

Research shows that a young South African who can get and keep a first job for at least 12 months has an 85% chance of being employed for the rest of their lives!¹ So when a young person manages to secure a job or internship, it's vital they know how to hold onto it. While it may take time and experience for young people to develop their employability or 'soft skills' – such as initiative, interpersonal and organisational skills – there are some things they can do straight away to stand out from the crowd...

1 SHARE YOUR 'FIRST-JOB' INSIGHTS

Tell a young person about your first job – your successes, failures and what you learnt.

EXPERIENCE EQUALS EXPERIENCE

2

If the young person has not yet started working, suggest they complete an internship to gain real-life work experience. If they are about to start working or have time off from work, see if they can do a job shadow at a local business, your place of work or volunteer at a local NGO to gain people skills.

START AN EMAIL OR SMS CONVERSATION

3

Communication skills are one of the key soft skills employers look for in a candidate. Send your mentee emails (if they have Internet access) or SMSes (provide them with airtime/data) – and get them to reply without using "SMS speak" or slang so they can practice writing in a professional manner.

'BUSINESS' BOOK CLUB

4

Borrow books from the library about subjects related to the young person's line of work, or find out if there are any business people your mentee admires, and if autobiographical books or articles about them exist. You could also print out articles from the Internet for them to read on their own or to discuss with you.

ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK

5

Not all workplaces carry out regular reviews. Encourage your mentee to request a feedback session with their manager for pointers on where they are succeeding and where they are coming short. Discuss the feedback together so they can use it to build on their strengths and work on their weaknesses.

BOUNCE IDEAS

6

Other important soft skills employers look for are initiative and creativity. Ask your mentee what work-related ideas they may have had, but have been too afraid to share with their colleagues or manager. Even if they don't end up sharing these, this will give them an opportunity to voice their thoughts and develop confidence.

5 FIRST-JOB FUNDAMENTALS:

Go through this checklist for key things to remember when you start a new job:

Show up on time! Better yet, arrive 5-10 minutes early and stay a little late to show your enthusiasm and commitment.

Dress for success. Even if your workplace has a relaxed dress code, make sure you always look neat and smart.

Don't wait for people to give you work. Let your manager know when you have finished a task; take the initiative and ask for more work or offer to help others.

Be organised & efficient! Take notes when your manager gives instructions – and ask early on if you don't understand something; set reminders; don't miss deadlines!

Be polite & professional! Always greet your manager and co-workers; learn people's names; avoid making personal calls; and smile!

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Get young people to visit www.jobstarter.co.za to read more about employability skills and find internship opportunities.

Connect youth to Ikama Youth Career Guidance sessions: <http://ikamvayouth.org/programmes/career-guidance/information-learners> and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator for training and support to get work ready: <http://harambee.co.za/harambee/work-seekers>

"Trust your struggle": Show them this talk by CNN anchor Zain Asher about how she made a name for herself after failing to get promoted: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT2XII8oeh0>

