



way I categorized myself. That's the biggest mistake I made as an undergraduate, not taking advantage of the situation to see what it was I really wanted to do. There's too much pressure at school to decide right away on a career path, but really there's no hurry. There's plenty of time, and there's nothing to say that if you're going for another degree after college you have to get started right away. That's a fallacy, and a dangerous fallacy, and the worst thing is not that it can set someone like me back a couple of years in the short term, but that it can push someone in the direction they don't want to go. That pressure can force someone into career decisions they're too timid to change."

LOOKING BACK AT THE AMERICAN EXPRESS REAL LIFE PLANNERSM

Over the past academic year, we hope that we've offered valuable tips and expert advice to help you navigate the real-life waters that lie ahead. Readers who've followed our post-college survival guide from the start have learned how to interview for their first job, how to dress for success, where to look for a first house or apartment, and how to make a small paycheck work toward a sound and promising financial future.

Below, some of the highlighted words of wisdom that have appeared in these pages:

Real Life Planner Installment #1

GETTING STARTED

"I see a lot of complacency. I had a student come in in April who was graduating in June, and she hadn't started looking for a job yet.

By that time, I'd say about three quarters of the jobs are filled because the companies have been recruiting since October and they've made most of their offers. She limited herself to one-quarter of the market and that kind of complacency can really hurt you."

John D. Shingleton, director of placement, Michigan State University



"For a student to come and ask me what the hot fields are is, I think, an inappropriate question, the tail wagging the dog. And the presumption is, whatever I say, well then that's what they're going to do. So if I say geology is hot they'll say, 'Great, I'll be a geologist!' Well, that's ridiculous."

Christopher J. Shinkman, director of career planning and placement, Stanford University

"The most important thing in a job interview is to be yourself. That doesn't mean don't prepare. Prepare and be yourself. If you don't want to take time to prepare, well then don't

interview with that company; you don't really want to work for them anyhow."

Don Freshman, college recruiter, Goodyear

Real Life Planner Installment #2

NETWORKING

"One of the best things to do is join a professional association related to your field and volunteer your time. You meet these people not on networking pretenses, but on the pretense of getting to know the field, and those people will tell you how they got started. You'll learn how they can be of help to you and how you can be of help to them."

Karen Dowd, director of placement, Darden Graduate School of Business, University of Virginia

"You have to know what's going on in your field, and networking is a great way to do



that. It tells you who you are, what you're worth, where you should be, whether you're falling behind. Networking tells you when it's time to go for more money, and if you can't get it from your own company you'll find out where you can get it."

George Mazzei, author, The New Office Etiquette

"It's very important for young workers today to understand that most millionaires—especially self-made millionaires—are extroverted and very personable people. Unfortunately, much of the college education doesn't reflect that."

Thomas Stanley, professor of marketing, Georgia State University

Real Life Planner Installment #3

THE RULES OF THE GAME

"The whole idea that you can do your work and ignore the interpersonal relationships among the most arrogant ideas that anybody could possess. If you do that you say to your fellow workers, 'I know you have some needs and problems, but I don't have any intention of meeting them.'"

Marilyn Moats Kennedy, founder, Career Strategies, Chicago-based counseling firm

"It's very important to know who really says 'Yes' or 'No' to what projects, and who that