

Giving college grads a fighting chance



Insights from the other side

Congratulations!

We'll cut right to the chase. Graduating is great, but getting a job you love is even better. We're here to help.

In the Spring of '06 Drew McLellan posed a question on his blog, Drew's Marketing Minute. He asked his readers to offer their best advice to graduates who wanted to break into marketing.

This e-book is the result of those insightful, generous answers. We hope you'll benefit from their years of wisdom, experience and mistakes.

Good luck – we look forward to having you as a colleague.

Drew McLellan

If you want to earn a marketing job -- market yourself. Select a handful of companies/agencies that you'd like to work for and do your homework. Learn how they work. Learn about their clients. Learn who you need to influence to get their attention.

Create a marketing plan. Use several mediums to get your message through to them. Make sure your resume and cover letter don't look like everyone else's attempt. Send relevant articles. Leave voice mail messages. Start a direct mail campaign. Comment on their blog. Leave an impression. And be patient. Hopefully by now you've learned that marketing isn't an instant fix. Give it time and be persistent.

How can you be memorable? How can you give them a glimpse of how hiring you would be beneficial? How can you help them understand that they can't afford NOT to hire you?

If you can't market yourself -- why would they think you could market their clients?

Sharon Sarmiento

1. Smile at people and take an interest in them.
2. If you're an employee (as opposed to an entrepreneur), make friends with your boss and with your boss's boss.
3. Don't be a martyr and work late thinking that it will impress your supervisors. What they're really thinking is, "Why can't she get her work done before quitting time?" Also they'll come to expect that you're available to stay after hours.
4. Don't get involved with office politics. This means not talking badly about anyone behind their back. In an office environment it's so tempting to gossip, but it'll come back to bite you.
5. Don't take work too seriously. Especially if you work in a traditional office, it's just a given that friction will occur or that people you don't think are deserving get promoted, or some stupid policy gets put in place that you disagree with. There's so much that's out of your control, so just resolve to not let it bother you.

The absolute biggest thing I wish I knew when I was first starting out, is that you can create your own job if you don't see any that you like. That's what I did. If you're a bit of a risk taker and a maverick, you might find greater satisfaction outside of the traditional working work. Just think about what you enjoy doing and how you could possibly monetize your skills.

It feels amazing to be able to create your own business to suit your unique skills and passions.

Lewis Green

Thank you for giving this gift to America's brightest and its future leaders. Like David, my advice deals with "while still in school, do this."

When I graduated from the University of Florida, I was one of two graduates who donned our caps on Saturday and went to work on Monday. Here's what got me the job:

- 1: Throughout school I held various part-time positions in businesses within my career field, resulting in stuff to put on my resume and job references.
2. From the real world, I learned that taking classes outside my degree focus was important, as I came to the business world with a well-rounded, double-major academic background, as well as a sense of what others not seeking jobs in my career field thought.
3. In my last two quarters, I interned (for free) at businesses where I wanted to work. One of those businesses hired me, because I proved that I was a hard worker, willing to go the extra mile, a quick learner, a non-complainer, a guy who showed up on time, and a person who met every deadline. Why is that important?
4. Frankly, most graduates are equally trained. Forget the "I went to Harvard so I'm better than those who went to a state school." Most businesses don't care where you received your degree. They want to train you to fit within their culture not Harvard's culture. So what makes up your advantage: The Things I mentioned above.

Kevin Hillstrom

I got my first job after apparently failing a series of tests while applying for a job with the NSA. At my University, I noticed a job posting for a position that perfectly matched my "skills". There was one problem, however. All resumes were to be received by June 1. It was June 15. I applied anyway. Seven days after sending my resume via the mail, I received a call for an interview. Three weeks after the call, I started work in my new job.

The other thing I would share is to never, ever, let anybody tell you what you are capable of doing. Ever. On day one of your first job, somebody is going to make judgments about what your potential. Some of your leaders and co-workers will want you to do things exactly as they have been done previously. Others will discount your ideas due to a lack of experience. Some will see you as a threat, and will do things to limit your potential. You control your attitude, work ethic, quality of work, ideas, and leadership. If there is one thing I have observed, over and over again, it is that talent, attitude, work ethic, quality of work, ideas and leadership always defeat anything that is not pure of intent. Don't listen to the pundits who want to put you in a box, and tell you what you can/cannot do. Do the job you were assigned, but do it with the attributes I list, and you'll do very well for yourself in the long-term.

Ann Simons

- 1) Typos are a very bad thing on a resume. Make sure you have a couple of people proof it for you before you send it out.
- 2) Do your research. Read the company's website, including the bios, and do a quick Internet search. If they've posted white papers on the website or they've written books, read them. Think of some questions to ask related to what you've read that you can discuss in the interview but be sincere. Don't ask a question just to ask a question and don't pretend you read the book if you really didn't.
- 3) Don't do all the talking, and don't make the interviewer do all the talking. A good interview is like a conversation with both parties sincerely interested in learning what the other person has to say.
- 4) Please don't tell me you want to pursue a career in marketing and advertising because you "want to express your creativity" unless you want to sound naïve and immature. I want to hire people who understand that the point of advertising and marketing is to sell products and services and can demonstrate how they can help me and/or my clients to do that.
- 5) Do informational interviews with people at agencies and companies so that you have a realistic expectation of the business.
- 6) Always bring along a pad of paper to take notes even if you find you rarely use it.
- 7) When negotiating for salary please don't tell me you need more money so that you can get your car fixed or move out of your parents' house, etc. I don't care. What I do want to know is what value you will bring to the business and how you can prove what you say is true.
- 8) I love creativity and people who present resumes or share work that they've done in a way that is new or different. But before you bring it to an interview, share it with someone whose opinion you respect to ensure it is creating the impression you want to create.
- 9) At lunch please don't chew with your mouth open or talk with food in your mouth.
- 10) Always, always, send the interviewer a brief note---email is just fine. People so seldom write notes that you will stand out if you do.

Finally, learn to network. Every job in marketing and advertising that I've had (including my very first agency job) came about through networking. Most of the time the job was not advertised and I was the only candidate because I was recommended by someone the hiring person trusted. Most people do not know how to network well. A great book on the topic is "Networking: Building Relationships and Opportunities For Success," by Melissa Giovagnoli and Jocelyn Carter-Miller. And don't stop networking just because you get a job!

Ann Handley

1. It's not about you. It's about what you can contribute. To that end... be different. Be unique.
2. Listen to your gut. Your inner voice. Your instinct. Whatever you call it. It's there. And you know what to do.
3. Don't be a jerk. The business world is impossibly small. It'll come back to bite you in the butt.

Paul McEnany

Don't be an idiot. That would be first. I see a lot of kids, not knowing what they don't know, with an image of what advertising is in the movies, not in real life.

With new interns and new hires, I always like to ask questions about how they use media. They're pretty good informational resources. So, by this I mean, know what you DO know, and CAN know. Understand the issues we're going through, and how you can offer a new perspective.

You're luckier than most, you have all this information at your disposal, and by just taking a few minutes to examine how you act in context with these issues can make you a quite intriguing character.

The bottom line is that there is a wealth of knowledge out there for free, so go learn it. And, as someone just graduating college, you use the media in ways that we're spend a lot of money studying, so use that to your advantage.

Bob Glaza

Ask and you shall receive. Here's my 2 cents worth:

- Take risks - you never know the results.
- Imagine all the possibilities. You're on a journey. Whatever job you discover is not the destination - its a signpost.
- Be surprised - you may end up doing something very different than you thought.
- Aim high and keep aiming. Hitting the target comes with practice, practice, practice. Think Aristotle and happiness.
- Have fun with it. Remember whoever you work with or for wants you to be yourself. Ideally, your education has allowed time learning about yourself

Steve Sisler

My thoughts about careers in general begin with how we all begin...by taking our first baby steps! Careers are NOT etched in stone! They can and usually do change.

That dynamic alone keeps the search exciting and fresh. Don't be afraid to take a step, whether small or large, outside of your comfort zone. You never know where that step will take you, what doors it will open for you. 25 years ago while in college I landed a part-time position as a delivery boy for a local independent pharmacy.

Since then, the steps I have chosen to take have led me to positions of VP of Procurement for a 200-store pharmacy chain, pharmacy owner, VP of Sales after a career switch, while all the time being a loving father and husband. Never be afraid to go after what you truly want to accomplish.

Having said that, money is not the ultimate goal for which you get up in the morning and go to work. Personal satisfaction is as important as job satisfaction. Do what makes you happy! And when your personal and professional goals change as you continue to evolve, don't be afraid to modify or even change your career path. There is no greater loss than to have never tried something new, as again, careers are NOT etched in stone.

At the same time, finding a comfortable balance between personal and professional commitments is a must! I'm not saying it's easy, especially during those early years when you are establishing your career.

Making commitments to your career and home life will yield dividends well into your future! The alternative will be to have a void either at home or work, and then you'll ask, "Where did all of the time go?" By then, it's too late.

Whether deciding upon a new career or simply a new job, be prepared! Educate your self about the industry and the employer with whom you are interviewing. There is nothing more frustrating than to be interviewing a candidate who knows nothing about the job they are applying for.

Those interviews often last less than 30 minutes. Your enthusiasm to learn will go a long way during the interview process. Even better is when your enthusiasm comes through for a job and company for which you researched and created an action plan to be used during the interview process.

Lastly, do not dwell in the past. Learn from the past, but don't live in the past. Always look forward to the new opportunities which lie before you. Once you have set your focus on a new dimension for your career, begin by determining what that first step will be. And then take it!

Nick Rice

Don't try to impress everyone right off the bat. Come into your new role from with a learning posture and always try to offer something of value. Know that your education is great; but the real world is a lot different than theory. It's wise to listen to people that have been around a while. I know you want to set the world on fire with new ideas, but to be honest, there are no new ideas.

Find a mentor! Never stop learning!

Your resume is great. But you need stories to tell about yourself - and I'm not talking about Facebook or MySpace style stories. If you have nothing more to add than what's on your resume, why should I bring you in to talk?

You are very much a child of the internet. Your boss probably is not. Be very aware of what your superiors think of your online activities and associations. Let me be clear, if I see pictures of your frat party or you making out in a bar, you're automatically going in the garbage. Google your name and see what shows up - and remember it takes forever to remove an item from Google's cached pages.

If you're still in school, find a good internship that will generate measurable results for your resume.

Learn how to write conversationally. It's how real work gets done.

Volunteer for the crappy assignments - people notice.

Realize that you are entitled to NOTHING. Success must be earned. You cannot expect the big paycheck and the sweet office based on a good GPA alone. You must work your way up and you must prove that you can get the job done. This takes years not months.

Come in early, stay late, and prove that you can make a difference.

Lastly, have fun while getting the job done. Get to know people. Put yourself out there and learn. People love to transfer knowledge if they know you're not after their job and that you truly want to learn.

Liz Strauss

What I wish I knew when I was trying to get my first job.

I wish I knew how much being an enthusiastic learner is worth to a manager who is looking to hire. I wish I knew how much it wasn't about me, but about how I would fit in with the company.

I wish I knew that it was about the people and how well my skills would help everyone shine -- not just me.

I wish I understood that my energy and my willingness to learn everything probably weighed more than my degree which everyone else being hired also had.

I wish I knew that listening and thinking before I talked was the most important skill of all.

Roger von Oech

When I was starting my own company thirty years ago, I asked a lot of people — business owners, managers, coaches, teachers, and so on — for their ideas on what it took to be a success in business.

And the best advice of all came from my printer. His words of wisdom to me were: "Don't fall in love with type styles."

He went on to explain that a lot of designers tend to fall in love with a particular font, and then they want to use it everywhere — even in places where it's inappropriate. Well, I didn't listen to him, and soon I fell in love with Palatino semi-bold. I used it everywhere, and, yes!, after awhile my design looked hackneyed.

I think you can generalize my printer's advice to: "Don't fall in love with ideas — be they marketing systems, accounting protocols, software designs, whatever — because as soon as you do, you'll want to use them everywhere — even places where they're inappropriate."

I think one of life's greatest pleasures is to fall out of love with a previously cherished idea?

Why? Because then you have opportunity to look for other possibilities!

Mark Goren

How I landed my first job (war/success story)

It took months after graduation, but I finally landed my first job after being referred to a head hunter who was looking for an English writer with an understanding of French to fill a position. The job was related to communications, but not in advertising (where I really wanted to work). I got the job – and took the first job offered at an agency shortly thereafter.

What I wish I knew when I was trying to get my first job

That it would take months to find one. I would've taken the time to travel.

My advice for someone trying to break into the marketing/advertising business

Go back to school and find an advertising-specific certificate program. Network like crazy. Volunteer for industry award shows/committees/organizations. Stay in touch with the industry.

Words of wisdom about careers in general

Never forget the help you received from seniors in the industry and return the favor when you're in a position to.

C.B. Whittemore

When I think about my first work experiences after college, I can't help but consider each individual job experience as well as the entirety of these experiences before business school in terms of [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#).

At first, it's about **physiological** needs: figuring out what's what and where [my workspace/desk, the lunchroom, the bathrooms...] and what the basics are [phone number, passwords, dress code, responsibilities...].

Then, it's about **safety & security**: how quickly can I absorb all of the newness? How can I fit it? How can I make it beyond whatever the trial period is? Can I position myself for an early evaluation to get feedback? How have others been successful in this position? What's critical?

Next, comes **love & belonging**: who has an interesting perspective on the job/company/marketplace? Can I get to know that person? Who might offer advice? How can I get more involved?

Then, **self-esteem & esteem of others**: I'm really proud of what I am contributing. How can I add more value? Within the organization and outside of it?

And finally **self-actualization** - am I pursuing my passions? How can I develop further? Can I do it in this environment?

From that perspective:

- Definitely be dependable, professional, punctual, responsible, courteous... Commit to deadlines and meet those deadlines.
- Keep a positive attitude, be interested and enthusiastic. If you can't be upbeat and professional, then find another job where you can be, otherwise you will enter into a vicious cycle of unhappiness.
- Be an information sponge. Watch, listen, absorb. Ask questions. Listen to the answers. Understand the big picture and appreciate that even the smallest details matter to that big picture. Look at the big picture from your customer's perspective, and your customer's customer's perspective. Can you improve on anything?
- Be flexible and willing to take on even the most boring jobs. Can you be creative in how you get those jobs done? [I once had to sharpen pencils for my boss. To ensure that he always had ready access to sharpened pencils, I bought him an electric pencil sharpener. Never again did he have to wait on me for perfect pencils!]
- Finally, don't get caught up in internal politics. Therein lies the road to ruin!

Joan Schramm

This is a wonderful compilation of advice -- and not just for new grads, either. Many people in business could benefit from reading this stuff.

Let me add the most important thing I learned as a new manager -- don't air your dirty laundry in public.

Lots of people seem to think that a departmental meeting is the time to bring up things that someone else did wrong. It isn't. Any issues you have with someone, bring them up in private.

No one wants to hear you asking Fred why his people were late with the widget count again last month (least of all Fred). Handle Fred in private and, if you don't get a response you need, then go to your boss in private.

Departmental meetings are to share information and questions, not to play "gotcha" with someone.

Becky Carroll

1. View every interaction with the business world as an opportunity, and put your best foot forward at all times.

Story: In high school, I was a straight-A student and applied for a National Science Foundation scholarship. Part of the application was being interviewed by a scientist at NASA/Ames Research Center. I still remember the interview vividly. We had a great conversation, and all went well. At the end of the conversation, something unexpected took place. I was informed that I did not win the scholarship, but I was offered a job to work at Ames! It was for the summers, and it turned out to be such a great summer job, they offered me a job when I graduated from college. I turned this one down, but it was a fabulous experience to work at NASA! Every interaction you have with the business world can have positive outcomes for your future career. Make the most of them.

2. Be honest at all times.

Story: I was an engineering undergrad and interviewed for a job at HP. I was told the hardest part of the interview would be the technical interview session. With sweaty palms, I entered the conference room and was asked many questions to test my technical abilities and knowledge. There was one question that was especially challenging, and I didn't know the answer to it. I could have faked something, but I decided to be honest and said, "I don't know the answer." The interviewer thanked me and moved on to the next question. "Wait, what was the answer to that question?", I said. The interviewer answered, "I don't know, either. I just wanted to see how you would answer." I got the job (and then worked for HP for nearly 14 years!).

Honesty and integrity will serve you well as you put your best foot forward into the job market (and beyond). Go get 'em!

CK

Get creative in both getting on the radars' of the companies you want to work for and in the relationships you want to develop.

Initiate a program, project, website, or wiki that will get you noticed and advance your search but also help you develop strategic relationships that you can carry throughout your career.

You might even create a hub or group with others who are also looking so as to help one another generate ideas--and keep one another motivated.

While you'll want to follow all the "best practices of job searches" do one better and put those marketing smarts to work early on by thinking of ways to stand out. Much luck and welcome to the real world!

Toby Bloomberg

Fail. A lot. By that I mean take a chance on the road less traveled even if that road takes you out of your comfort zone. As several people have mentioned opportunities come from surprising places and people.

Getting your degree is an exciting and heady experience. However, it's the first step in a long adventure. The people you meet will have traveled that road before you. Take advantage of their experiences as you add your own to the mix.

Learn to be a team player.

Leave before you have "used up" the experience. Over staying on a job will lead to frustration and sadness of the heart.

Help others along the way. The favor will be returned to you many times over.

Ask for help when you need it. You're not expected to know it all.

Join and participate in professional organizations where you can meet, play and learn with others who share your interests and passions. People help people who they know and like.

Balance your work life with time for personal pleasures, family and friends.

Andy Nulman

Earlier this month, in what has become a regular, once-a-semester occurrence, I gave a speech to [McGill University's BCom](#) students about how to get a job in a "non-traditional industry" (their quotes, not mine).

The reason I keep being invited back is that there is no course in how to gun for a gig (nor one on "*How to Study*" either, but that's a whole other bone to pick), and my outrageous ramblings seem to have struck a chord. What I say is rather unconventional and contrarian (now THERE'S a Surprise!), and while it goes on for 90 minutes, the advice can be distilled down into the following, which can be labeled:

The Three Ps of Marketing Jobs (*Finding 'Em, That Is...*)

PATRONAGE

A dirty word in politics, but a valued shortcut in business. Years ago, I created a TV series for CBC in Canada called "*Getting Job One*," and for it, we interviewed dozens of job-seeking students. All of 'em eschewed going to their relatives or friends for help with stinky disdain; they were gonna get their first job themselves, goddamit, even if it killed them! Well young'uns, the most valuable asset in business is your contact list, and at this stage of your careers, yours subsists primarily of those close to you. There is no shame in depending on others for an "in" to get you a job; you'll be depending on others for the rest of your working days to keep it.

PROSTITUTION

Perhaps the best tactic of them all. By offering yourself up to a prospective employer for free, to do anything--*everything!*--you are showing confidence in yourself, your abilities and your potential to fit in with the company. Some have softened the blow of this term with the euphemisms "*Intern*" or "*Volunteer*," but make no bones about it--you know what you want, and this is how you'll get it. And when I say "do anything," I really mean "anything"--wash cars, walk dogs, separate trash from recycling. Trust me, perform well for free and when that paying gig opens up, where do you think they'll look first--that pile of resumé...or the guy or gal bustin' butt down the hall?

PRÉSUMÉS

And speaking about resumé, throw yours away. It ain't worth squat. Unless you've started a business or two, or worked in the field, in the eyes of most marketing job-offerers, you ain't done nothing. Worse still, unlike law, medicine, science, architecture and the like, in the marketing game, your marks don't count for much. So instead of listing your classes, interests, school activities and other rather irrelevant things you've done, on a resumé, market YOURSELF with a document I call a Presumé, in which you convince your prospective employer what YOU WILL DO for him or her. This will show forward-thinking, creativity and salesmanship...three factors crucial for success in marketing.

Seth Godin

My answer is easy to write, harder to implement. In my experience the single best way to become a marketer is to market. And since marketing isn't expensive any longer (it takes more guts than money), there's no need to work for Procter & Gamble. None. In the old days, you could argue that you needed to apprentice with an expert and that you needed access to millions (or billions) to spend. No longer.

So, start your own gig. Even if you're 12 years old, start a store on eBay. You'll learn just about everything you need to learn about digital marketing by building an electronic storefront, doing permission-based email campaigns, writing a blog, etc. Who knows more about marketing--Scoble or some mid-level marketing guy in Redmond?

You don't need a lot of time or a lot of money. You can start with six hours every weekend. Over time, if (and when) you get good at it, take on clients. Paying clients. Folks that need brilliant marketers will beat down the door to get at you. After a while, you may decide you like that life. Or, more likely, you'll decide you'd rather be your own client.

People who want to become great fishermen don't go to work on a salmon trawler. And people who want to become marketers ought to just start marketing.

Roberta Rosenberg

As someone who's made a career and 3 businesses based on the concept "be the biggest fish in the smallest, most profitable pond" ... I'd urge fresh-faced college grads to consider the road not taken when they consider the various career paths open to them.

Don't go for the obvious or the glamour.

Seek out interesting industries and smallish companies where you can get your hands dirty in a number of different jobs.

Keep your goals loosely structured, but have goals.

Recognize when opportunity is biting you on the tushy and be not afraid. You can always get a job doing something, but some opportunities won't wait for you.

I fell into direct marketing 25 years ago as a junior copywriter working for a small B2B publishing company while going to grad school for a masters in broadcast management. Within a few months, grad school and broadcasting was a memory.

I was home and so it has ever been.

Chris Cree

Here's what I tell the younger folks around me just getting started:

A job isn't forever. You don't have to have it all figured out when you start. In fact, you'll save yourself a lot of heartache if you give yourself room to learn what you don't like and possibly change direction.

If you have a choice between taking a job for money or because it is something you would really love to do, don't go for the money. If your work happens to be something you are passionate about, say something you'd consider doing even if they didn't pay you, then the money will follow eventually. And probably in much larger amounts than that other job could ever bring you.

Finally, you're much better off just being yourself. If you have to pretend to be someone else in an interview to get the job then you are probably going to be miserable working there in a year or so. If they turn you down because you were yourself then be grateful because they've done you a favor. They've just saved you some misery down the road.

Ann Michael

WOW – there is some really great advice here already. In trying not to duplicate anything, my general advice is: remember that teamwork and collaboration are the name of the game now.

I know you're wonderful, but there are other wonderful people out there too and you WILL accomplish more working with them.

Don't be frustrated or concerned about people that are very different from you. Whether old or young, male or female, or from radically different cultures, you (we!) have a lot to learn from all of them.

Know who you are so that you're not afraid or unduly offended by those who are different from you. They aren't a threat. They're a HUGE learning opportunity.

Be passionate, but balance that with patience. Passionate people are in danger of being very frustrated and bitter if they don't learn to manage their passion and focus it on positive results.

Focus on others – what can you learn from them – what can you offer – how can you help. Make it personal – forge relationships, alliances, and friendships.

Above all – love what you do and don't be afraid to change what you do if you “fall out of love”. If you don't you open the door for a lot of heart ache!

Andy Brudtkuhl

I've been out of school from the ISU College of Business for just over two years now but I've been in the technology industry here in Iowa for 7 years.

First you must know that there is a sense of what I call ageism in Iowa (maybe elsewhere). Although I do have 7 years experience with tech in Iowa, potential employers see a 24 year old kid. In many companies it won't matter how smart you are or how much experience you have - you still have to prove yourself.

This leads to my second point - patience. I have all the ambition in the world and it gets very frustrating not moving as fast in my career as I want. Part of this is a product of my first point but I've grown to live with it. Don't expect to get where you want to be right away. Ninety percent of the time at the beginning of your career your experience, knowledge, or talent don't matter. You have to work your way up just like everyone else.

And if you do lack that patience, like me, there's always room for more entrepreneurs. If you don't have that spirit small / startup companies provide the best learning experiences because you often must wear many hats.

Another thing I've seen from peers of mine as they graduate - they quit learning. That's a great way to get stuck in a job you don't like for a long, long time.

And last - don't let a job, boss, or company mold you into what it wants you to be. If you are pressured to do so its not the right fit and you will be starting off your career in the worst possible way.

Patrick Schaber

Keep an open mind!

When I graduated from college with a degree in Marketing my expectations were too high as far as what kind of job I thought I'd land. The jobs that I truly wanted required much more experience than what I had. I had to adjust my expectations and I am glad I did.

My first jobs out of college were in customer service and sales and they offered me a great base of experience getting to know customers and how to interact with them. I think I'm better in my job today as a Marketing Manager because I was able to get that experience early on in my career.

Also, look for opportunities to expand your knowledge base when you're in a job out of college. What gaps can you fill? What new talents can you bring to a job? Always be thinking out of the box.

Tony D. Clark

As a home-based entrepreneur, I have a little bit different view of the questions, so it here goes...

How I landed my first job (war/success story)

My only "real jobs" were in my late teens and early twenties - some manual labor, a line cook, a waiter, and part-time bookseller. So I don't really have any advice here - I just walked in a filled out an application.

These were mainly to cover me while freelancing. But I highly I recommend that everyone be a waiter/waitress and a manual laborer sometime in their life. It's hard work, and you take a lot of crap. I learned a lot about business from my short stints in those jobs. Mainly that I never want to do it again, and to treat those providing a service with respect and kindness (as long as they are doing the same).

What I wish I knew when I was trying to get my first job

That I didn't want a JOB. I wanted a CAREER and a BUSINESS.

My advice for someone trying to break into the marketing/advertising business

For breaking into the business, I defer to the other experts here. But for the aspiring entrepreneur, I always recommend reading Ogilvy on Advertising. No better yet, to quote Brad Hamilton from Fast Times at Ridgemont High, "Learn it. Know it. Live it."

As an entrepreneur, I learned that a majority of the other books out there just regurgitate Ogilvy. Better to get it right from the source.

Words of wisdom about careers in general

It all comes down to doing what you love. Every successful person out there got to where they are, by doing what they love - Jobs, Buffet, Oprah, Tony Robbins, Adam Savage, Alton Brown.

No matter who it is, they have a passion for what they do. It shows in their lives, in their faces, and in their bank accounts.

Don't take 10 years to figure this out. By then it's much harder to do something about it. Follow your passion, use your gifts, and provide something of value and you WILL be successful in every way you can imagine.

Andy Wibbels

If you don't immediately work in your chosen field realize that you aren't 'above' socializing with your colleagues. I had an attitude that 'this isn't what I really want to do' so I didn't cement relationships with my coworkers. The big realization is: People leave companies and they often need to hire new people at their new companies. **Stay in contact.**

Take full advantage of education and professional development offered by your employer. I wish I'd gotten my MBA in the several years I'd worked at a large Fortune 500 company. I dawdled when I could have a grad degree by now - and they'd have paid for it.

As for breaking into marketing I really have no idea since my marketing training is all informal. I'd say read as much current lit as you can on the next phases of marketing. I'm guessing so much of **what is taught in marketing curricula is dead in the water** when measured against the current mediascape.

Learn how to **navigate assholes**. Every industry has assholes - and often you will have to work for them. Build boundaries to keep them at a distance but work with them. Document everything in case you have to do your due diligence with HR.

Relationships rule. It isn't who you know. It isn't what you know. It is **who knows what you know and what you can do**. Impress extroverts.

Designer Mike

I graduated college with a degree in graphic design in 1999 when the job market was tough. It seemed nobody was hiring or wanted to hire a fresh faced 20 year old designer with talent but no experience. I needed to pay the rent so I sucked it up and work blue collar jobs. I worked for \$7/hr at Gabus Ford parking cars in the heat and cold of Iowa weather. I also worked a second job unloading boxes for FedEx at 3AM!

At Gabus Ford one day I was asked to help their Des Moines Register sales rep take some photos for the ad. I saw my chance. I asked the rep if I could give her my resume to give to the Register folks (I had some in my car). I gave it to her thinking nothing would EVER come of it. Well, two days later I had an interview and got the job.

I guess the moral of the story is to work hard every day and always be prepared.

Aaron M. Potts

Having done everything from door-to-door sales, to military service, to having a well-paying position with a successful dot-com company (before the bubble burst), my advice to any job seeker would be to think long and hard about what you actually WANT to do.

It is far too easy for us to take a position or grasp an opportunity that we are qualified for, without giving enough consideration to whether or not we will still want that position 20 years from now.

For example, a photographer can do anything from running their own business to being on the payroll for a company that may or may not even be around 20 years from now. And if they were, would you still want to work for them?

In short, follow your PASSION, not your opportunities.

Terry Starbucker

The best bits of advice I could ever give to any person just starting a career are:

- 1) Whatever you choose to do, you **MUST** be passionate about it
- 2) Once passionate, you should visualize yourself at the pinnacle of whatever you choose to do, and then write that vision down.
- 3) Go after it with focus and persistence - every interview, every discussion you have with anyone about your career, should always come back to the vision
- 4) Believe in yourself
- 5) Keep your perspective and humor intact during the process
- 6) Enjoy the journey!

Good luck, and keep the faith!

Mark True

My advice for someone trying to break into the marketing/advertising business...get as much 'safe' experience while in school. Volunteer for as many tasks as you can to get a little practice and knowledge about them all. Do some writing, some photography, some design, some speaking, etc. You won't be good at them all but you will be good at some, so it's better to learn where they won't fire you.

Then, when you get in an interview situation, learn all you can about the organization - or its clients, if it's an agency - and be ready to ask intelligent questions. That makes the interviewer feel good because they like to talk about themselves, and gives you more information and more time to think about your answer.

It also gives you a chance to decide if you really want this job before you get the job!

Steve Miller

Don't get stressed out about whether you're going to make or break your life or career in your first job.

Your life will take a LOT of twists and turns (most unexpected) before you find your passion. Your first job is simply the first step on a long journey. Look for something really interesting, not something that just pays well. Have fun. Enjoy the ride.

Darren Barefoot

Wear Sunscreen and be an intern.

If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it. The long term benefits of sunscreen have been proved by scientists whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable than my own meandering experience...I will dispense this advice now. -- Mary Schmich

I probably do one informational interview a month with a recent grad, and inevitably they ask a lot of questions about ad agencies and large corporate marketing departments. I can't answer those. I've never worked in either (though I've consulted in both), and given that I prefer a diversity of work (and work environment), that suits me fine.

So my advice to new graduates is degree-neutral—it applies whether your rolled-up paper says “Engineering” or “Visual Arts”. It's also pretty obvious, but it worked for me and I truly believe it'll work for anybody.

Do an internship.

About a year after I graduated, I did a two-month internship at Radical Entertainment a Yaletown game developer. It was the height of Web Bubble 1.0, and I played more *Quake* and *Starcraft* than did actual work, but it got my foot in the door. After two months they didn't bring me on (they were busy laying people off, if I recall correctly), but I left their offices with a tech company on my resume, a decent portfolio and a glowing reference. In a couple of weeks I had two offers, and I'm still good friends with the guy who hired me at MPS. A similar strategy worked for my brother.

What does an internship do for you?

- It forces you to research the local job market, and to actually choose the employers for which you want to work. It makes you ignore the classified ads, which is a good habit to get into.
- You get a ton of interview experience at a reduced stress level. After all, there are lots of companies that might want to intern for, and you might as well talk to them all.
- You learn how to promote yourself. You have to make cold calls to potential bosses, and that's scary.
- Once you land an internship, you get to practice over-achieving. Obviously you want a job with the company, so you've got a short amount of time to convince them of that fact.

My two-month internship was unpaid, and I think that's okay. Happily, I had the structure of a UVic alumni program which provided a context for the potential employers. Regardless, accept that during your internship you'll make little or no money. That ought to make you all the hungrier.

The whole process—from assembling a resume to calling employers—can be difficult work for a young person, but it's well worth it. It's the proverbial toe in the door, and that's more than most graduates get.

Rosa Say

I hope sharing a link is okay: I'd written this article in response to a question I got from an intern starting a new job, and I hope it helps with your project; it's called, "New to Management: A Learning Hit List."

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/management/new-to-management-a-learning-hit-list.html>

Mary Schmidt

In the real world, nothing works like it says in the books. Be flexible, keep your eyes open, and continue learning. Your degree is just the beginning.

As for getting a job, I'd recommend smaller companies/agencies. They're typically more creative, move faster and will give you more opportunity sooner (and you'll likely have more fun.)

Phil Gerbyshak

What I wish I knew when trying to get my first job?

Resumes are important. GPA is more important. Who you know is even MORE important. And what's most important?

Who knows YOU! If nobody knows you, you will have a tough time getting a job. Take an interview somewhere where you already know someone on the inside that can give you a great reference. This helps more than you will ever know...ESPECIALLY for your first job.

My advice for someone trying to break into advertising or marketing is...

Practice while you're in college, read all the things you can about advertising and marketing on the web (your college textbooks are hopelessly out of date) and try to do some marketing now in the blogosphere. Find a great internship with a great team and learn all you can. Take lots of notes, and ask LOTS of questions.

Other career advice:

Careers are tough things. Your first job is not a career.

Don't be afraid to try a few different things.

Go with what feels right, not with what makes you the most money.

If it's a little unethical, don't do it. If you sell out now, they'll sell you out later. Be morally right and do the right thing. ALWAYS!

Fail. A LOT. Ask for forgiveness, NOT permission. Take the shot!

Get to know as many people higher up the ladder than you are at work. Ask them what makes them successful.

Avoid negative people...AT ALL COSTS!

Spend your money on a comfortable pair of shoes because you'll stand more than you think, and walk further than you want to.

Take every chance you get to improve your communication skills, especially your verbal ones. Toastmasters is good for this.

Take all the training your company provides, even if it's on your own time. Know where the company library is and get to know the librarian. Ask for book recommendations often.

Subscribe to Audible.com and listen to 1 new book a month.

Go to the blogosphere and read everything you can about a topic that can help you get to where you want to be or what you want to learn.

And most importantly of all...HAVE FUN!

OK, **second** most importantly of all is have fun. The most important piece of advice I can give is simple: Never Stop Learning!

Valeria Maltoni

1. Do the work. Whatever it takes. This is the secret ingredient. I mentor many MBA students and young people who are seeking a splendid career, possibly starting from a top management position and making a lot of money.

Some of these expectations may be created by the level of debt that many graduates incur in school. Some may be the fruit of misguided perception.

2. Give people a chance to see you at work. This is how you break away from the pack. Most of the young people I recommend for hire have worked with me in activities to benefit non-profits and volunteer organizations.

3. Stay in control of your career. This is how you show maturity, poise, and perseverance. Believe in yourself and your ideas enough to continue investing in your own growth. Finding a first job is just the beginning.

4. Conduct yourself in a way that is above reproach. This is how you show what you're made of. You own your own brand and credibility is a fragile thing. Protect yours by behaving ethically and above board on everything you do. This may mean apparent temporary set backs in the short term.

5. Keep an eye on the long term. This is how you show loyalty to the profession. Remember that especially in today's day and age, each industry is getting smaller and smaller. When you make your decisions, consider all consequences, even the unintended ones. You are your best advocate and brand keeper.

Stephanie Weaver

My very first job, when I was not even 16, I got by calling, then calling again, then calling again. (While this can backfire, people do notice persistence.) My first museum job, I got by going in for five, yes, five, informational interviews. They offered me a one-time weekend teaching job for \$50. I took it. Then they folded two grants together and created a position for me.

General tips:

Spell check your resume, proof it, and then have someone else proof it again. Don't put your GPA on it; no one cares after college. Use nice paper.

If someone offers you advice, take it humbly and thank them. Volunteer to help. Learn how to answer the phone. Show eagerness, enthusiasm, and passion. Learn how to dress appropriately for an interview. Don't give up!

Doug Karr

Here's my advice:

1. If you thought that reading was important in College, you haven't seen anything yet! Learn to love reading, get inspired by it, join a book club, and add every marketing, advertising, and PR book to your bookshelf. It's an investment in your future that will pay off. When employers know that you're keeping up on the latest trends, they'll pay attention.
2. Grab Todd And's Power 150 Marketing list and add them all to your feed reader (don't forget mine ;). Get used to skimming over these blogs daily to capture ideas and inspiration.
3. Understand and recognize how technology is changing your field of expertise. It's not 'getting eyeballs' anymore! The world of marketing, advertising, and PR is about pulling people into your story. Sociology plays as important role as Technology. Human behaviors are changing and it's going to take amazingly talented youth like yourselves to think outside the box.

Best of luck! Sometimes it takes that, too!

Mario Sundar

Here's my 2-cents as far as career satisfaction is concerned:

Find what it is that you absolutely love, pursue it passionately and then spend the rest of your life - not working but thriving in a job that is no longer a JOB.

Even within marketing there are so many categories you can find your true calling in, just follow your heart (sounds clichéd; yet true:)

Delaney Kirk

1. Find out what you don't want to do/Learn skills along the way

There is a lot of pressure on college students to pick a major and then find a job in that discipline after graduation. However, many do not know what they want to do both in and after college. I tell my students that I did not discover my career choice until I was 28 years old. In the meantime, I worked several different types of jobs (accounting, marketing research, management), learning what I liked to do and what I didn't enjoy. I reassure them that they have 6-7 years after graduation thus to beat my record. Working these other jobs helped me to narrow down my choices until I found something that was a good fit for me.

2. What employers look for on a resume: Presentation

- Keep length to one page (unless have lots of relevant work experience)
- Make good use of white space
- Make user friendly (easy to find info)
- Professionalism (no typos)
- Don't use bold or italic fonts as resume will be scanned
- Use bullet points
- Use active verbs (google "resume action verbs" for these)
- Put contact info on all pages (if have more than one)
- Think about your email address (partygirl@yahoo.com is not good)
- Also, make sure your voice mail message is professional sounding
- Quality and color of paper (white, off white best/good quality paper)
- Personalized cover letter increases your chances
- Remember that you have about 30 seconds to impress the reader

3. What employers look for on a resume: Content

- Objective—be specific to the job or put none at all
- Skills, experience, education (what makes you qualified/what have you accomplished)
- Start with most relevant info
- Related coursework, organizations, computer skills
- Tailor your resume to the position applying for
- Use headings used in the ad or job description
- Use keywords for your occupation
- Gaps in employment (address these in cover letter)
- Include websites of former employers
- Give examples (not just a manager but how many ees, what did you do)
- “Canned” resume? (no, write your own)
- Time to “beef up” the resume (internships, organizations—leadership roles, volunteering)
- Include generic skills if applicable (communication, teamwork, self-starter, organizational)

Consider your resume as an ad that highlights your value as a potential employee: make it short, proactive and a good marketing tool.

4. Prepare for the Interview

- Know why you're interested in the job (interviewer may ask)
- Learn about employer and job (ask for copy of job description before interview)
- Determine your strengths and weaknesses (ask your friends for help)
- Major accomplishments
- Previous job responsibilities
- Prepare questions to ask at the interview
- Look around at culture (do you want to work there? ask employees what they like about the company)
- "Train" your references (give them copy of your resume, list of your strengths)
- Make a good first impression
- Arrive a little early
- Try to relax—take deep breaths
- Be polite to staff members

5. Purpose of the Interview (interviewers are looking for the answers to two questions)

- Can you do the job?
- Are you our kind of person?

The company is interviewing you to see what you are like as a person. Your desire to work. How you get along with others. Positive attitude. Communication skills. Will you fit in? Technical expertise can be determined through tests and by looking at resume.

6. During the interview

- Use the name of the person interviewing you (but not first name unless asked to do so) several times during interview
- Avoid "yes" or "no" answers
- Do not bring up salary or benefits unless interviewer does
- Avoid use of negative terms as answer questions (if ask about past conflict, make sure your example has a positive ending)
- Be specific – use examples of accomplishments in the past
- Ask for the job

7. Appearance & enthusiasm important

- Wear professional clothing
- Good grooming
- Firm handshake
- Don't wear anything that connects you to religious group, political cause, association, etc.—don't want to bias interviewer
- Breath mints
- Don't wear perfume or after-shave lotion
- Don't smoke
- Wash/clean out car (shows attention to detail)
- Turn off cell phone!

8. Be prepared for questions

- Don't lie! (this includes your resume also)
- Use three steps and a bridge strategy

Example: "What are your strengths?"

You:

- a) skills (you are good with numbers)
- b) knowledge and experience (that are pertinent to the job)
- c) personality
- d) bridging statement: your motivation to seek this job or choose your major

- If asked, "What are your weaknesses?"

Have to say something--everyone has weaknesses. Be honest. Mention something minor that you are working on such as lack of public speaking skills (but you are taking a speech class) or that you tend to take on too many activities (but you are learning to prioritize what is most important)

9. After the interview

- Send a thank you letter
- Express your interest in job and company
- State will be in contact and mention date (next week?)

10. Debrief

- Go over what went well and what didn't so can learn from process
- If do not get job, call to thank them for their time and ask for tips for future interviews. Don't ask why didn't get job.

Keep in mind that the process of getting a job is one of the toughest things you will ever do. It is much harder than working at the job you'll get!

Doug Mitchell

I graduated in 1994 with a degree in International Business. I knew that I wanted to have an international flare in my vocation but I had no idea what that meant. Like many business majors, I spent the first 5 years of my career in sales jobs that were fairly unfulfilling. However, I spent those 5 years thinking, planning, learning about myself, improving myself, and building relationships. The time was not "wasted".

Then, in 1999, I had a conversation with an early twenty-something guy that I'd built a relationship with in my sales days, "I'm looking to get venture capital financing for my start up company, He said, "I have one month's salary to give you to write the business plan. If we succeed, you're in. If we don't, that's it." I took it, we did it, and the rest is history

So here are a few nuggets I've crystallized from my experience:

1. Always build relationships in everything you're involved with. You NEVER know when that person might be EXACTLY what you're looking for in an employee or advisor. These relationships will likely be the ones that either provide you jobs, financing, or business partners. I haven't had a resume since 1999 and wear that as a badge of honor.
2. Foster relationships with mentors. I didn't do this early enough. Create an honest self-assessment. I call it a "Life Resume". When you find someone you truly admire for their skills, business acumen, relationship skills, etc...ask them for a formal mentor/mentee relationship. Structure it and meet monthly. I found a venture capitalist and said, "I want to know what it's like to be you and what you do all day," and that's been over 2 years now.
3. Shift your thinking to solutions and you'll be a winner. Everyone has problems. Meetings are filled with idea killers and lamenters. Have you noticed though that many leaders are aware of the problems...but driven to break through to solutions without harping, getting down, or developing negative energy?
4. Become very comfortable in your own skin. Speak in public, get terrified and overcome it. Conquer that inner voice of doubt and break through to excellence. Nothing will serve you more than being able to communicate to large numbers of people.
5. Write. Become an effective writer by having your prose torn apart by someone good! Don't be afraid of the red pen! Learn to embrace it. Say more with less (I should listen to my own advice). Blogging is a great way to accomplish this. Please keep the party photos and youthful indiscretions off the myspace.com pages though.
6. Follow your passions (hint: they may change). I'm not particularly passionate about a subject like real estate, economics, or art. But I have discovered that I'm extraordinarily passionate about growing small companies into bigger ones NO MATTER WHAT THE SUBJECT MATTER. It took me a while to gain the perspective and breadth of knowledge to grasp this. But when I did, doors began opening for me. If you love an industry or segment, you may want to get some experience in any part of the value chain you can. I bet if I took a job sweeping the shop floors at a NASCAR team's garage just out of school, I'd be a marketing executive by now.
7. Embrace technology and be an early adopter. This does NOT mean become a programmer! Learn how to use all of the technology tools that successful companies use. There's nothing more

powerful than "the girl who just seems to know how to do it all". It doesn't seem like it, but it will become harder keep up when you get older so consciously extend beyond your comfort zone throughout your career or you'll get passed by.

8. Consider the option of NEVER getting a "real job". Self-employment may not be everyone's first best destiny, but you may not know until you try. It may seem safer to be employed by someone else, but I'd beg to differ. If you have it in you, do it. I'd rather see try and fail vs. never try.

9. Dress Well. It's advice that seems to be missing from the "Golden Rule" list when growing up these days. It's NEVER harmful to be the best dressed person in a room. You will command more respect by being well dressed. If you don't know what looks good, seek help.

10. Have initiative. Take on tasks and roles that extend beyond your comfort zone and knowledge base. This could be the largest single factor in your success. Immerse in something new. Passionately obsess about something until you know more than most about the topic. Do this enough times, and you'll find yourself able to participate in a much larger sphere of influence. Nothing pleases me more than hearing, "I don't know how to do that, but I'll figure it out and have it done shortly."

David Reich

I can honestly say I got my first job through The New York Times. For me, that old ad slogan holds true.

Well, it got me the interview, anyway. What really got me the job with a small public relations agency was a portfolio that I came in with. It had samples of my writing as a reporter and news editor of the college paper, along with news copy I'd written for my newscasts on the college FM radio station. And I had news releases I'd written as an intern in the college public information office.

My advice really is geared toward people still in school. Get involved and, if possible, find activities that relate to the field you'd like to enter. This way you'll have a resume that stands out from the crowd because of your real-world experience. And if you have a portfolio of real-world samples rather than only class assignments, you'll be that much ahead of the game as you go job-hunting.

Good luck and don't get discouraged.

Chris Brown

How I landed my first job: A lot of "informational interviewing"... I'd call and ask for an informational interview & then try to get 2 more leads for informational interviews. Eventually, someone knew someone who needed someone.

What I wish I knew when I was trying to get my first job: that the best job leads come from the most surprising places. A friend of the family. Your old soccer coach. The uncle of a friend. It's not usually what you would expect.

My advice for someone trying to break into the marketing/advertising business: Look for a place where they are willing to work with you, not just hand you work. Being mentored is a really great thing if you can find it.

Words of wisdom about careers in general: Follow your passions. Jobs change. Stay in touch with people, especially when you don't need to. Pay back favors. Pay favors forward. As soon as you get your job, give some help to someone else who is still out looking, even if it just encouragement.

Carolyn Manning

Develop your DESIRE by reading the successful business books written by successful business people.

Start with Napoleon Hill's *Think & Grow Rich*. Add a few of the masters: Peters, Covey, Goden, etc, etc.

Round your thinking with a smattering of philosophy, some classic fiction, a little poetry. End with Napoleon Hill's *Think & Grow Rich*.

If the range of your interests is wide and varied, your open mind will take you far.