



MODULE EIGHT

Ode to a Career

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A truck on a country road with old barn and canola fields in the background. Photo. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/167_4020480/1/167_4020480/cite

School is almost “over” now and students need to think about how having a career will change their lives. They also need to be ready for the steps to take in order to get the career of their dreams. Of course, that is not always as easy as it sounds. Getting into the perfect career often takes years! In this module, information will be given to walk a student through the process of job applications, through getting a job and understanding the final steps of becoming a full-time employee.

Life During & After College

Students can use college for more than academic preparation for their career. A smart student will use college opportunities to prepare themselves with more life and job skills. Some great opportunities that students at Adventist colleges have include student missionary (SM) and task force positions. These positions allow students to travel to new places, meet new people, and learn new skills for the workplace.



Working as a student missionary also allows students to become more culturally aware, which can pay off big time, especially when employed by organizations that work with multiple cultures.

Networking

Networking is an important skill to master in both high school and college. Networking allows students to make professional connections, both with fellow students who will become professionals in the future and with already established professionals in the world of work. Students can network at major school events as well as in town by joining a chamber of commerce group, attending professional networking events, being involved in the community, and even by making solid friendships with teachers and other professionals at their schools. Often, success comes from who people know rather than how much they have on their resume; it is to a student's advantage to build as many friendships in their network as possible so that they can have resources when they need help, information, encouragement, or training.

Internships

Internships are another important opportunity that students should be encouraged to seek out. An internship can be either paid or volunteer, but the entire goal of an internship is for a student to get on-the-job professional training for an area in which they are interested.

Often, internships are an impressive addition to resumes. Students seeking internships in college should ask teachers in the department of interest for possible companies offering

internships; some companies also publish these opportunities on college campus bulletin boards and/or send out information for internships via department e-mails. Students need to make sure that the time they will dedicate to their internship does not hamper any prior engagements with classes or other jobs; they should also make sure that they leave enough time for studying in their schedules as the whole purpose of college is to receive an education. Successful interns will jump into the job and get involved in order to learn as much as they can through on-the-job training; they will also ask questions in order to learn about both the company as well as the job they are doing.



Senior man shaking hands with his grandson. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2887427/1/154_2887427/cite



More Resources on Networking & Internships:

http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/career/successfulinternships.aspx?

https://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/career/files/02161-generalinterviewquestions.pdf

What Employers Want

Students should never be afraid to start small. Even if that means working as an underling in a company rather than doing what the student has studied to do, they should do the job to the best of their ability. Starting small never hurt anyone, and even working in a restaurant as a waitress can be a good starting point just to show that the student is not afraid to work, no matter what the task. Being able to account for time on a resume will show potential employers that students are serious about work, not just waiting for the job of their dreams to show up. Employers like devoted, committed, and hardworking candidates who will add to their company. They are also looking for employees who are honest with them.

Employers are also looking for specific traits and skills, especially with new college graduates. College is the time to hone these skills and practice in a more protected environment. Many employers are looking for specifically developed skills in young employees, and college is the place to prepare for the workplace. Good employees will match these basic attributes: team player; decision maker and problem solver; planner, organizer, and prioritizer; communicator, both verbally and non-verbally; analyzer and processor of information; analyzer of quantitative information (numbers); possessor of technical knowledge related to the job; skilled writer and editor of reports; and a great salesperson who can influence others. Obviously, that is a complicated and thorough list, but students should understand that everything they learn and experience in high school and college will prepare them for their future skills.



Female graduate. Photography. Encyclopedia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2885242/1/154_2885242/cite

In college, students learn a good portion of those skills while they complete the requirements for their degree. However, if students know in advance what employers will be looking for, especially in a certain career field, they can spend time further honing those skills. For example, if their dream career is to be a peace maker in highly volatile situations, the student would want to make sure they knew how to stay calm in high-stress situations as well as how to communicate quickly and effectively.



More Resources on *What Employers Want*:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/10/11/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-20-something-employees/>

Resumes

Students in high school can prepare for their future career by learning how to write a solid resume; they will need to fine tune and polish their resume in college as they prepare to look for a job in their chosen career field. However, even a job as a waitress can require a resume; learning early how to craft a resume will save time and stress later in life. Most high school students have heard of a resume but may have no idea what one looks like or what the purpose of having one is. Many examples of resumes are available online at the click of a button, but there are general tips that can help students craft a solid resume as well. Resumes, especially for recent high school or college graduates, are typically one page long (front only) and highlight goals and experience that shows a potential employer how suitable the student is for a particular job.

Format & Appearance

Appearance is important, and font and size used should be standard and easy to read; the resume should have a clean and uncluttered appearance as well (i.e. do not use clipart or extra frippery to decorate the page). Resumes should also be printed in black ink only on professional quality paper. Design a clean/neat/uncluttered resume.



High angle view of four business executives in a meeting. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 7 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2885612/1/154_2885612/cite

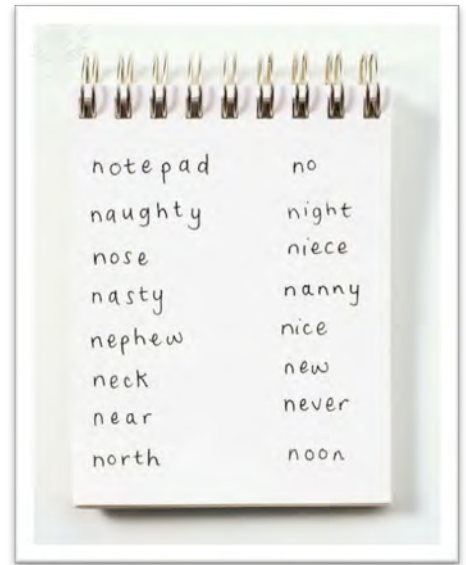
Required Elements

Resumes have common headings such as personal information (name, address, phone number, and e-mail address), objectives (one sentence summarizing the applicant's goal for the job search highlighting the applicant's skills), education (include school name, city/state, graduation date, course highlights in relation to career field, and certificates or awards received), work and experience (summer jobs, internships, volunteer involvement - include position title, company, city/state, employment dates, and a brief list of job duties), awards/honors (include role in position, organization, and dates), skills (list skills, especially hard skills, like software mastery and languages), and references (three to five people including a teacher, work supervisor, and/or character reference - include relationship, organization, and contact information). Information in these sections should be provided in reverse chronological order to provide most recent experience near the top of the page; this makes it easier for a potential employer to see what the applicant has been most recently involved in.



General Tips

There are few mistakes that turn off potential employers as much as typos and misspellings. Applicants should carefully proofread in order to catch these mistakes, and additionally should have a trusted friend or other professional acquaintance review, critique, and edit the resume. In addition to being error-free, good resumes are careful to avoid overusing “buzz words” in the text. “Buzz words” are usually encouraged to try to get potential employers to see that the applicant is a good candidate for a position; however, more employers are leaning towards wanting to see *how* a candidate is right for the position rather than reading the right words to make employers think they are qualified. For example, if the employer is looking for someone with good community involvement, they would prefer to see a list of examples in which the applicant has been involved in the community rather than reading that the applicant is simply involved in the community without seeing evidence. Potential employers prefer evidence over verbiage. In the end, a good applicant will decide on what image they will show the employer, and they will be enthusiastic by showing their qualifications rather than using fancy words.



Page of a notepad listing words starting with n. Photograph.
Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 7 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/118_801781/1/118_801781/cite

Cover Letters

The cover letter is the accompanying document that addresses the resume to the potential employer and allows the student to make initial written contact with the employer. Here are some great tips to creating a good cover letter that can be shared with students:

1. Don't repeat the resume.
Employers will look at the resume anyway, so students should focus on showing their personality and interest in the field in their cover letter.
2. Keep it short.
Good cover letters get right into the important content of the letter rather than using flowery and space-consuming fluff.
3. Address the letter to nobody in particular.
If the job posting leaves no one specified, the field should be left blank rather than using a generic introduction as this weakens the start of the letter.
4. Send the letter as a PDF.
Formatting is important, so saving the letter and sending it as a .pdf file makes sure the content and formatting is not changed or made to look sloppy.
5. Avoid self-introductions.
Students should avoid saying their names and what position they are applying for; this kind of introduction makes people sound inexperienced, which does not give a great first impression.



6. Close strong.

Just as with good research and article writing, good cover letters end strong. Students can wrap up their letter by explaining quickly (think 1 sentence) how their experience and worldview will help them at the job.

Additional Resources

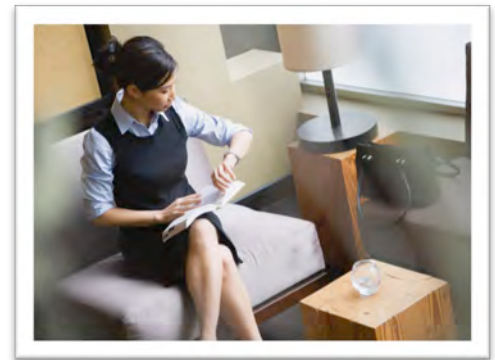
In addition to the printed resume, potential employers may also look at the applicant’s online information; ideally, students in high school should learn that their online presence can have an impact on their job application process. However, they should also be advised that employers may feel that applicants with “unsearchable” profiles are attempting to hide themselves from employers. Students and young job seekers should be encouraged to maintain a positive online presence that will not be potentially embarrassing for future employers to view. Having a positive online presence can actually allow potential employers to see the real person behind the paper resume; in some cases, this could be a huge asset to the job seeker. Students should be encouraged to view their internet presence as a way to speak further to their education, experience, skills, activities, and community service and involvement, especially as so much is missed from bullet points on a resume.

Submitting Resumes

Students should be advised against spending too much time applying to every job available. Instead they should carefully research and apply for positions for which they feel they would do a good job and be a good fit for; this will allow them to feel more confident in interviews and other encounters and communications with potential employers.

Then What?: The Post-Submission Timeframe

It is important to understand that employers have their own timeframe and method to managing resumes and applicant interest; hounding a potential employer about whether or not they are interested in a resume is a great way to get the employer disinterested fast. Instead, applicants should be patient and if they must, they could consider sending a very general, quick e-mail message to ensure the employer received the resume and to reiterate interest in the position. The key to the follow up email is that it be as unobtrusive as possible.



Asian woman checking watch. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 7 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2896135/1/154_2896135/cite

More Resources on Resumes:

<http://www.glassdoor.com/blog/5-job-search-tips-style-2014/>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/sethporges/2012/08/29/6-secrets-to-writing-a-great-cover-letter/>



Interviews

Sample Questions

Interviews are always a bit nerve-wracking; however, students can prepare for interviews by having friends or teachers ask them sample questions. Here are some of the most popular questions that may be asked in an interview that students should be prepared to answer:

- Tell me about yourself
- What is your major and do you like it or not and why
- Where do you see yourself five years from now
- Why are you seeking a position in this company
- What contributions can you make to this company
- What are your plans for continuing your professional growth
- What kind of work environment are you most comfortable in
- What have you learned from previous jobs or positions you have held
- Give me an example of a work situation in which you were not proud of your performance and what did you learn from this situation
- What quality or qualities do you have that would enhance our staff
- Describe any experience you have had that has prepared you for a full-time position with this company
- Tell me about a conflict with a coworker and how you resolved it
- What four words would you use to describe yourself
- What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses
- Why should this company hire you
- What questions haven't I asked you that you would like to answer
- Do you have any questions for me



Young businessman shaking hands. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 7 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2894923/1/154_2894923/cite

While this list of sample questions may seem daunting, students who take the time to prepare answers to hypothetical questions will be less likely to be caught off guard while in an interview. Additionally, the final question in the list is equally important. Most interview leaders will ask if the interviewee has any questions. Being prepared with at least two good questions shows that the student has given serious consideration to both the interview and the job itself. There are several great websites with examples of questions that interviewees can ask during an interview.



Pay & Benefits

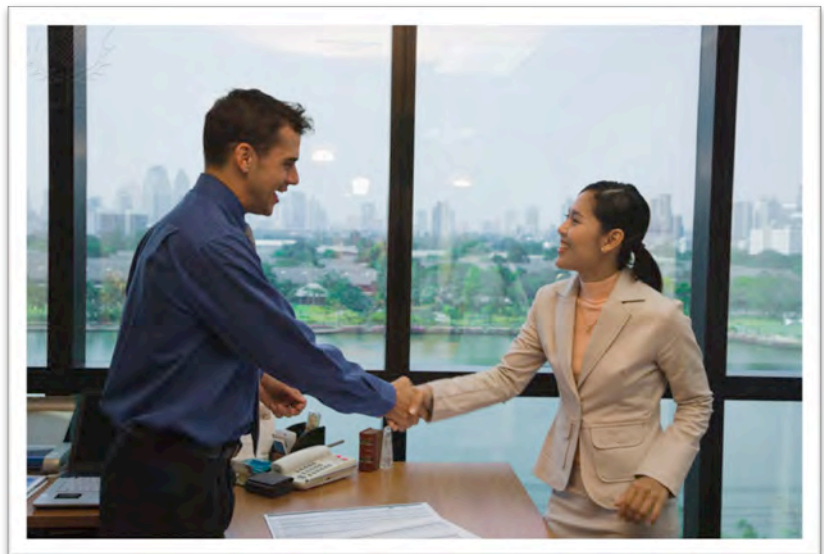
If the job did not specify pay wages, type of pay, or benefits, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ask about these details. The applicant will want to know whether the position is hourly (paid by the hour of work - usually tracked by time cards) or salary (paid on a wage scale based on the position of the employee - usually uses a set wage scale to determine yearly salary for the employee). In addition, the company may provide some benefits, like providing insurance and/or retirement. These details can add to the overall value of the job.

Post-Interview Timeline

After completing an interview, the applicant may contact the company within a week or two of the interview to reiterate interest in the position as well as to inquire as to whether or not a decision was made. Hounding the potential employer is, again, seen as an undesirable behavior.

Welcome to the World of Work

Once the employment application process has been completed and the student becomes an employee, there are new items that are important to understand as the student transitions into the life of full-time employment. Hopefully before accepting a job offer, the benefits of the position were reviewed with the employee. If not, the employee will find out soon enough. When completing the paperwork after being hired, the new employee will complete required tax forms that allow them to comply with federal and state tax requirements; the employee will also have to show social security and possibly other important identification documents in order to complete payroll paperwork. Additionally, any insurance benefits or employer retirement contributions will usually be set up at the time through the financial department.



Ethnicethnic businesspeople shaking hands. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 7 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2904504/1/154_2904504/cite

Medical/Insurance Benefits

Some companies offer insurance benefits; it is to a student's advantage to make sure they know what exact benefits they will be eligible for. Additionally, these medical benefits are sometimes offered as a discounted insurance premium or some other discount; often, there is an option to have these costs withheld from the employee's paycheck. Before students build a budget based on their earnings, they



need to make sure they know what additional monies will be taken out of their paycheck before they receive it.

Taxes

New employees will want to spend a few moments talking with the financial expert at the office about taxes and the amount to have withheld from their earnings. There are many types of taxes that may be withheld from earnings, including federal, local, and state taxes. Additionally, social security and/or Medicare may be withheld from earnings. It is always best to make sure employees understand all items that will be withheld before they begin budgeting based on the earnings they think they will receive. In January of every year, employees receive tax forms that aid the employee in filing state/federal taxes before the tax deadline of April 15 every year. Taxes are always filed for the previous year.

Retirement

Retirement contributions by an employer are a great addition to any employment package. Some companies will commit to matching up to three percent of an employee's contributions into a retirement plan; especially for young employees, it is best to contribute up to the maximum of what the employer will match. This will allow the retirement fund to grow more quickly. Employees should plan to start contributing early to their retirement as this will be important in their future; there are several terms they should know about, including 401 (k), 403 (b), IRA, and Roth IRA. To better understand the types of retirement and investment plans, employees should make sure they spend some time researching the various options available to them.



Retirement plans. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 7 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/132_1267967/1/132_1267967/cite

More Resources on Retirement:

<http://www.thesimpledollar.com/which-retirement-plan-is-right-for-me-traditional-iras-versus-roth-iras-versus-401ks-and-403bs/>

<https://guidance.fidelity.com/viewpoints-workplace/roth-401k-right-for-you-2>

In the end, new employees will face many new decisions as they start their careers; it is best to prepare early by attempting to understand the basic terms involved with completing the hiring and financial process of starting a new job.