

Contacts key to job search

By Stanley Nelson
Of the Emerald

Today's job market is nothing like that of the past. To get a job in today's market the graduate must apply new techniques to getting that first or secondary job, says author Jack Falvey.

Falvey, author of "After College: The Business of Getting Jobs," is a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal and National Business Employment Weekly.

No longer will the traditional application and resume approach with subsequent interview follow-ups succeed. Today's graduates must employ their information-gathering skills and learn the market, knowing who the key players are and optimizing contacts, Falvey says.

The change became apparent to Falvey while he worked for the Gillette Co. as a college recruiter and taught at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. There he saw students without an accurate view of the working world.

"They had to be taught the realities of the outside world and that jobs didn't come from resumes or interviews or anything else. What they came from was meeting the people that had the positions available."

Information gathering skills and using the contact network is a necessity, he says, which reinforces the idea of it's who you know that matters.

The idea is to exchange information, which removes the pressure of the interview situation, he says. Granted the job may be difficult to find, but the informal approach will reduce the chances of rejection and

lead the graduate to a better understanding of the particular field he or she seeks, he says.

"It is not a question of basic economic or regional differences, it's just a question of going out and looking," he says. Falvey suggests finding one source, even if it is a friend, relative or acquaintance, to make the initial contact and then make additional contacts from the initial source.

Many businesses allow guests at luncheon or dinner speaking engagements. An investment of a lunch or dinner to make new contacts is an investment worth making, he says.

While there, the student need not make a pitch for employment while meeting with business representatives. In fact, the less students say about themselves the better, he says.

Results vary from an initial contact that may lead to a job or an 18-month crusade for a job, he says. Still, the direct face-to-face approach builds contacts that will lead to an eventual job.

Ideally the information-gathering approach to a job should start before graduation, and there is nothing wrong with being choosy in the graduate's first job, he says. It is more important to get the right boss than the right job the first time.

"It's even more critical than getting married because if you marry somebody all you do is sleep with them. You are unconscious all the time. If you work for them, you are with them eight hours a day — you live with them," Falvey says.

And as people grow older, the entry-level job will always be there. "When you read a newspaper for job opportunities, you don't read the

classified ads, you read the obituaries because everybody who is in the obituaries no longer has a job."

There is a constant flow of people in and out of all industries and businesses and parts of the country and that flow is universal.

"It's as sure as death and taxes," he says, as well as employees retiring, changing jobs and employer firings. Because of the constant change in employment, Falvey says, "I see the job outlook as excellent."

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