TIPS FOR NEWLY EMPLOYED GRADUATES TO SUCCEED IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE WORKPLACE

25 January 2016: Between 10 and 12 million young Africans enter the job market every year and yet the employment opportunities available are less than half of this number. These statistics, cited at the 2015 World Economic Forum by the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, prove that it is becoming increasingly challenging for young graduates to find employment in the competitive job market, and remind them that when they are fortunate enough to get their first job, they need to do everything in their power to keep it.

This is according to Lindi Dlamini, Group HR Executive at PPS, who says, "It is vital for young graduates who have succeeded in finding employment after their graduation to ensure they add value to their new workplace so that they can retain their hard-won job."

Dlamini provides the following tips for young professionals entering the workplace for the first time to increase their chances of securing permanent employment.

**Build professional relationships**

Upon entering an organisation, the new employee should never miss an opportunity to introduce themselves, even if the supervisor does not introduce them to colleagues immediately. Networking is a vital component of building one's personal brand and it is always appropriate to maintain professional relationships with colleagues. This will allow the new employee to learn from people other than their direct supervisors.

**Know when to ask questions**

Nobody will expect a new employee, especially one fresh out of university, to know everything on their first day. Graduates will find that there are many aspects to a job that they will not be familiar with unless they have had prior experience. These procedures can include answering the phone, logging on to the office IT systems, office protocols and company rules. It is advisable for graduates to ask their supervisor about these important issues in the first few days of their job, or pay close attention to any instructions provided during the induction process. It is a good idea to make notes as the supervisor answers any questions, to eliminate having to ask the same query again – the first few days of a new job can be very stressful and it is easy to forget something.

**Have a Positive Attitude**

New employees should always approach the workplace with a positive attitude by showing enthusiasm for assignments, their colleagues and the business itself. It is vital that individuals learn to leave non-work related problems at home to ensure that they remain positive and focussed when they are at work.

**Dress appropriately for the job**

While the dress code is not the same within all organisations and industries, it is important to make a good first impression when starting a new job. Before the official first day of work, enquire about the dress code and rather be overdressed (or too smart) than underdressed for the first few days of work. Many professions do require a different dress code than the normal business attire, therefore it is important to know exactly what the requirements are.
**Take initiative and be confident**

Generally during the first few days of a new job, the work load will be light in an effort to ease the employee into their new environment. However, the new employee should take initiative and ask for more tasks, although only if they feel like that they have completed the tasks at hand. It is imperative to be proactive and not sit unoccupied at the desk waiting for a new task.

New employees should also attempt to free up their colleagues' time by assisting them with anything they feel capable of handling. People should always try to be confident in their ability to succeed in their new position and not be afraid to ‘bring something new to the table’ by contributing ideas and thoughts to group discussions.

**Stay organised and set goals**

It is vital for an individual in a new position to ensure that they are extremely organised and prepared for their new role. It is necessary to develop a system to keep track of meetings, appointments, assignments and key deadline dates. It is also a good idea to set goals in order to remain enthusiastic about the new job.

“Getting through the first few months of a new job is not an easy task, but by keeping the above tips in mind, young graduates entering the job market can aim to work hard, make a lasting and positive impression and aim for success in the company they now represent,” concludes Dlamini.