

HINTS AND TIPS ON FINDING (and making a success of) YOUR FIRST JOB

You have just left school/college or university. You are proud of your exam passes and you are ready to go. Sowhat next? Here are some thoughts from people who remember what it was like and would like to help!

Getting started

Make sure your CV/Resume is the best it can be.

Remember that your CV /Resume is your own personal advert. As for any organisation that wants people to buy their product you have to make it factually correct and attractive!

People get hung up about how CVs look and forget about the content. Brad says

“Compose your resume carefully and get help creating and editing it from trusted sources. My daughter sought advice from experienced people and recent graduates who had landed good jobs. I think that was very wise, since there seemed to be a place for "new" and "old" thinking! “

Lorraine reminisced about her first job and the many lessons learned from the tasks given, **situations** arising and the people she worked with. Her message was **“Exploit Natural Talents: Sometimes you don't fully appreciate value of your natural skills, until entering business world. “** Now that's a great point!

Andonella said **“Ask around what kind of jobs people do in the areas you are interested in and only then start to narrow it down.”** Even the smallest companies have a range of roles that need filled and you might start to notice ads for jobs you had not considered.

What did you learn from work experience?

It can be tough getting that first foot in the door when employers all seem to be advertising for people with experience. You might actually have more experience than you thought you did. Did you do work experience at school? Have you had a part time job or done any volunteering?

Here's Beth's story.

My best early work experiences actually took place before I finished university. I worked for my father in his clothing shop from about 13 years old. Of course I was given the grittiest jobs but I still got to hang out in a working environment and learn from the older staff. My advice to anyone still in school or out of school is to try your hand at different kinds of jobs to see what you like doing for 8 hours a day. Be open to learning from your work colleagues because they'll have a lot to teach you if you're open to learning. Also, make sure you have fun at work, whatever you end up doing!!

(Others have commented on learning from the people you work with. More of that later)

“I suggest that getting a job is the main thing to concentrate on. Any job! Temping is a great way for graduates to prove themselves. Also take a large doze of humble pie when looking for job - you may think you know everything there is to know about your subject but believe me you don't! “

Scott's advice is really good. You have the opportunity to learn in a real work environment and what you might learn if you keep your mind open can be invaluable in future roles – even if it is that you don't want to ever work in that sector or role ever again.

Oh, and remember to ask if the person you worked for would be happy to give a reference – and keep in touch so that you know if they are still in the same role when you do want one.

Network like crazy so that people know who you are and what you want to do.

There are so many ways to network, whether you favour online social networking or getting out and meeting people.

According to Lorraine **“Networking: contacts / recommendations [are the] most valuable assets in a job search. My Dad had worked there (in the local business) and the owner knew me as a little girl. Dad was also the most conscientious worker he ever had – and he figured... like father, like daughter ...they were right!**

HR Maven applies this same advice by saying **“Make networking a priority. Stay in touch with colleagues and favourite faculty from college/university. Many great employers contact our faculty directly for recommendations on terrific job opportunities.”** I know this works as one of my son's first contacts with a potential employer was through his course leader.

And remember, if you're not talking about what you want how will anyone know?

“Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job.” is Ritzya's advice.

Take a break before you get started?

A gap year/break just might be a good idea. Marietta says **“Before you start down that road, going to school again .. take a year off .. rest, decide what you want to do, but only for a year .. and then embark on the next leg of the journey Gee .. wish I'd done that! I worked at something, always earning money, from the time I was 11 .. worked after school and all through school .. and was hired well before graduation to start right after graduation!”** Dan says **“as a new college graduate, have an opportunity that you will never have again in your life: To do something without any concern for money or career advancement and just for "the fun of it".**A lot of British kids travel and work their way through gap years taking jobs in bars, cafes etc wherever they land. Others, like Dan, go to areas where life is a whole lot tougher than many of us experience and find their way in life from that. If you choose this route remember to reflect on what you learned and put it on your CV!

Create a professional social networking profile

There has been a lot of press coverage about social networking profiles influencing employers on who they invite to interview. Brad's advice is **"Clean up your online presence. Create a professional LinkedIn profile, and edit/eliminate Facebook, etc. profiles."**

Interviews

After all the hard work you are invited to interview. Preparation is crucial. Remember to dress smartly but comfortably. Polish your shoes. Make it clear that you have made an effort.

Subhas says **"Appear and aim to succeed in all interviews. Write down what went right and what went wrong in last interview, and develop an action plan to correct or prevent such lapses."** And call for feedback if you are not successful to help you do that. Most interviewers will be happy to do that.

Another encouraging piece of advice is from Brad **"Don't give up! Always think positively and hope for the best, but know that rejection is part of the process and happens to everyone. Just when my daughter was getting discouraged, one of the first companies she contacted called her and offered her a position. So far, it's been working out great."**

One of the biggest challenges for any new graduate is finding a job to go with the qualification. Breanne says **"Don't freak out if your first job isn't in the field of your degree. College grads rarely get their dream job the first time they start working."** But the job you do get will be the stepping stone on the career path. Jimmy comes from the background of animation and recommends taking a job in areas of the business. He says **"Look for these opportunities to get in the door."**

And a final thought comes from Andonella about taking the job you are offered **"Think again - is it really what you want? I spent a year teaching in a very rough school because I thought I had to take it - or it was great not to worry about it as finals approached. 1 tough year followed my finals"**

First steps

So you got your first job and the fun is about to start. Everybody starts knowing very little if anything about a new employer so now is the time to ask questions, listen to the answers and apply what you learn as quickly as you can.

Barbara has a word of warning **"I would say don't go into the job force believing you know everything; keep a positive attitude but don't be obnoxious; be willing to listen"** HR Maven agrees **"Develop and refine the skill of listening. I have hired my share of recent graduates who believe that they have all the answers. Enthusiasm is good, but know that experience has its value too. Listen to those who have the experience and develop discernment for what is useful to you."**

Loyalty – give your employer a bit of leeway

School leavers and new graduates (referred to as Generation Y) are expected to make more demands of employers than the old Generation X did and where Gen X would have put up with a job Gen Yers are expected to move on to find what they are looking for. Breanne gives a wee bit of good advice here **“Be loyal. Don't quit the job for [a few pence] more an hour or a shorter commute. Stay at the job until you feel there's nothing more you can learn from those people.”**

Can do – and will

One of *the* most attractive traits in any employee is a “can do attitude”. Start that way and the world is your oyster

Susan’s advice is **“Don't be insulted if you're asked to do scutwork from time to time. Into every job a little scut must fall.”** Not sure of the definition of scutwork – but you get her drift!

Jordan’s comments say it all **“ Do SOMETHING and Try EVERYTHING. “** and Breanne adds **“Soak it ALL in.”**

Celebrate successes – little and often

Big Olympic Gold medal wins are great and can get a whole nation celebrating. Even gold medal winners started from small but significant successes. Promise yourself that throughout your career you celebrating those. Rob puts this into context **“First, celebrate what they have achieved, and then eat a slice of humble pie. They have demonstrated the drive and ability to learn, and achieved a standard of knowledge in their chosen area. This does not immediately act as a substitute for the experience of those who they will find around them (who may have already earned their degree, and who will have suffered the hard knocks).** And crucially David reminds you to **“Keep a note of your successes to add to your CV”.**

Gossip and politics can come back to bite you

In the early days with a new employer you will want to fit in as quickly as possible. This is time to be clear on how you want to be perceived. Louis says **“Don't be too familiar with your co-workers. Maintain decorum and dignity. Work is not school”** and to think **“ Before entering into office politics and griping. You never know who is listening.”**

Barbara adds **“ Keep a positive attitude; don't become part of the "gossip pool"; set a standard for yourself and stick to it.”**

Prepare for the future

Your first job is your first step. You may work in the same organisation for many years – in the same of different jobs. You may stay for a shorter time. But whatever you do use everyday work experience to build on your skills and reputation.

Develop skills – lots of skills

Subhas recommends “ **Listening, business communication and presentation skills along with developing problem solving skills and understanding and getting to grips with business etiquette.**” In addition Monica recommends that you “**Keep on developing their communications skills in the broadest sense of the word**”.

Mentors and buddies

Many successful business people work with mentors. Some organisations have “buddies” for new employees. Mentor or buddy – someone who can support you, ask difficult questions, make suggestions and introductions can be invaluable in your career.

Rob says “**find themselves a good mentor. If they are lucky this may be available through their new employer, or they might look to a relevant professional body. If not, I would recommend they search out someone at their workplace, or an elder friend or relative, who can act as an informal sounding board. This is a very good way of ‘accelerated learning’ in the workplace**” and Breanne would “**Find out who is the best in the job and make them be your mentor.**”

A final word from Jason “**Find a mentor? Absolutely. I did it without realizing it, simply by being open to learning and asking a lot of questions of a lot of different people.**”

Go on – ask for feedback

Many people are frightened of asking for feedback. But you cannot improve if you don't know what level you are starting from. Breanne's advice is to “**Be open to criticism. Take every mistake and make it a positive experience**”. It used to be known as learning from your mistakes!

Take risks and try things

This goes hand in hand with feedback. Have a go and see what you learn. Many people do the same old thing day in day out. Promise yourself not to be one of them.

“**Never reject an assignment just because you don't know [enough]**” is Musthafa's advice and Kevin says “**Taking 'risks' can be a positive thing. Try to never forget that, whoever / whatever you encounter as your career progresses.**”

Jason's advice applies on a bigger scale “**Take risks and make it happen for yourself. Change the world and make it better through your actions. Don't wait for the perfect plan. Begin by doing something. The plan will manifest itself**” and in the meantime Steve recommends “**Try things.**” If there is something you've always wanted to do, try for it. Keep a backup plan or two going (Don't

Quit Your Day Job) but you don't need to always follow the herd if there is something that calls to you.”

Learn from others

This has been covered already but here are some extra, really useful tips

“Seek out and listen to all of the SME's (Subject Matter Experts) in life” Jay

“..be a willing student to learn how others have succeeded” Barbara

“Learn everything you can- even if it means you stay late to participate in activities that aren't in your job description.” Breanne

“What I did and what I learned about my job paled in comparison with who I met and what I learned about business in general.” Jason

“I think the heart of my advice would be encouragement to seek to learn from the experience of others and also to be willing to explore opportunities. Fortune favours the diligent!” Seamus

Just because your peers won't do it does not mean that you shouldn't

In the effort to fit in it is easy to get into the habit of not standing out. Don't go there!

Louis wisely counsels **“Don't be afraid to volunteer for projects that are less than glamorous. We must all build sweat equity in our workplaces if we are to be taken seriously. “** and Barbara adds the suggestion **“..be willing to take on duties that do not belong in your job description”**

How do I create value – whatever that means?

Believe it or not your employer does not want to pay you your salary for turning up at the times stipulated in your contract. They would really like a bit more than that and if that something more turns out to mean improvements in processes, client relationships, team working etc and you are at the heart of it – then you will be one valuable employee!

Susan sums this up **“You're going from an environment in which what you've learned is the most important thing in the world. It always will be. But you must also be able to create an overlay of "how do I create value"?”**

Never burn a bridge – you may want to come back over it

No matter how hard a time you think you have had. No matter how bad a boss you think yours was. No matter how unlikable you thought your co-worker. Never let them know that. You never know what lies ahead . As Toby says **“Never step on someone else to go up a step, you may end up needing, working for or with that person later.”** Jay adds **“NEVER burn a bridge! You never know who you're going to be interacting with in 5 years”**.

Learning didn't stop with exams – learn for life

You might have heard of lifelong learning and maybe you rolled your eyes. But the best learning could be yet to come. Just make sure your mind is open to it.

Steve says **“You're not looking for what you will do with your life -- that will come from what you learn -- you are looking for your best next step.”**

John has this wise advice **“The moment you start a new job, or take a new career step, that is the moment to start working on your next job or your next career step. This applies even when you haven't the slightest clue what that next job or step might be. It doesn't matter - just start developing knowledge, skills, ideas, networks - anything that might one day either be of use to you, or more importantly, might let you stand out in someone else's eyes as the person they need to take on a task.”**

Getting paid

Ah yes – it is all worth it when the monthly salary payment is in the bank. Laurie told me a great story about spending her early salaries too quickly and says that she **“I learned the value of money”** from that experience.

It may sound boring when you have had no money and now you have what you believe will regular income but Subhas recommends **“Develop a savings habit from first earning onwards”** and Brian says **“Spend less than you earn and do it for a long period of time”**.

Life in general – because there is more to life than work -some comments on work, life and everything else in the mix

Do what you love

I meet so many people who say that their aim is to earn a living doing what they love. Some are working towards that – others are stuck. Maybe this advice will help you to avoid the latter

“..tell them to pursue their passions, no one likes to do a job they hate, but so many people do. So start out with a passion and enthusiasm motive.” Mark

“Do what you love to do, not what others think you should do.” Brian

Give something back – it will make you feel good. Honest!

“Give back, when possible. Find ways to provide service in your community - volunteer, tutor or teach. Life is so much more than your job.” HR Maven

Know what is important to you...

Monica says **“stay faithful to yourself”**.

Relationships matter

“I would caution them to not ignore family life, home life, spiritual life and friends. Don't forget to have those relationships outside of work. If you find yourself down the road in ten years with the perfect job, but no one to share the success with you could have some regrets on a personal level. Jobs come and go now days, family and true friends (not acquaintances or colleagues) will be there through it all.” Toby

Stay positive – and enjoy the journey

A few final comments to send you on your way

“Never lose your enthusiasm or idealism no matter how many people try to rain on your parade.”
Richard.

“Proceed Fearlessly” – Jay

“Don't sacrifice your own personal wellbeing or social life for the company “ David

“Trust your instincts” Laurie

And the final word from Topher, a recent graduate himself

“Be realistic with what you want to get out of the job. On the same note, don't limit yourself to what you have been brought on to do, if there is something else going on that you want to be involved in then ask....some of the most interesting parts of my job have been added by exploring ways to expand the position”.

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