph.D., CFP(r)

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