

10 things I know now

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That I wish I'd known when I started out

Hindsight is 20/20. It's easy to look back and say we would have changed our actions had we known then what we know now. Our lives are filled with moments of reflection: "I shouldn't have had that fifth Jägerbomb." "Milk was a bad choice." "I probably should've remembered her birthday (oops!)." These are the moments you wish you had a time machine so you could go back and do things differently.

While some mistakes are bigger than others, every decision you make about your career is important. That's why I am volunteering as your own personal time machine -- a window into your not-so-distant future -- with some advice on the ten things I'd wish I'd known when starting out in advertising.

1. Make friends with the receptionist and the IT department. You will end up

asking them to do you countless favors, especially in the beginning. They deal with hundreds of people a day, so there is no need to smother them, but a little bit of kindness can go a long way.

2. No one got anywhere by just doing their job. If somebody senior to you asks you to do something, the answer is yes. All the time, to every question. "Can you help out on this piece of business?" "Do you want to enter this competition?" "Can you help cut out pictures for this mood board?" Yes, yes and yes. These questions are all opportunities: to learn, to be noticed, to get exposure to people you previously wouldn't have and, most importantly, to prove yourself. And there is nothing more important when starting out than proving yourself.

3. You're going to be invited to a lot of cool parties and events. Go. You'll have some of the best experiences of your life, and they're great opportunities to meet some really fun people and build valuable relationships. Plus, starting salaries in advertising are notoriously low, so why not take advantage of free food, drink and a night on the town?

4. If you aren't getting nervous at least three times a week, you aren't trying hard enough. This has been a mantra for me throughout my career. Getting ahead is about always challenging yourself to get better, and the only way that is going to happen is if you feel a little out of your depth sometimes.

5. Pardon my language, but don't crap where you eat. Starting a new job means meeting a lot of people. You will spend lots of time together, and might get drunk together... at which point you will start to think it might be a good idea to get naked with this one or the other. It's not. In fact, it's a terrible idea. When this moment approaches, I want you to think of a kebab. A kebab seems like a great idea when you're drunk at 3 a.m., but when you wake up,

sick to your stomach, you'll wish you hadn't done it. And you'll definitely wish you didn't have to see the kebab for a minimum of eight hours the following day, and every day in the foreseeable future. Put the kebab down, and step away from your co-worker.

6. Take an hour for lunch. You might have to stay at work later, but you'll have something to look forward to every day and you'll make better friends because of it.

7. Your "lack of experience" in the workplace can actually be one of your strongest assets. While there is much to learn from people who have been around a long time, they may also be the ones who feel like they've seen everything before. Their experience gives them a lot of reasons why ideas can't be pursued, whereas your naiveté will drive you to ask, "why not?"

8. Don't let Meat Loaf's classic track, "You took the words right out of my mouth," be your brainstorming theme song. If you're sitting in a meeting with what you think is a good idea in your head, don't let someone else say it first. I can't tell you how many times I was politely waiting for my turn to speak when somebody else got in before me and stole my thunder. It can be extremely frustrating.

9. Not everybody thinks the same way you do, and that's a good thing. Don't be concerned if you don't always approach things the same way they've always been done. It can scare some people, but a diversity of thinking is valuable in the workplace and could end up being what differentiates you from the pack.

10. The advertising industry can be a very small place. The people you work with at the start of your career will most likely be around for most of it. While

some of them will undoubtedly rub you the wrong way, it's important to make more friends than enemies. You never know: one day they may be your boss. Or your client.

Of course, in the words of the great Marshall Bruce Mathers III, "If I could take it all back now I wouldn't; I would've done more sh*t that people said that I shouldn't." While Eminem's articulation may be lacking in this instance, his sentiment is not. Learn from my mistakes, yes, but make sure you go out and make plenty of your own, as well. That way -- in a few years -- you'll have your own retrospective wisdom to pass on, and plenty of fun stories to go with it.

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