

To Land A Great Job, Students Need A Four-Year Plan

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Every college student needs a four-year plan that can lead to a great job. Since nobody wants to spend four years in college only to end up in a dead end job, wise students write out, and periodically update, a comprehensive plan that reveals the steps that will lead their goals.

Here is a brief and simplified example that can be tailored to individual needs.

Freshman Year - As soon as possible, select a general and broad career direction that makes sense for you. With that decision, you will be able to conduct some research. Try to find out what the employers in these fields will require of employment candidates, if you interview with them in your senior year. In that way, you can begin to create a path to follow, set goals and establish a timeline for the steps that are required. Don't worry! You can make changes, as you are able to clarify your direction.

From this point forward, you can begin to follow your initial plan of action. Your plan should contain many of the following:

- Identify influential people who can help you, in the future. You'll need a network.
- Build your credibility with high performing students and influential people.
- Volunteer for something in your area of interest.
- Get to know your Professors, Advisors and Career Services staff.
- Research Campus, Community and Work opportunities.
- Understand yourself - What strengths do you bring to the table?
- Pay attention to your attitude and body language. They tell others who you are.
- Evaluate your Leadership, Communication and People Skills.
- Tend to your grades. They are the gateway to many employers.

Sophomore Year - If it has not already been done, you should select a tentative major in your sophomore year. This does not mean that you have to pick out a specific career or job to shoot for. It is still early. As you take your classes and begin to participate in campus, work and

community activities, you will gradually gain a clearer perspective.

Take the time to update or expand your plan of action, based on your current goals. Follow your plan of action during year two. It should contain items like these:

- Build and maintain relationships with influential people. Create your network.
- Continue to build credibility with Professors and high performing students.
- Get involved with something in your area of interest.
- Get to know your Professors, Advisors and Career Services staff.
- Participate in Campus, Community and Work opportunities.
- Seek part-time and/or summer jobs in your field of interest.
- Understand yourself - What are your interests, strengths and weaknesses?
- Present the Attitude and Body Language that will help you.
- Find ways to strengthen your Leadership, Communication and People Skills.
- Identify and research potential employers and job hunting web sites.
- Do what is necessary to keep your grades up.

Since employers love people who are able to get things done, begin to build your list of accomplishments. Generally your accomplishments should be aligned with the goals in your plan of action. Try to excel in your areas of interest and strength.

Junior Year - Look back over the past two years and update or expand your plan of action. At this point, your plan should become quite specific. If you have a better idea of where you are trying to go, your plan should include the steps that will get you there. Follow your plan of action for year three. It should contain items like these:

- Continue to build relationships with influential people to expand your network.
- Do something specific to build credibility with Professors and high performing students. Find ways to help them achieve their own goals.
- Volunteer for something that is important in your area of interest.
- Work closely with your Professors, Advisors and Career Services staff.
- Play a leadership role in at least one Campus, Community or Work opportunity.
- Continue to work at part-time and/or summer jobs in your field of

interest.

- Understand yourself - Focus on your strengths and interests.
- Improve your attitude. Present a positive "can do," "let's give it a try" attitude.
- Be certain that your body language and actions match your words.
- Demonstrate your Leadership, Communication and People Skills.
- Identify and research potential employers, alumni & employment web sites.
- Draft your resume - Emphasize accomplishments in your field of interest.
- Develop and practice your interviewing skills.
- Think references and recommendations: Identify the most influential and respected people who will speak highly of you. Strengthen these relationships.
- Keep your grades up.

During your Junior year, strive to achieve one or two significant accomplishments that will meet or exceed interviewer/employer expectations. These are the things that will be highlighted on your resume, so you will stand out from the other candidates.

Meet with Career Services to see if you are allowed to sign up for campus interviews. If yes, get some interviewing experience. Practice telling interesting stories about how your accomplishments came about.

Senior Year - Finalize and follow your plan of action for year four.

- Keep your grades up.
- Finalize your resume. Your resume should emphasize your accomplishments and clearly differentiate you from other candidates. What makes you special?
- Prepare for interviews. Practice your responses. Develop thoughtful questions.
- Sign up for and participate in campus interviews. Be ready with examples and stories that will impress employers. Don't be shy.
- Tap all of your networking sources for useful information and job leads
- Keep organized and detailed records of your contacts
- Contact every employer from your earlier research
- Start utilizing appropriate employment web sites
- Seek references and recommendations from the most influential

people in your network.

- Conduct a thorough and enthusiastic job search campaign. Plan to contact at least 100 employers.

This abbreviated plan can serve as a model for students who are concerned about their futures and are willing to do the hard work. Forward thinking students understand that employment success is earned slowly, during all four years of college. That's why I say that, "The senior year job search starts in the freshman year."

There is no shortcut to employment success. Students who diligently follow their four-year plans are much more likely to be rewarded with great jobs and good salaries at the best employers. Isn't that your goal too?

Visit Bob's web site: www.The4Realities.com. Bob Roth is the author of *The 4 Realities Of Success During and After College* -and- *The College Student's Guide To Landing A Great Job*.