

Career expert offers 10 job search tips for grads

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As appeared in The Star Ledger Guest Column on December 9th, 2009 (www.nj.com)

As appeared in MillburnPatch.com on December 8th, 2009 (www.MillburnPatch.com)

Q. As a recent graduate with my bachelor's, what are the top 10 tips you would suggest for me starting out in my job search?

— *Starting out*

A. Here are my top 10 tips for grads starting their career search:

1. Be yourself ... polished up!
2. Learn to tell "your story" well. Share why you are the best candidate. What value will you bring to the organization? Think from the recruiter's/hiring manager's perspective.
3. Have your "elevator or marketing pitch" ready for the "Tell me about yourself" question, which is used for informational interviews as well. Be prepared to identify what sets you apart from the rest. Share what you are looking for (be focused and have specific areas).
4. A résumé is a "living document" in a constant state of revision. Be prepared to give examples from your résumé that can address your ability to deliver on expectations/projects.
5. Get business cards. Put your name, e-mail and cellular phone number and a title or category if you have identified one. You can print them off the computer until you decide who you want to be, then order them online or from the office supplies/printing stores.
6. First impressions: Make sure your cell phone message sounds professional. Remember this is one way to begin "branding" yourself.
7. Organize your networking plans:
 - Make a list of who you know, who they know and who else you would like to know.
 - Join social networking groups and list 3-5 associations to join. Joining associations (preferably in your desired profession) and becoming active in them can produce outstanding results and in a shorter timeframe.
 - Create a LinkedIn account. This allows you to build an image, or brand.
 - Connect with your college or university alumni, companies you interned for, mentors and others in "groups" with common interests.
 - Identify 3-5 of your mentors — individuals you respect and admire — and arrange informational interviews. You must prepare for these the same way you would prepare for an interview. Come prepared with targeted questions.
8. Get your references ready. Contact former employers, internships, professors and ask for written or electronic references. Ask for a LinkedIn recommendation.

9. Prepare to make and track phone calls. Sell yourself, not the résumé. Set hourly, daily, weekly plans with goals. Also, get your space organized, have a system to track activity and follow-up.

10. Get mentally prepared for the "process." Finding the job you want and getting offers is a numbers game. The sooner you realize this, the less likely you are to become dejected. You will fail more than you succeed, but you only need to succeed once (getting and accepting an offer).

Consider joining a job search circle led by a certified career coach to learn job search methodology, expand your network and gain maximum value from the group experience.

Lisa Chenofsky Singer, of Chenofsky Singer & Associates, offers executive and career management coaching and human resources consulting. Lisa writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her website is ChenofskySinger.com