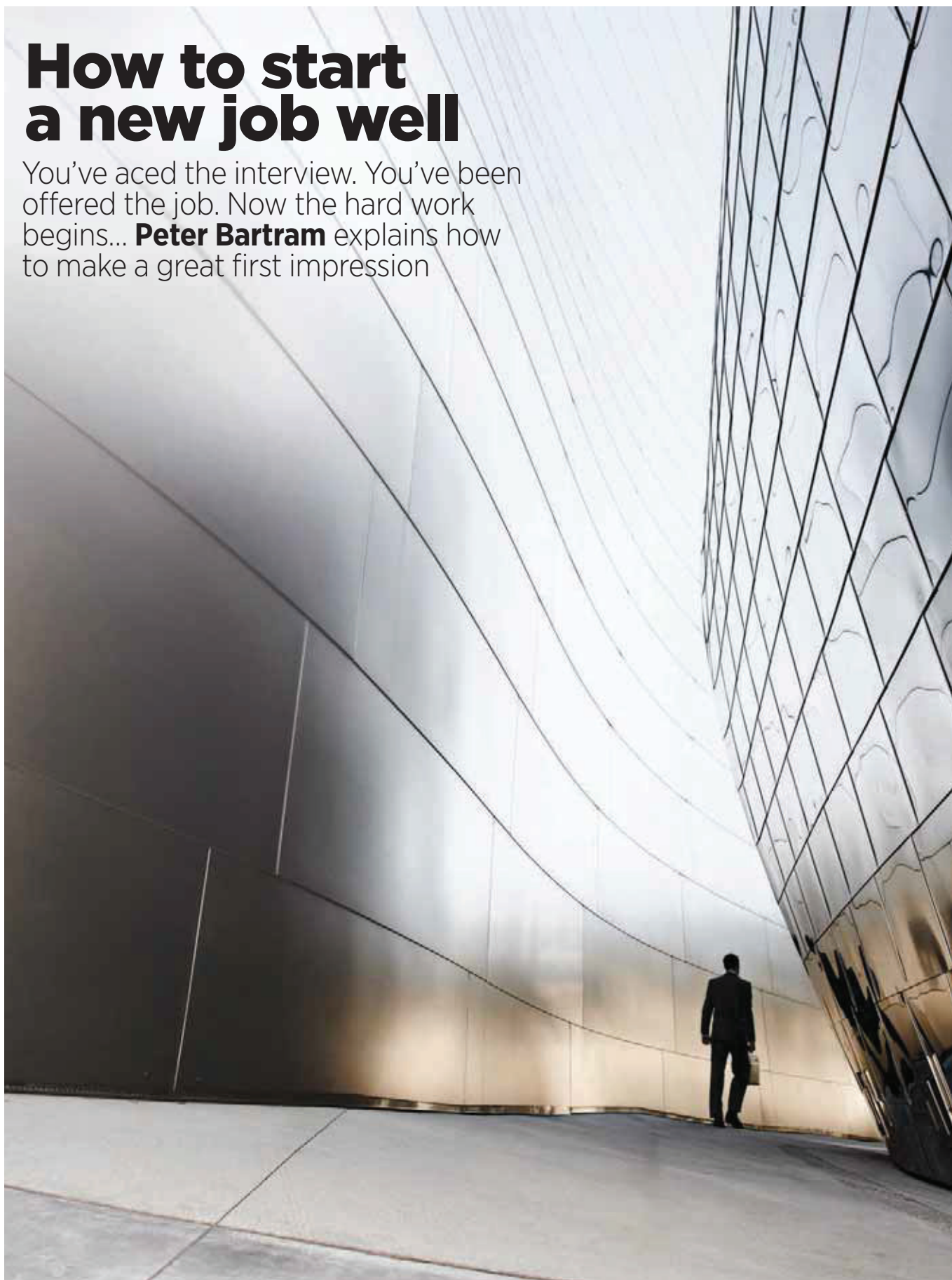


# How to start a new job well

You've aced the interview. You've been offered the job. Now the hard work begins... **Peter Bartram** explains how to make a great first impression



CORBIS

**W**hen it comes to starting a new job, 29-year-old Russell Nelson is already an old hand at the business.

He's just begun work with the oil and gas exploration firm Talisman in a financial reporting and control accountant role, but he's also had two jobs in accounting practices.

Stepping into a new office for the first time can seem a daunting prospect. But Nelson believes it needn't be. "Introduce yourself and get to know as many people as possible quickly," he advises.

That's precisely what he did when he joined the 30-strong accounting team at Talisman. "It's good to get to know a bit about them personally as well as professionally," adds Nelson.

"When you need their help to get something done, it makes it a bit easier."

"It's also important for the newbies to understand how they are going to integrate themselves into their new working environment," says Andrew Inglis, a consultant at Carlton Resource Solutions, who spends a lot of his time placing young accountants into jobs.

Inglis believes newcomers need to listen to what their new colleagues are saying - so that they can pick up on how business is done around the office. But he strongly advises: "Don't get involved in office politics."

Jonathan Orchard, a partner at Sayer Vincent, an audit and accounting firm for charities and not-for-profit bodies, is also a great proponent of the power of listening. "It is the key to understanding a firm's culture and ways of working, so you then adapt accordingly," he says.

"It is right to expect a proper induction and take it seriously. You won't be expected to take it all in first time, but you must show willing. Ask lots of questions, particularly if you aren't sure of the right way of doing things. Don't be afraid to ask as this is how you will learn."

Nelson found his induction at Talisman informal but helpful. He was introduced to colleagues, shown how to use the firm's various systems and filled in some personnel forms with the help of the HR department. He was also left a helpful file of information by the previous person who'd held his job.

John MacLachlan, a former chartered accountant who now runs Monkey Puzzle Training and Consultancy, believes that joiners at companies fall into one of two

opposite traps - trying to stand out too much or trying to blend in too much.

"To avoid trying too hard when you start, think back to why you wanted the job, why the company was looking for someone, and what they liked about you," he says.

"This will help you direct your attention towards what you're there to do and what you can bring to the business. It also reminds you that they chose you for you and the things you could bring to the role. So be yourself. It's stressful enough for most people in a new job without pretending to be someone you are not.

"To get to grips with the new work, take some time at the beginning to really look at what you are being asked to do. Separate it into the bits that are new to you, which aspects are just a variation on what you already know, and which are something you

already know how to do well."

Settling in during those first few weeks in a new job can be difficult if you're not sure how you will be judged. "Make sure you understand what your objectives or KPIs are for your probationary period," advises Karen Young, director at recruiting specialist Hays Senior Finance. "Take advantage of opportunities to highlight concerns to your manager, and make them aware of any further training

you need to fulfil your role.

"You should ensure that you are fully aware of what good performance looks and feels like in your new job, so you can aspire to achieve it. This will ensure that both you and your new manager know when to celebrate success. Equally important, you will know where to focus on areas of improvement to help you perform to the best of your ability."

And if you're still studying for exams, don't forget to make arrangements for future studies with your new employer.

"Keeping your employer informed will help secure their support for your studies and help workload planning both for you and of course for the overall department," says Young.

"It is also helpful to ensure that your new employer is aware of any planned holidays you have in your schedule as early as possible."

And when it comes to impressing your new boss? Last word to Nelson: "Be polite, get to know them, and be as keen as possible. Do extra tasks to help out. Volunteering for work nobody else wants never goes amiss." ■

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## CASE STUDY CAMILLA CHIA



Flash back to September 2012: Camilla Chia is walking through the streets of Oxford with clammy palms and a racing mind - on her way to her first ever workplace.

She has landed a job at chartered accountancy practice Wellers, and is so determined to make a good first impression she has planned a few strategies for her first weeks:

She is going to be as friendly as possible. Whatever tasks she is given, she will perform as well as she can. Above all, she is going to look efficient and deliver work in a timely fashion.

Looking back, Camilla believes that her approach worked out well. "The most important thing is to be patient," she says. "Even the most experienced of professionals is not going to know everything."

On her first day, Camilla was shown around the office and introduced to other staff members. Three weeks later, she attended a two-day induction programme for other newcomers.

She plunged into work in her very first week, dealing with some simple tax returns. "It was good to get involved with real work straight away," she says.

However, being the new girl was understandably daunting. "At first, I found it difficult to ask people when I didn't know something," she says. "But I discovered that you should never be afraid to ask because you can never know everything."

She has developed good working relationships with other trainees at Wellers; hearing about their experiences helped Camilla realise that others were also facing the same kinds of issues.

She has also learnt that it's wise to observe what line managers want. "You do a job for one line manager and they love it but another won't like it that way. It's all about feeling your way through."

Camilla says that people who have never worked in an office before may find the environment difficult to cope with. "It's important not to be fearful. You need to throw yourself in," she advises.

"You're not going to get into trouble for making an effort and trying something. I'd say the most helpful tip of all is to never hold back."