

Saturday, May 31, 2008

Short Article

Want to Keep your Job? Apply Business Rules and become "Fire-Proof" Perhaps you like your teaching job and you would like to keep it. Even in times of political uncertainty, budget chopping and test-driven neurosis; teaching is the greatest profession on Earth. Despite the "objective teacher evaluation process" to the contrary, it is still the campus administrator and peer group (cliques, in crowd) perception of you that counts toward your keeping the job. Sidebar Despite protestation to the contrary, it is still the teacher's perception of each student that determines each student's academic success. So, why not employ strategies from the business world to keep yourself employed? Positive First Impressions through the Entire Year While you have 20 to 30 seconds to project a positive impression, you can scuttle that impression in one tenth of that time interval. Destroying your positive reputation takes only the blink of an eye. It is your task to protect your image. But barring any snafus or gross miscues, your job is to distinguish yourself in the eyes of your boss. (This is much like the corporate world.) Rules of "Fire Retardation" It would be fantasy to believe that the rule of "academic freedom" protects teachers. This might be slightly true in prestigious colleges and universities, but is mythical in public education. In public education, the rules of bureaucratic survival are in play. So, here are the rules that should keep you employed. (Go as far with these as your values and ideals will allow.) 1.) Come in Rarely, Stay Late (or both) At least arrive with time to spare. Late, or last-minute rushing to beat your students to the door are distractions to the positive image that you are careful to build. And, arrive to class with time to spare after lunch. Make sure that you don't strand a bunch of students, especially Middle School or High School "cut-up-clowns and socially-challenged-misfits" outside the locked door of your classroom when class is scheduled to begin. (Leaving the door open so they can carry on inside the room generated even worse consequences. Miscues like these will be duly noted by your supervisor. 2.) Accept Challenges Avoid the, "That's not what they pay me to do" syndrome. Instead, "step up to the plate, go down swinging if you have to, but give the challenge your best effort." 3.) Keep Cool Don't wear normal or typical classroom stress on your sleeve (or on your face). When stress climbs to extraordinary heights; find safe, rapid and effective outlets. 4.) Complete Deadline-Tasks Ahead of Time Turn in everything that you are required to turn in ahead of time (preferable), or on time (minimum requirement). But, be sure to get a receipt if you turn in a item early. Principals' secretaries and department-chair type folks are known to loose just about everything; then they blame the folks at the bottom of the chain of command. Sidebar Yes, campus secretaries outrank teachers on the de facto (what really counts) chain of command. 5.) Befriend High-Ranking Secretaries Some secretaries can "turn the screws" and make your campus life miserable. Others can act as a "power-of-authority stand in" for the campus administrator. But no matter what their level of reach and influence, "Don't cross them!" Besides, it's easier for a campus to replace a Math, Science or Special Education teacher than to replace a masterful secretary. (Secretaries hold substantial, irreplaceable institutional knowledge.) This institutional knowledge, plus the tendency of campus principals to "back up" their secretaries, adds to the secretary's power and influence; making them formidable foes. Sidebar Just as teachers should avoid "power struggles" with students because teachers cannot win, your chances of winning in a power struggle with a secretary are "slim to none." 6.) Keep Current - Keep Alert. Know what is going on on campus, and steer clear of trouble spots. Steer clear of controversy, and avoid creating complaints. School districts, like most bureaucracies, are "complaint adverse."

Do what it takes to resolve complaints, and keep complaints from being flagged by your supervisor as "warning signs" of your unsuitably and unfitness for duty. 7.) Get the Job Done, and Don't Complain about the Obstacles There are always obstacles. Glitches abound. Work with a plan, and have a backup plan. Remain cheerful. Use the energy that whining and complaining wastes to bolster your success. Expect positive outcomes. If the challenge really is "impossible," give it your all, anyway. 8.) Keep Improving your Skills Avoid the "I am an expert, and there is nothing that I need to learn" rut. Listen to your peers. Offer personal support and advice; not the self-serving "put-downs that "know-it-all" folks communicate with every "helpful" remark.

Help your colleagues, but don't expect help back. Just share your best. 9.) Keep Secrets Keep all confidential information confidential. Period! 10. Communicate Major Ideas in "Simple Terms" Learn to say it in six sentences, and be decisive. Provide just the amount of information that your supervisors can grasp. (Imagine that they have a palm the size of a three-year-old, with matching coordination and mental agility. This will help you communicate with your supervisors.) 11.) Keep Energetic. Keep a Positive Attitude Remain optimistic. Focus on "can-do." Share a positive outlook and a positive attitude. Be the person that other people are glad to be around. Summary

Follow these rules of business success and you will "fire-proof" your teaching job.

Come to think of it, these business rules for success are really a formula for success in life in general. Integrate these strategies into your skill behavior and habit patterns. These strategies will increase your on-the-job worth wherever you work.