

Graduating in a Competitive Job Market

Plan Ahead:

- A degree does not guarantee you a job, it qualifies you to apply. Look at your classmates as your competition in the job market. Pay attention to your specific strengths and what makes you competitive.
- Internships answer the “How am I supposed to get experience if no one will hire me?” question.
- Leadership is important, but go for quality rather than quantity. Recruiters will be more impressed if you have a significant role in one or two organizations rather than a long list of insignificant memberships.
- Related work experience is ideal, but any work experience is better than no work experience. A demonstrated work ethic or positive reference from a past employer can be important.
- Throughout school, put aside items such as writing samples, design samples, projects, awards, evaluations, etc., for future reference. You may need to pull a portfolio together on short notice.
- Get recommendations from professors while they still remember you.
- Recruiters are using the web to learn about you. Your personal and professional lives are not as separate as you think. Review your FaceBook page. Google yourself to see what a prospective employer might find and clean up what you can.
- Develop a profile on a professional networking site like LinkedIn before you graduate.

The Search and Application Process:

- Be flexible in your search in terms of geographic area, size of the company, etc. Remember, you don't have to remain at this job for the rest of your life.
- If you can't find your “perfect” job immediately, consider looking for one that might provide the experience you need to get that perfect job down the road.
- Utilize all available resources (want ads, company websites, job boards, networking, career centers, etc.)
- Don't wait. You may want to postpone vacation plans. The “best” jobs will go quickly.
- An employer will use a variety of methods to quickly “weed out” candidates. A resume or cover letter with grammatical errors or an incomplete application are just two examples.
- Follow the employer's instructions exactly. If the employer says "no phone calls" in the job ad, don't call.
- A resume needs to offer something significant and specific to the employer's needs - not be a life history. Consider it your first opportunity to get a competitive edge. If you want it read, make it readable.

The Interview:

- Prepare. Research the employer and news about your field so that you can add to discussions during an interview.
- Practice. Find out how you come across in an interview. You can get hired even if you are not the best qualified on paper.
- Even if the company culture is casual, the interview may not be. Present a professional image. Demonstrate how well you can represent the company.
- Be prepared to give specific examples of anything you have indicated on your resume.
- If you choose not to appear for an interview, call and cancel. It's a small world within industries; you don't know who the recruiter you just stood up, might know.
- Don't forget the thank-you note.

Unsure about any of these or related issues? Visit Us!