

ministrators, alike, are promoting the development of the "whole" student, instilling enthusiasm for learning and encouraging positive social relationships. The research evidence seems to support what the humanist educators have said for years, that these goals are more compatible with comfortable, attractive, and interesting learning environments (Weinstein, 1979).

This research might also provide clues for overcoming teacher complaints about the lack of motivated students. Students and teachers spend a large portion of their lives in the classroom. Is it unreasonable to expect these places to be hospitable?

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Find the Job

David R. Ford

I am pleased to be asked to serve on this afternoon's program to address the topic of job placement, especially sharing some thoughts on helping the student find the job. Perhaps a personal illustration will set the stage most appropriately for my remarks. As a child, I often had a difficult time with simple motor skills. This created great frustration for public school and Sunday school teachers. Coloring within the lines didn't seem particularly important and free-hand drawings were a disaster. I could run, throw a baseball, a football or shoot a basketball with a fair amount of accuracy, but the simple skills seemed to frustrate me and those who seemed to place a greater importance on them than I did. There was one simple skill related to drawing that I enjoyed however and that was the dot-to-dot exercise. You all remember those books I'm sure and in fact have probably purchased them for your children to occupy their time while the family takes long trips across the country. It was always a challenge to connect in sequence the dots and then amazingly to see the result: a fish, a bird, a tree, or whatever. As I was assembling my thoughts for this presentation, my memory went back to this exercise because helping the student find a job seems to me to parallel the dot-to-dot process. That is connecting the dots or points to remember until at last a complete picture emerges: the job.

Eight Points to Consider (or Connect) in Getting a Job

I'm sure each of you would have your own set of points to consider if we were talking to a student about getting a job. In a visit to our University Placement Service a few weeks ago, I picked up one of several brochures they had available which particularly caught my eye. It was entitled "The Honda How to Get a Job Guide," a special edition of Business Weeks Guide to Careers published by McGraw Hill, Inc. Paraphrasing from that guide I would list (not particularly in priority order) the following points I believe important to today's topic:

- Construct a resume that will sell yourself to an employer
- Know what Employers Look For
- Develop a Job Search Strategy
- Utilize Effectively the Art of Making Contacts
- Know How to Dress for the Job Interview
- Know How to Stand Out in the Job Interview
- Job Interview Follow-up is Important
- Consider Expectations for the First Job

Let's look at each of these eight points in some detail while sprinkling some of my past experiences and opinions among the facts.

Presented by David R. Ford, Associate Dean and Director of Resident Instruction, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, to the NACTA Conference in Raleigh, N.C., June 18, 1985.

The Resume

In my opinion, which is shared by others, there is no one acceptable format for a resume, however, three seem to receive wider use than others. The **chronological** format reverses the time sequence with the most recent jobs, experiences, and degrees first. The **functional** format groups experiences in skill categories that feature strengths. Finally, the **targeted** format focuses on capabilities for a specific job. I'm sure speakers who follow me will cover resumes in more detail, but I encourage our students to use the functional or the targeted approach. I don't know about your students, but when ours become seniors they suddenly have this fear that they have no marketable skills. The listings of skills as they relate to the job they would like to have is a good exercise in self confidence building.

A final point I would make on resumes is that the cover letter accompanying the resume is a vital part of the package. It should be crisp, well-written, very positive and definitely directed to a specific person, never To Whom It May Concern or Dear Director of Personnel.

What Employers Look For

Grades are still the most common initial sorting medium. I continually remind students of that point beginning with their freshman year. Beyond grades, probably the second most important thing employers look for are communication and interpersonal skills. These, of course, are keys to how well the student will work with other people. These are traits learned through student activities such as intercollegiate judging teams, offices held in university or college clubs and honoraries, and volunteer assignments they may assume in their home or university communities. I speak to every entering class the day before classes begin each fall to encourage this kind of involvement.

Other points employers look for are enthusiasm, flexibility to allow for company growth and change, problem-solving skills, a high energy level which is a predictor of productivity and the maturity to handle oneself in a business situation. This is why we encourage students to seek some part-time work on or off campus so that references can speak to these qualities. If the student is too busy to work they need to become known by some of their professors who can serve as references. Here again, assuming leadership positions in college or university activities will help.

A Job Search Strategy

We encourage all students to research the company or individual they are interviewing before they interview. This can be done through our office material or through our University Placement Service. The University Placement Service regularly conducts workshops to provide guidelines for the job search strategy. The student is encouraged to be persistent about getting an interview. On our campus, the University Placement Service will not permit a student to sign up for an interview unless the employer lists their academic major. Therefore, I encourage the student to get the name of the contact person and write to them or call prior to their visit to the campus to request an interview. This aggressive technique often

makes an impression upon the interviewer. A final point is that a bit of luck is often involved (i.e., being in the right place at the right time). I'll speak more to this point in a minute when I talk about contacts.

Effectively Making Contacts

Students should be encouraged to develop a network of personal acquaintance contacts. This includes anyone they know or are related to through school, part-time jobs, parents or organizations. They shouldn't be shy or embarrassed about approaching these people in their job search. Through the college or university placement office they should develop an additional contact file from placement notices and job announcements.

There is a limit, beyond which a person may become offensive, so the student must not misuse the contact approach. Time, experience and advice from college faculty will help.

Dressing for the Interview

Personal taste and the availability of money play an important part in selecting the right clothing for an interview. However, the most straightforward way is to begin by researching the appropriateness of dress for the prospective job and its location. This will prevent overdressing but also avoid an embarrassing position of being too casual. Department stores such as Sears sell very appropriate clothing for interview purposes at reasonable prices. It's best not to be a trend setter for that first impression. I remind students that they have only one chance to make a good first impression with a given employer.

Standing Out in the Job Interview

This may be the second most important point, even though I have not covered it until now. Assuming the resume was well done and unique enough to attract the attention of the employer, a job interview follows. Now the real test comes as the student tries to sell himself or herself in competition with other interviewees.

It all begins with self confidence. A firm handshake, eye contact, etc., are all key points that I'm sure will be covered in more detail in later talks in this session by our industry representatives. For the first job, I tell students to **sell potential for performance** since in most cases proof of performance is not available. We help them prepare by having mock interviews or using the modern technology of video tapes.

It is extremely important for the student to assess the situation early in the interview and observe whether or not they think the interviewer is competent or relaxed about interviewing them. Not all interviewers are comfortable with the process and making them feel comfortable is a definite point in the students favor. It may well make the difference in getting a job offer. Finally on this point the student has to be themselves. They cannot play act and get by with it for long. They have to know who they are, what they want and have some idea of where they are going at least in general terms. All too often I find that students have preoccupied themselves with taking a set of courses prescribed by the faculty and have given little thought to where it will lead them. Our Agricultural Student

Council conducts a Career Forum annually which stimulates the student early in their career to think about the specifics of career selection. Alumni, industry representatives, and faculty have been very helpful in making this program successful.

Job Interview Follow-Up

The key point here is to make sure the student doesn't stop the process with the interview. A phone call or follow-up letter is essential to indicate to the employer that you are interested and will carry the process to completion. Thanking the people (i.e., secretaries, clerks, etc.) along the way who were involved in the process is always a good idea. Sometimes a word they say to the employer will help the student get the job. The student must be persistent but always polite. They should be counseled never to attempt to buy their way into a job with gifts.

Expectations for the First Job

I believe we have an obligation to help the student think realistically about their expectations once they have accepted the job. They should understand that success often means tuning into office politics and understanding company culture as much as doing a good job of what they were hired to do. They need to understand that rank has its privileges and they shouldn't be too proud to handle some menial chores in the beginning. Helping the student to understand that a good sense of humor and flexibility may be the two most important attributes they take to the first job is essential. An old Hoosier colloquialism states that "You need to remember to ride the hay wagon with your knees bent." This is good advice for all of us.

Summary

In summary, let me leave you with my ABC's of helping the student find the job: **ABILITY; BREAK; CONFIDENCE.**

- **Ability** to identify work-related skills and responsibilities they want to assume. Decent grades need to be coupled with experience, enthusiasm, flexibility, problem-solving ability, etc.

- Recognizing the **break** and capitalizing on it is essential. A network of contacts help create an atmosphere for a break to occur.

- **Self confidence** is the key to standing above the crowd. The student never should lose sight of the fine line between self confidence and cockiness.

Job Interviews

Michael E. Bledsoe

Synopsis

As our professional ranks continue to swell with new candidates, it becomes increasingly more important to train our students in the preparation and execution of a job interview.

Many colleges have begun the task of preparing their students for what should be considered their

Bledsoe is with Chevron Chemical Company, Tucker, GA and discussed job interviews at the 31st Annual NACTA Conference on the North Carolina State University Campus, June 16-19, 1985.

"final" Final but, even more have not. Although all colleges offer some help with "Job Placement," i.e., establishing interviews, resume, curriculum vita, etc., most fall short on one of the most important steps ... the interview.

Concepts such as interview preparation (homework), the "first impression," how interviews differ between Industry and Academia, what to say as well as what to avoid saying, and finally, how to avoid the anxiety trap of waiting for the interviewer to call back.

As teachers of Agriculture, we have a responsibility to our students to assure quality education. As educators, our directives must be to make every effort to assure our students the opportunity to exercise their skills in today's job market.

Taking a Job Interview

Joyce Edwards

The interview can be exciting and challenging. It is not something to be taken lightly. It calls for a positive self-image as well as preparedness to discuss yourself, your capabilities, the company, and why YOU should be hired. This article will deal with the how-to of interviewing. The resume gets the interview (in most cases), but the interview gets the job.

The Self Image

The majority of people in the world today are controlled by something called a self-image, or a system of beliefs about themselves that has been accumulated over time. Most people are not really aware that they, like a computer, have been programmed. From the very first day of birth, the process of programming begins stemming from the particular country that one is born in. The other factors of programming and conditioning stem directly from tradition, culture, race, religion, society, family, etc. Out of this context, beliefs, opinions, concepts, and attitudes are formed. It is these beliefs and attitudes that shape one's self-image, which is the sum total of his/her past experiences. To become aware of the self-image to the point of understanding how it controls one's life is very important. With this understanding, individuals can assimilate whatever they desire into their experiences. When you want something out of life, or want something to occur in life for you, it will only occur if it is consistent with your self-image, and it will not occur for you, or remain with you, if it is inconsistent with your self-image.

It is a known fact that whatever you think about usually shows up in your experience as a condition, circumstance or event. It has been called by some "the self-fulfilling prophecy." It is inevitable that one ultimately must accept what one is. This is necessary to come into complete contact with reality. Once this is done, then you can project on the screen of space, using your imagination, in order to incorporate this

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