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Tips for the recruiting game

Companies looking for extracurricular activities, students who are knowledgeable about the industry

By Aleta Zak
Of the Emerald

Recruiters from firms who come to the University looking for a few good men — and women — know exactly who they're going to hire.

"We want someone who can tell us what skills they have to offer us," says Kathleen Edmunds, executive recruiter for the Meier and Frank Company based in Portland. "They should be a generalist, have a combination of different activities in their background. Intelligence (alone) won't do it."

But intelligence, Edmunds admits, will definitely give soon-to-be college graduates a leg up in the retailing job market. Meier and Frank primarily hires promising

young marketing and management majors with a successful record in their field as well as in leadership roles and extracurricular activities.

"I might ask how someone financed their education," Edmunds suggests. "I look at the whole profile."

Many students make the mistake of waiting too long to start preparing for the job hunt, Edmunds says. She visits the University twice a year: once in the early fall, for December graduates, and again in February for spring grads. "I get phone calls in June from people who are just ready to graduate, and they're panicking. They should be contacting recruiters a lot earlier than that," she says.

Edmunds advises students to "do their homework" before showing up for the interview. They should be familiar with the company's background and be ready to convince the recruiter that they can do the specific job listed. For Meier and Frank, that would mean completing a company training seminar and moving into a specific department as a manager. After about a year, the trainee is promoted to assistant buyer, and in another two or three years, to a buyer.

Alan Wurzweiler, a sales planning manager for the Portland branch of the Xerox corporation, agrees that some students could be better prepared for interviews with recruiters. That's why Wurzweiler coordinates special "day on the job" sessions and roundtable discussions for students who want to learn more about the nature of the sales business.

"You don't look at an annual company report," says Wurzweiler. "That doesn't tell you anything. You have to go talk to someone in the company; spend a day riding around with a sales representative."

Both Edmunds and Wurzweiler stress the importance of regular visits to the University Career Planning and Placement Center. The center keeps files on particular companies, some of which publish

brochures on their recruiting programs and what the firms are looking for.

Wurzweiler visits the University three or four times a year to scout for talent as well as to fill full-time positions and internships. Xerox does grade on academic records and involvement with campus ac-

'You have to be able to relate well to other people,'

tivities, he says, because those things help tell him how a potential employee will perform on the job.

Personality and communications skills are very important for anyone wanting to work for the Price Waterhouse public accounting firm, says Robert Gootoo, a manager in charge of recruiting for the firm's Portland office. "You have to be able to relate well to other people," he says. "That's just as important as grade point averages."

During the interview, students should ask questions about the firm instead of letting the recruiter do all the talking, Gootoo suggests. "It has to be a two-way thing," he says. "If someone came in and didn't ask me anything, I would think he hadn't learned anything from the interview." This means researching all the background material available on different firms to become familiar with different firms in the field.

Gootoo says students approaching the accounting job market should get as much interviewing experience as possible by talking to recruiters from other firms. Some student business organizations sponsor mock interviews with local Price Waterhouse employees, providing a learning experience without quite as much pressure.

All three recruiters say preparing for the interview well in advance is important. "I think everyone is a little nervous when they're interviewed," says Gootoo, "but the more prepared you are, the better you will do."

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