

The Truth About 15 Career Development and Job-Search Beliefs

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As you begin your career, you will hear conflicting messages about the nature of work. Knowing the truth about these common inaccuracies will help reduce your stress in terms of your career. Try to be clear and open minded when it comes to achieving success by avoiding these common misconceptions:

Myth 1: The most qualified person gets the job.

Reality: The person who lands the job is the one who makes the best impression, regardless of qualifications. To make the best impression, you need a strong resume. A resume does not land you a job, but rather an interview. In addition, you need to excel in other ways. Sometimes people with weak resumes land interviews because they are good at networking, and are able to convince the interviewer that they possess the best match of qualifications, "chemistry," and personal attributes for the job. Personal attributes include persistence, enthusiasm, honesty, confidence, and most importantly, popularity. Don't get overconfident if you feel you are the most qualified person, but don't be discouraged if you are not a direct match for the position. In the interview you must prove yourself as the best candidate for the job.

Myth 2: My major should be directly related to my job/career.

Reality: Not true! Pick a major that you love, and make sure you gain relevant experience from internships that match your career goals. For example, the notion that there are no jobs for liberal arts majors or that you have to major in business to land a good job, is false. For example, Carly Fiorina, CEO of Hewlett Packard, was a medieval studies major at Stanford University.

Myth 3: Good grades and a college degree will get me a good job.

Reality: Your GPA of 4.0 is not the only ticket needed to land the job. Employers do look for academic success; however, many employers would rather see a GPA of 3.0 plus a combination of several internships, leadership activities, community service, and technical skills.

Myth 4: My first job out of college is one that I will be stuck with for a long time.

Reality: Most new college graduates are in their first job for one to three years. People who spend a lifetime with one employer are a dying breed. In the new economy, a job change every three to five years is not considered job-hopping. In fact, demonstrated experience at several employers is an asset, while long-term employment with one firm can be a warning sign of someone afraid of risk-taking or change. Studies show that the average working American will have three to five careers and between 10 to 12 jobs during his or her lifetime. As a result, you will need to make multiple moves to gain new skills and get ahead. Do avoid very short stints—those under one year.

Myth 5: I should know what I want to do before I go to my campus career center.

Reality: Your campus career center specializes in students who are undecided. Trained professionals in the career center will help you focus on your goals and steer you in the right direction. They can help you get a career focus with such self-assessment inventories as the MBTI, CISS, and the Strong. Make an appointment today!

Myth 6: My family and friends know me. They can help me choose the right career.

Reality: Remember: You, not your parents (siblings, friends, etc.), must live with your job choice. Trying to please others, such as your parents or friends, is a mistake that will come back to haunt you in the future. When it comes to jobs and graduate school, people close to you will have conflicting and strong opinions about what is the best option for you. It is okay

to seek a variety of views, but remember that your family and friends are biased and are not trained career counselors. You will want to have someone listen to you and advise you objectively. Ultimately, your career is your responsibility.

Myth 7: I'm going to graduate school; I don't need a resume.

Reality: It's a smart idea to begin building your resume now so you can see the gaps in your experience and have time to fill them in before you finish with your education.

Myth 8: Interviewing is easy if you know how to talk.

Reality: Job searching is really about marketing yourself to employers, and the best way to do that is to read books on interviewing and set up a mock interview at your career center.

Myth 9: The only jobs available are in the classifieds.

Reality: At least 50 percent of jobs are found using the most effective job-search technique: networking. And research shows that fewer than 20 percent of jobs are listed in the classifieds. If someone is looking for a job and the classifieds are their sole source of job leads, their job search will be frustrating. The career center can teach you the other job search strategies that will complement your classifieds search.

Myth 10: I sent a resume and a cover letter. If they want me, they will contact me.

Reality: A passive approach will not work in today's job market; you need to conduct extensive follow-up and request an interview.

Myth 11: Money is the most important factor when making a decision about a job offer.

Reality: Wrong! The two most important factors are: job content and your new boss. Since you will be at work more hours than you will be with your family or anything else, job satisfaction should be a high priority. In addition, many workers today are eager to forego money to achieve a better work/life balance. In addition to financial incentives you should also weigh such essential factors as the relationship with co-workers, typical workweek, location, organizational flexibility, and other benefits such as tuition reimbursement and vacation time.

Myth 12: The campus career center is the place you go when you are a senior.

Reality: Wrong again. Finding the right career or graduate school is a time-consuming process that is best done early in your college career; not at the last minute. Starting late can only add more stress and anxiety to this already challenging process. In order to fulfill your career plans, you will want to participate in internships, develop your resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills. Many seniors remark that they wish they had started this in their first year in college.

Myth 13: More education means more marketability.

Reality: Having a "better" degree does not necessarily mean getting the job you want or getting a job that is meaningful. What is important is the right combination of education and work experience, mixed with your ability to sell your personal qualifications in an interview. The key here is that you match your educational goals to your professional goals, and then couple them with relevant experience. There are plenty of people in the world who are well educated, but lack the necessary experience.

Myth 14: The company will take care of my career and me.

Reality: Perhaps this was true in the 1950s, but the workplace has evolved. According to *Business Week*, the chances are one in three that you'll lose your job at least once during your working life. In an age of downsizing, the rule is career self-management. Only you will be responsible for your continuing education and career development. Even if you do well for the company, there is no guarantee that the company will guarantee its own future, let alone yours!

Myth #15: I posted my resume to the Internet, so I should hear about a job offer soon.

Reality: The Internet will not solve all of your career problems. Using the Internet should be part of your overall job-search plan, but don't be lulled into a false sense of security that it is a silver bullet. Post your resume on three to five of the best job sites and be sure to monitor it as well as checking the job listings on a regular basis.