

Steps Students Must Implement Prior to Entering the Job Market

As the unemployment rate continues to hover at historic highs, the job market continues to be a humbling place for all levels of professionals searching for a position as well as those entering the work force for the first time. Other than a few select industries including medical, education and government, most sectors continue to wait for more compelling signs that the economy is stabilizing before feeling comfortable adding to their payroll.

Currently, most employee levels, including high priced and experienced talent, is “on sale” for those employers who may be currently hiring. This is obviously due to the fact that there aren’t many positions available overall and many people are forced to accept positions far below their previous levels. The end result is that executive level professionals, in order to pay their bills, must “open up” their search parameters to include mid level positions. Mid level professionals may be forced to apply for lower level positions, which in turn, leave less positions available for the entry level people, whom historically, were students entering the job market for the first time.

Many Colleges and Universities are experiencing record student enrollment levels due in part to the lack of entry level jobs. Students now feel compelled to stay in school longer, add to their levels of education, make themselves more marketable while remaining hopeful the job market improves by the time they graduate. In addition to students staying in school longer, experienced professionals, who find themselves in career transition, are enrolling in school in order to enhance and add to their existing skill sets.

When these students are ready to enter the job market, a question our firm, DMR Career Planning, is consistently asked is:

With the reality of today’s employment environment, how can a student, with a limited employment record, stand out and compete with experienced job seekers for the few positions available?

As our firm prepares students for the “real world”, we consistently use words such as **perception, credibility, intelligence, teamwork, leadership and motivation**. These are traits which describe what employers would typically search for in a new employee. Since a student has a limited work history for a potential employer to use to formulate an opinion, they must focus on these secondary indicators.

On a resume or an interview, we suggest a student highlight:

- **School, major, relevant coursework & grades** (Good grades indicate commitment to excel and specific coursework will provide the foundational skills to pick up a specific task faster & easier).

- **List any paying jobs you may have had** (Indicates hard worker and independence, despite school workload).
- **Internships or Volunteering** (Employers will recognize this as viable work experience even though there is no or limited pay involved).
- **School committees & Clubs** (Indicate leadership & organizational skills).
- **Sports** (Participation in team sports indicates that you may work well within a team & work environment).
- **Soft skills & Personality traits** (Hardworking, eager, willing to learn, motivated, etc)

In addition, we require our student clients to assure their personal email addresses, outgoing voicemails and online presence are professional. If not, a potential employer could perceive your lack of professionalism or attention to detail as a negative even before an interview!

If all components of our student client's search process is **perceived** by the potential employer that they are: **detailed oriented, credible, intelligent, team focused, leaders** and **motivated**, the "playing field" will be more level when they are competing against more seasoned candidates.

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