

# Ask the Career Coach: Graduate Job Seeker

The writer isn't graduating until May, but how should he handle his job search now?

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

*As appeared in MillburnPatch.com December 14, 2010 ([www.MillburnPatch.com](http://www.MillburnPatch.com))*

Dear Career Coach Lisa,

I am graduating with a bachelor's degree in economics in May 2011. I applied for corporate graduate training programs in financial services firms so I would have a job upon graduating. They seem to be all filled. I have been advised to wait until I'm near graduation and then see what entry level positions are available. I'm worried with the state of the economy whether that is a good idea. What would you recommend?

JS  
Short Hills

Corporate Graduate Training Programs in many of the financial services firms have reduced the number of graduates in their program. These programs are very competitive and typically require a high GPA and previous internship experience. Involvement in some related student activity or clubs and having someone inside the firm recommend you is very helpful.

Although many of the graduate program selections are typically made between year end and February, there are usually some last minute fall out that occurs within these programs as previously committed graduates change their decision to accept. With the economy being tight, there will probably be less drop-outs than previous years. I would suggest you send holiday wishes (can be holiday cards or via email or LinkedIn) to all of the professionals you interviewed with and to all previous internship connections letting them know that you are searching for an opportunity upon graduation in May 2011. Offer to meet with them in the new year on an exploratory basis. As they respond, set up appointments.

Using LinkedIn allows you to connect and invite them into your network for the future. Your LinkedIn profile needs to be ready to present as this is your social online resumé and presence. Obtain a few recommendations from previous internships and from professors. When you are in active search mode, "post and update" often with either an article you have read and want to share with your audience (LinkedIn connection) or reminding your contacts that you are graduating and seeking an opportunity.

Use this time to gain informational knowledge. Engage others in a conversation about careers. Ask them about their job, their industry and what they see for future career development. You will learn more about various companies, and most people enjoy speaking about what they do and many will enjoy the privilege of informally mentoring you. Ask your parents, family members, friends of your parents, with your parent's permission of course, and neighbors about potential individuals they can recommend you contact for exploratory or informational meetings.

Networking is the key in this job market. Do you know any previous graduates in the training programs you have applied for that you can connect with? Ask them about the program and see if there are additional programs you may not have applied for. Speak with your University Career Center. Get to know them and let them know who you are. Ask about other companies coming on campus and contacts they may have in the field you want. Ask them to help you set up some exploratory and informational interviews. Ask about alumni at various firms that you can contact. The alumni meetings may be a great way for you to learn more and gain inside contacts so when a position opens, you may be considered.

This is the time to explore career options. I recommend you broaden your search to include finance opportunities rather than just financial services firms.

**About this column:** "Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to [CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com](mailto:CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com). Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is [www.ChenofskySinger.com](http://www.ChenofskySinger.com).