

## I've Graduated from College... Now What Do I Do?

Hello everyone, this is Mitch Metoxen, Assistant Manager Oneida Higher Education. My subject in our Higher Education article series is “what do I do now that I’ve graduated college?” This entire series gave general advice for persons who think post-secondary education (education after high school) is for them. Now that you’ve successfully committed yourself and earned your degree, how do you find that dream job and is there such a thing as a dream job.

Questions like “how do I begin looking for a job,” “where am I going to live,” “how do I start paying bills,” and “should I go on for more schooling” may be hitting you all at once. In today’s economy, combined with the privilege of the Oneida Higher Education Grant, you may think your only option is to jump right into more schooling. If more schooling is not for you and I believe it is not always the best choice, then how do you go about getting that job you’ve been preparing for?

If you’ve been following the advice from our previous articles, such as choosing the right college, taking advantage of extracurricular activities, taking leadership roles on campus, working part-time, internships, job shadows, informational interviews, getting to know your professors/instructors, etc., you’ll have a good head start to enter the workforce.

I feel I have to first mention that we in Higher Education do not get to counsel on this subject very often. Meaning, once you’ve graduated, we rarely have clients ask us for advice on finding a job. Though I’ve had some training in this area, I had to do most of my own research, consisting of the internet and one of my favorite past-times, listening to Wisconsin Public Radio. All the advice boiled down to three things, **networking**, doing your **homework** on potential employers and keeping a **positive outlook**.

To read this article in its entirety, visit our website at [www.oneidanation.org/highered](http://www.oneidanation.org/highered)

### **Know Yourself**

Before you start your job search, it is important that you know yourself. Ask yourself these questions: What is my leadership style? How can I make myself stand out? How do I get where I want to be? Am I willing to relocate? Are you willing to work in an unrelated field? Be aware that you may have to get rid of your pre-conceived notions on how to get where you want to be.

### **Networking**

It is important to realize you have a circle of acquaintances that are resources, a network, which can help you find that job. So who’s in your network? Of course your friends and family, but also don’t forget your former classmates and teachers, your college’s career development center, your place of worship, your neighbors and all other acquaintances in your community. Start by stepping out of your comfort zone and saying “Hello!” to these people. There is a hidden market of employment out there and these people may know of

an opportunity. Get comfortable talking about your situation and what kind of employment you're looking for.

Even at this point, you may not be sure what you want to do and out of desperation may be willing to do anything. But stating this to your network comes across as desperate and does not leave a positive impression. So how do you better prepare yourself to network properly? Do some homework before your next event or meeting. Go online and search the company and persons for their interests and history. You may find ideas for conversation or that you have more in common than you thought.

Review your transcripts for classes you've taken and look at the "employment potential" listed under your colleges major or program. These are great ways to keep yourself updated on the language of your profession and to remind yourself of your past training.

### **Online Social Networks**

Join social networks such as LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/>). LinkedIn, though not solely for employment, is an opportunity to network online. You establish a professional profile and join groups. The difference between facebook and LinkedIn is LinkedIn allows you to join groups in your areas of interest, which you can then join in on discussions.

When joining groups in LinkedIn, it's not good to start your introduction by asking for a job. Give it a few weeks to get to know the people in the group and letting them get to know you. Start slowly and get acquainted so people may be more responsive to your job search.

Another fairly recent concern is reminding students to revamp their current online social network. Make sure your profiles on Myspace and Facebook do not portray you in a way that would bring discredit to your profile.

### **Remain Optimistic**

You may need to take a fresh look at your approach. Re-look at your resume and cover letters. Ensure they are specific to the job you are applying for.

Resumes should be prioritized from top to bottom. Prioritize based off of the job description. If the job is about sales, list your skills regarding sales first, then your community involvement. Regarding objectives make sure they match the job. With today's technology it is very easy to create and send resumes and cover letters out quickly.

Human Resource departments are using key word searches or word scanners to scan a resume or cover letter. So ensure you have the exact words the employer is looking for on your resume or application. "Cut and paste" is a good tool to use when adapting your resume to fit a job posting, but be honest.

## **Interviews**

If getting the interview but not the job, you need to look from this point forward. Before the interview, do your homework on the company. Take the initiative to contact the company and ask who's doing the hiring. Attempt to meet with this person and introduce yourself. Ask them if they have specific goals or issues they want to address. This is a good way to do your homework. Many employers say the reason one person is hired over another is the applicant didn't know their company or enough about the job and what their current issues are.

Another way to practice interviewing is conduct mock interviews. Review the job description, create questions and have a friend pretend to interview you. Ask your local job placement centers if they can help you. Locally we have the Oneida Job Center and the Brown County Job Center. These are great resources for opportunities and additional training you might not be aware of. You can also visit the "career one stop" website at <http://www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/Interviews/GetReady.aspx?ES=Y&ES T=interviews> for more information on preparing for an interview.

## **Web Based Job Searches**

Take advantage of web-based job searches. The most common are Monster.com (<http://www.monster.com/>) career builder.com (<http://www.careerbuilder.com/>) or yahoo's hotjobs. These are considered the "big three" for big commercial type websites. Companies have to pay to have their jobs posted here. Other websites like indeed.com (<http://www.indeed.com/>), simplyhire.com (<http://www.simplyhired.com/>) or juju.com (<http://www.job-search-engine.com/>) are search engines specifically for jobs. These websites use a zip code and keyword search to search through newspaper postings.

Indeed.com allows you to set up a feed so you are made aware of job postings at a moment's notice and it tracks when you last visited the site so it will only post job opportunities from your last visit.

Always remember to be careful when you put your resume online. You are putting a lot of information out there and some people may not be so legitimate.

Another way to use the web is by going to sites like wetfeet.com and vault.com for industry trends, company profiles and news, and insider information from employees.

## **Follow-Up**

It's always good to follow-up on your application, but give the employer at least 10 days to process. When turning in your application, ask them for a timeframe as to when you'll get a decision. This will help you decide when to follow-up. When you follow-up, be prepared to give an interview over the phone. Make sure you've done your homework on the company.

It's also important to send a thank you letter or email after an interview. If done within 24 hours of the interview, it's a way to remind them of why you want the job. You also never know what the future holds, so why burn bridges.

### **Temporary Employment**

Staffing firms or temporary employment is another alternative. Some jobs may eventually get you where you want to be. Long breaks in employment may not reflect well. Continuous employment shows your work ethic and may give you opportunities for skill building.

Do volunteer work in your field. It can keep your spirits up as well as increase your network.

### **Non-traditional Alternatives**

I have to mention what I call "non-traditional alternatives." These are other options to the traditional lines of work. You can opt for the military or other volunteer opportunities like the Peace Corps. Many of my family have taken advantage of these routes. They can give you that competitive edge in the workforce.

To wrap it up, all this advice boils down to networking, doing your homework and maintaining a positive attitude. I hope I gave some information that may help you succeed in landing a job you can be proud of and you feel your education helped you get there.

There's one more article in our 6 part series. It's the conclusion by Nicole Stroobants. Keep an eye out and please contact our office if you have any questions, suggestions or comments. We look forward to hearing from you. Mitchel R. Metoxen, Assistant Manager Higher Education