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Personal Financial Planning & Prudent Investment Management

How to Run Your First Job Search

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Recent college graduates are currently subject to the stress of having to find a job in a difficult job environment. Competing for open jobs puts pressure on the candidate to have flawless interview skills. In order to improve the odds, I interviewed Peter Goodkind, President of The Bond Street Group, a leading recruiting firm based in NYC for his advice.

Q: How should a new graduate approach their first job search?

Peter: Become your own headhunter and cast a wide net – use your contacts to create a recruiting network. Understand that rejection is a part of the process. A job search is like being in sales, with you as the product.

Q: What are some misconceptions that college grads have about their first job?

Peter: College grads need to understand that everyone has to “pay their dues.” The first job will most likely NOT be their eventual career. However, they should understand their own personality and interests. For example, they should know if they are entrepreneurial, corporate types or have sales personalities. Candidates should put themselves in a job where they feel comfortable and have a possible long-term interest. Do not take just any job.

Q: What about Temp jobs for young adults?

Peter: I am 100% behind starting in a Temp job. It is the first form of hiring that comes back when the job market shows signs of improvement. Companies hire many people using the “Temp to Perm” approach. It is also a great way for the young adult to try out an environment to see if that is what they want to pursue.

Q: How should a college grad prepare for THE INTERVIEW?

Peter: Interviews are typically very short – 15 to 20 minutes at most, so a great first impression is a key to success. Here are several important tips.

- First, dress for success. Men should be properly groomed and wear a suit and tie. Women should also wear a suit or pantsuit that would fit into a job environment. Stick to basics and do not be flashy! You do not want the interviewer to focus on the clothes.
- Appear interested and interesting. Use a firm handshake and good eye contact. The interviewer usually decides in the first 10 minutes whether they are interested or not. They are judging your energy, motivation and character.

- Do your homework. Research the company and prepare 3-4 questions ahead of time. If possible, conduct a search on the interviewer to see if there is a way to make a connection.
- Never ask about work hours or money. If asked, respond with “Money is not an issue; I want this position.”
- Do not fold your resume. Use a large envelope if necessary.
- Do not speak negatively about a former or current employer.
- Be prepared to talk about some of your achievements, internships, volunteer work, etc.
- Most importantly, smile and look them in the eye.

Q: What is your advice on the use of Monster.com and other job search websites?

Peter: Job search websites are long shots but they are good for finding your areas of interest. Sending resumes via these sites is usually a waste of time, unless followed up with phone calls to attempt to make personal contact.

Q: Should a candidate contact companies directly?

Peter: It is best to look directly on company websites for current job openings. Contact the Human Resources Departments directly. Be relentless and proactive. Learn to overcome rejection, it is a normal part of the process. Texting and e-mail have a low chance of success. Use the phone and try to get in front of people – it’s a “sales job”. Utilize your own network of friends, family, etc. – Call people and ask for 15 minutes of their time.

Peter: What is your opinion regarding the outlook for the job market for the rest of this year?

A: In NYC, the financial services industry is clearly on an uptick and hiring has increased vastly since December. Companies are scrambling to fill “support” positions. The next 6 months should be a good time to be looking for a job. However, hiring has not trickled down to the college grad level yet. I believe it will by the summer. Good luck with your job search.

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