Independent Banker
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Portfolio

[tag] Leadership at All Levels

[hed] 5 skills to master early in your career

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In the third part of our ongoing series offering advice to new community bankers, we’re focusing on tips for the newest of them all. What are the career skills you need to learn in your twenties? (Pro tip: Whether you are new to your career or a seasoned professional, it’s never too late to learn these lessons!)

Here are five ideas to share with the youngest among us.

1. **Get uncomfortable.** If you have a comfort zone, get out of it from time to time and take some risks. That doesn’t mean you should be reckless, especially in banking. Calculated risks are worth taking, however, and it’s OK (beneficial even) to make a few mistakes. So, try making decisions without overthinking them, make some yes/no decisions based on your gut, talk to people you don’t know at events and practice asking for things that matter to you. The more you get out of your comfort zone, the easier it’ll feel.
2. **Take feedback.** Even though it may sometimes feel like criticism, receiving feedback with grace is an important skill, so try not to take it personally. When you receive compliments, take them in. Both constructive and complimentary feedback enriches professional growth, so learn to lean into it.
3. **Build a brag sheet.** Keep those compliments on hand to use later on (say, at your next performance review or to read on days when you need a confidence boost). Few of us remember to collect all the positive feedback we get, so save complimentary emails from your boss or colleagues, and store records of your successes.
4. **Be a mindful communicator.** One of the most underrated skills in the workplace is listening. Be mindful during conversations by listening carefully to what the other person is saying, then reflecting their words back to them. When you’re thinking about contributing ideas in team meetings, count to five before speaking, to make sure you’ve fully thought through what you’re about to say. The same goes for emails. Make sure to proofread what you’ve written before sending it. An error is hard to claw back, especially if you hit “reply all” by mistake. When it comes to networking, hone your communication skills there. Practice mindful communication in both interpersonal and digital connections. Reach out regularly and share information that your contacts may find useful. Relationships that you built early on could travel with you through your career.
5. **Don’t compare yourself with others**. Work life can be competitive, and social media, which has been shown time and again to promote unrealistic ideals, can take a toll on all of us. Don’t be distracted by what other people say are markers of success. Set your own goals, make a plan to achieve them and appreciate the positive support from all around you.

Professional and leadership growth isn’t always easy, but joy and learning can be found in the journey itself. Believe in your success, navigate like a pro and know that you can conquer your twenties!

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