

In a few months, thousands of final-year students across India will step out of their campuses and into the workplace. Some may already have their placement offers, and many more will receive theirs soon; a moment filled with relief, pride, and the feeling that life is finally moving forward.

Ari and Sri felt the same. After months of interviews, preparation and uncertainty, their offers arrived like a long-awaited victory. But what they did in the days between receiving the offer and joining the organisation shaped everything that followed.

Different ways

Ari moved into the familiar post-offer comfort zone that many students slip into. The interviews were over, the goal had been achieved and the pressure had eased. Ari enjoyed the praise and believed that learning would begin after joining. For many students, the offer letter feels like a finish line.

Sri also celebrated, but in a different way. To him, the offer letter felt like a doorway, not the destination. He spent time reading up on the organisation, understanding its products and services, refreshing important concepts, and completing a short online course related to the role. He reached out politely to a future colleague. Only a few students do this but,

when they do, the transition becomes smoother and the first week feels far less overwhelming.

Across organisations, seniors often wonder how new entrants will adapt. This does not come from judgment. It is a mix of curiosity and concern because the workplace they entered years ago looked very different from the one that youngsters today will enter. In my leadership sessions, I hear something consistent from senior

managers. They admire Gen Z's intelligence, courage and speed. What they worry about is not whether they can do the job. They wonder whether they will settle in well, learn steadily, and show consistency.

Satya Nadella captures the essence of this when he talks about the value of being a learner. His reminder that the learn-it-all will always outperform the know-it-all is especially relevant to those preparing for their first job. Indra

Nooyi often says that the first step to improving an organisation is improving ourselves.

Consistent behaviours

Organisations do not expect mastery on the first day. They look for sincerity, humility, and a willingness to understand how things work. For young professionals, that improvement can begin before Day One. Research from McKinsey in 2023 also shows that even a little

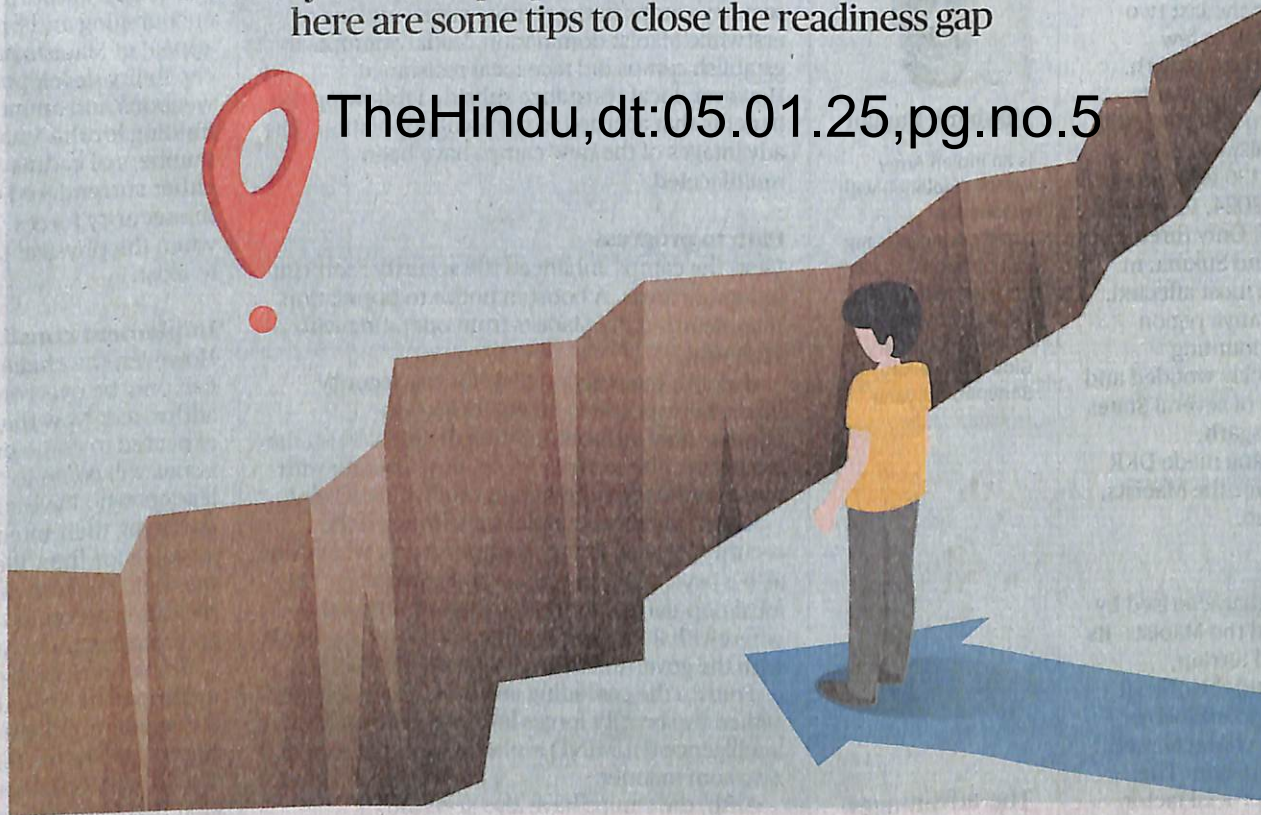
preparation before joining helps new employees learn faster, adapt better, and experience less stress in their initial weeks.

Students today constantly hear about productivity hacks, communication styles, and success habits. But early success comes from certain consistent behaviours: listening fully, respecting time, asking thoughtful questions, preparing before meetings, and completing small tasks with care. These habits

A smooth transition

As many students prepare to enter the workforce in 2026, here are some tips to close the readiness gap

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quietly build trust and create a strong foundation for growth.

Those who begin like Sri often say that they settled in faster, understood the team sooner, felt more confident in meetings, and handled the early days with less stress. Those who begin like Ari are not wrong. They just take a little longer to find their rhythm. The difference is not about talent or capability. It is about the small choices made in the quiet days before joining.

Beginning like Sri does not require intense study. It requires small, meaningful steps. Reading about the organisation, refreshing one important skill, learning the basics of a new tool, completing a short certification, and setting a simple routine can make a young professional feel grounded and ready.

As you prepare to enter your first job, it helps to remember that the offer letter is not the end of the journey. It is the beginning. The days before joining are a chance to build clarity, understand the workplace and prepare your mind to grow. You do not need to prove anything on your first day. Begin quietly and steadily. Let your early actions show that you value the opportunity, you are ready to learn, and you are prepared to begin well. The future that unfolds will be shaped by how you choose to step into it.

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