



ON-THE-JOB INDEPENDENCE--OR TRAINING?

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

It is not unusual to come across a job ad that lists among its qualifications the ability to think independently. No employer would want to be saddled with an employee who needs babysitting. In my line of work, there are often guidelines that are set by clients in the creation of write-ups. Although those guidelines more-or-less dictate to me what the employer requires to be done, it is still upon me to move along those guidelines and infuse work that I do with my own personality. Fortunately for me, clients have always appreciated what I come up with, mainly because I do my best to hew close to their requirements while at the same time allowing my unique style to shine through.

Many times, I have had to consult other sources before I even begin on a project. It pays to take someone else's work and create something new and different afterwards. As everything I have done has been purely ghostwriting, it can be a challenge to come up with something unique all the time and consistently. The web has numerous sources that anybody is free to look through, but there is such a thing as writer's ethics that sets the bar against plagiarism of any form.

I learned this lesson the hard way during the beginning of my online career.

I had finished creating a write-up that was assigned to me. I was feeling the beginnings of fatigue in me. I needed one sentence with less than 10 words to complete my allotted word count of 500. I looked through one of my sources and just decided to copy and paste the beginning sentence of the original article to my own write-up. Alas, my employer promptly gave me a warning the day after I had submitted my assignment. He stressed that he encouraged independence in all his writers, but that didn't mean we could get away so easily with independent copying. I apologized profusely and since that time have always endeavored to keep my assignments plagiarism-free.

In any career, it pays to be independent. By using all your capabilities and keeping your limitations in check, you can show your employer that you can be trusted to work independently while adhering to whatever set standards there may be. Showing your employer that you can be left alone and unsupervised and still manage to come up with good and honest work is always good advice. Independence is a learned skill that takes time to develop but will ultimately be a gift to have. Learn on your own time, but have the decency to acknowledge inability. Independent thinking is demonstrated by the ability to think fast and on your feet even when it's easier to just piggyback on others' concepts. But do not choose to get to where you want on someone else's back, and this is because you want to be independent.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What particular jobs require an employee to think independently? Be as specific as needed.
2. Would you take a job that was cut and dried or one that allowed you a certain level of independence? Why is that your choice?
3. Talk about your job. How do you practice your independence in your line of work?
4. What jobs do not really need independence? Are there such jobs in existence?
5. Do you sometimes wish you were allowed more independence on the job? Why or why not?