



Here's Why First Jobs Matter

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Many of America's most well-known executives spent years climbing the career ladder. They built their lives and reputations from the ground up—and no task was beneath them. While soaking up every opportunity they could grasp, these American success stories also acquired the skills necessary for executive leadership. Julie Janckila, Director of Corporate Partnerships at the Network of Executive Women, is a prime example.

In a recent LinkedIn blog post titled “Why My First Job Mattered,” Julie recalled her first job as a waitress. After picking up summer shifts at the diner her mother worked at, she discovered just how demanding the life of a waitress truly is. The lessons that Julie learned at her first job have stuck with her, giving her the tools for sustained success. They are the foundation for how Julie approaches her work and relationships in the business world:

- **The customer is always right.** You learn this fast when a customer is upset with the food or when you spill coffee in his lap! Yes, I did that in my first week on the job—an embarrassing moment for me and a painful moment for the customer. You quickly learn to do whatever it takes to make the customer happy.
- **Multitasking is a must.** Waitressing is about keeping many balls in the air at the same time. Each table may be in a different stage of the dining experience and you have to keep the experience progressing to satisfy the customer.
- **Stay calm under pressure.** When you get “bombed” with a full section of new customers, you can't be paralyzed with fear or stress. You have to stay calm and quickly service your customers.
- **Build relationships and work as a team.** Even though you are the one interacting with customers, you rely on the cooks to correctly make the food and get it to you in a timely manner. Sometimes you have a rush request or a special order. If the cooks don't like or respect you, they are less motivated to help you.
- **There is always more work to be done.** One of my managers used to say, “If you can lean, you can clean.” There is no down time at a restaurant. There is always something to clean, silverware to be wrapped or supplies to be restocked.
- **Excellent service pays off.** If you meet and exceed the needs of your customers, you will often be rewarded with a generous tip. You are also rewarded with repeat customers and positive feedback.

While Julie didn't remain a waitress her entire life, the skills she learned in her first job became vital to her success later on. This same process is happening for millions of young Americans across the country, and we here at The Job Creators Network think it's important to remind people that first jobs truly matter.