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CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, Upgrade

Upgrade 'Take Your Kids to Work Day'

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Thirty-seven million Americans at 3.5 million workplaces will participate in the 20-year tradition of [Take Your Kids to Work Day](#) this Thursday. The goal of the day is not to transform the workplace into a circus or a playground, but to get children interested in what the workplace really is. Exposing girls and boys to what a parent or other mentor does during the day is important; it can help them discover their own power and inspire them to think about possibilities for their own futures. I would even go so far to say that unless you really hate your job, it's your obligation to participate!



Planning in advance is critical. No child wants to see their parent's crazy boss yelling at them; a disaster like that could be forever imprinted in a kid's memory. But if you keep these key tips in mind, the day could be a tremendous success for you both.

1. **Who to Bring:** If you don't have a child of your own, consider bringing a foster child, a friend's child, or a niece or nephew -- or reach out into the community at large and invite anyone ages 8-18 who is interested in participating. The key phrase here is "interested in participating." If you have to drag a kid kicking and screaming, if they're likely to cause disruptions or otherwise embarrass you, it's not going to be a good experience for anyone.



Photo credit: Flickr user John Truong Pictures

2. **Do Your Homework:** Talk with other parents who have brought their child to work. Ask them about the do's and don'ts and especially about what they might have done differently.

3. **Evaluate the Situation:** If you have a crazy boss, keep the kids at home. It's not worth the risk.

4. **Set Expectations:** Talk to the child in advance. Ask what they think it is you do at work and what they think they will see. Give them the big picture of the organization and your role within it. Let them know what to expect. New experiences can be intimidating to a child, so share some details about your office and prepare them for what will happen. Tell them the names of some of your coworkers.



Photo credit: Flickr user thathamiam

5. **Devices:** Don't let the child bring any devices. No iPhone, no DS, no iPad. Otherwise, they will be checked out, looking down at their screens all day.

6. **Prepare Your Colleagues:** Talk to your boss and coworkers ahead of time and let them know you are bringing a child. Your employer may have assigned a committee to arrange activities for the day. If your coworkers have interesting or exciting positions or projects, ask if you can schedule a time to job shadow or show the child an initiative.

7. **Plan the Day:** Make sure your day is open and schedule interesting activities throughout the day. Don't schedule back-to-back conference calls for yourself -- that won't be the least bit educational or exciting for the child. Check which activities your employer has in store and only attend the ones you think the child will benefit from.



Photo credit: Flickr user hubertk

8. **Keep Parameters:** Children shouldn't be answering your phone when your boss or clients are calling. Remember, you're at work.

9. **Ask For Feedback:** Dialogue is important. Ask the child for their impressions and encourage them to ask questions, not just of you but your colleagues. Ask them what they learned and what they enjoyed.

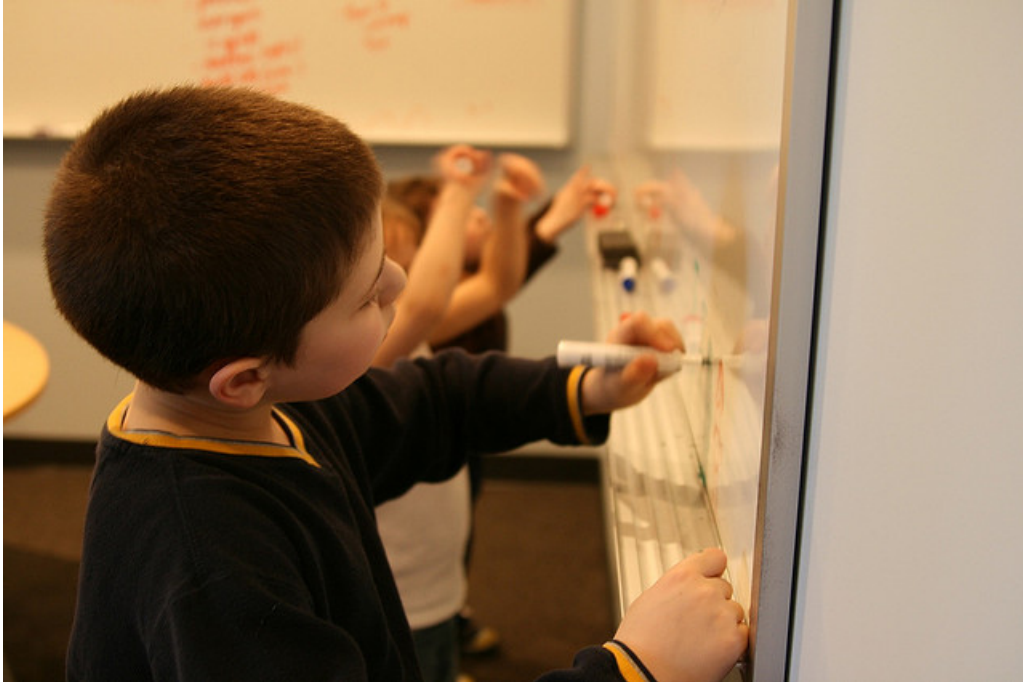


Photo credit: Flickr user massdistraction

10. Make it Fun: Don't take it for granted that the child will be comfortable. Workplaces can be intimidating for children, even if everyone is friendly. Take extra measures to make the day fun and exciting. And above all, don't be a killjoy. If after all your planning, something goes wrong and you end up super-stressed and busy, try to take it in stride.

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