

CAREER COACH'S TIPS



How to Become a Social Worker

Question: I am interested in becoming a social worker or a counselor, what do I need to know?

Answer: You've picked a great field, counseling is mushrooming -- you can specialize in everything from substance abuse to careers to geriatrics. Here are some ideas:

First, write for graduate catalogues for both MSWs and other kinds of master's degrees in counseling or a master of arts in psychology. See what you think of the differences in the courses.

Talk to some MSWs and some counselors -- what ideas do you pick up there?

Take a look at social work job listings and see if they appeal more than counseling jobs. Here's a great Web site for social work job listings: <http://www.gwbssw.wustl.edu>.

Regarding licensing: It's important to know the MSW is a much stronger degree (and the LICSW a stronger license) because so many hospitals, clinics, schools, nursing homes, etc. are required by insurance companies to have MSWs delivering care. Logically, it is also harder to complete (and requires more intensive field placements) than a counseling degree.

Look around a little bit, have a talk with the folks at your college about talking to alums who are willing to have information interviews, and good luck!

How to Become a Stockbroker/Financial Advisor

Question: How do I find out about becoming a stockbroker?

Answer:

Generally, the larger brokerage firms offer trainee positions. A college degree is not required, although most hires do have bachelor's degrees. You must be licensed, but you can take the exam for this a few months after you're hired by a firm.

Many people become stockbrokers after having worked in other fields. Those who have succeeded in other fields -- such as insurance sales -- are seen as good candidates. Many brokers view ambition as the key ingredient for a candidate to possess.

To start off your research on brokerage, go to these online brokerage firm directories:

- 1) www.corpfinet.com/first/BrokerageFirms.html
- 2) www.investorama.com/brokers/shtml

If what you read about the field sounds interesting, then your next step is to speak with stockbrokers. Try to find "live" information about the rewards and pressures of the field, and listen to any advice people are willing to give you about devising a strategy to land that first job as stockbroker.

Blast Off: Launching Your Career Now!

There's no better way to launch your career exploration process than by following up on those information interviews you did over the Thanksgiving break.

We've already proclaimed (so many times that you're probably sick of it) that your only choices in building your ideal career are networking or not working. Well, those information interviews are the raw material for the networking you have to do. In fact, you should regard every information interview as a potential networking event. These interviews are essential at all four of these critical career decision points:

Finding out about a field and deciding if you might like it.

Looking for suitable internships (remember, it's a good idea to do three or four during college).

Checking out graduate school possibilities.

Seeking that first full-time job.

Here are the rules for good information interviewing etiquette and for maximizing your eventual networking capability:

- (1) Do the thank-you note thing -- and make it customized, reflecting some of what you discussed, stroking your interviewee's ego, and assuring her/him that you'll be following up on the great suggestions s/he shared with you. Make that letter sparkle!
- (2) You said you'd follow up, so now you have to do it. Let us count the ways.

Make in-person or telephone appointments with the other contacts whose names the interviewee gave you. Don't forget prompt thank-you notes to these folks, too.

Write away for catalogues from some of the schools suggested to you -- there's nothing as revealing as flipping through a catalogue about what you'll have to go through to get where you're considering going.

In the library, on the Internet, in journals, newspapers, magazines, through associations -- follow up on all the info your interviewees suggested. And collect all this data in a notebook or pentaflex files. The main difference between junk and data is how you keep it organized, so you can easily use it for reference whenever you need it. Trust me, you are making a log of your odyssey from college student to employee, and then probably back to student and/or new employee again. Most experts now say you'll need to make this journey at least nine times in your life (because 90% of the jobs people your age will hold down haven't been invented yet). Get in the habit now of chasing information wisely and keeping it together. Be sure to check out The Granted Database available here on this site. Click on the alphabetical list of career fields for some sample suggestions (not a complete list, but good examples) about where else you can look for information about a wide range of fields and jobs.

When you've done some of this homework, it will be time to check back with your interviewees to update them on what you've found out. Face it, this is going to involve some work on your part -- no matter how much your education is costing, there's no way to get to a career you'll love without lots of legwork, serious inquiry and introspection on your part.

Print out this list -- and check off each piece as you complete it. It's been said by some "career ladder" experts that a successful career is powered by hundreds of networking contacts, ready for you to call at any time for information, encouragement or advice, as things continue to shift and change in this wild, wild world of work! So when's the time to start this info-interviewing-to-networking continuum? Preferably by sometime during your first year in college. If that's already an historical era for you, all the more reason to move quickly to the launch pad. There's a career waiting there for liftoff!

Career in the Entertainment Field

Question: I'm a 19-year-old male and I am in college. My problem is that I am not really sure about what I want to major in, let alone have a career in. I've always had a great love for music and have always played with the idea of going into entertainment, such as being a producer, but I am not sure where I can start to find out if this will be a wise choice or even a stable career choice.

Answer: You are not alone in wanting to get into the entertainment field, although before you decide whether this is the right career choice for you, you should do some research. First, buy the "trades" -- magazines like Variety, Billboard and Hollywood Reporter, which will give you a feel for what shows, CDs, etc. are in production, and will give you an idea who the different players are. Most of these publications also have Web sites where jobs are often listed. Then, check out Entertainment Recruiting Network at <http://www.showbizjobs.com/>. Look for an internship -- during the summer might be an ideal time -- at a record company or a television show. Talk to everyone on staff while you are there, and get a sense of what you are best at and what you want to do. Also, look at last week's "Hot Jobs" in AboutWork. It's a Q and A with Mel Russo, a casting director in Hollywood. Her story should give you ideas on how to break in to the entertainment field.

Your desire to work in a collaborative environment will help you with any job nowadays. Unless you work on your own, all jobs have teamwork involved.

As far as whether entertainment is a "wise or stable" career choice, there's no such thing any more! Even professions that were always perceived as secure -- medicine and law, for example -- are in upheaval. The best you can do is get lots of varied experience starting now, and constantly update your skills. Good luck, and come back and let us know how you're doing.

What Can You Do with an English Major?

Question: What can I do with an English major?

Answer: You can do almost anything with an English major, since it teaches you to read and write well (practically lost arts in this multimedia age) and to analyze carefully. If you're still in school, why not select three or four different fields in which you could use your language competency (publishing, journalism, teaching and communications, to name a few) and try to set up some information interviews through your career office. If you like what you see in any of those fields, the next step is to do an internship or two. In large publishing firms, for instance, job candidates who have had internships are preferred. If a publishing internship isn't possible, in smaller organizations a clerical position might allow you to move up, provided you do two things: (1) Let them know you're intending to be on the professional side of the ledger as soon as possible, and (2) Keep on doing your own writing on your own time. Having some stories or pieces of your own to shove under your editor's nose at exactly the right moment is a key strategy for making it over to the editorial side.

But don't forget to explore before you leap! Good luck and come on back after you've spoken with a few people.

Entrepreneur Checklist

Here are 10 qualities that most entrepreneur-watchers agree are necessary to make a go of it on your own. Look over the list below and check off the ones that seem to describe you. Then, as a check on yourself, ask somebody you trust to look over your responses as well. How do you stack up against these 10 entrepreneurial requirements?

- Like to do things your way.
- Have high energy and endurance.
- Are a risk-taker and able to tolerate ambiguity.
- Work hard, have good follow-through.
- Like to dream up new ideas.
- Want to make money, and are not afraid to borrow it to finance your ideas.
- Are able to persuade others to go along with your ideas.
- Can take rejection and keep going.
- Are a good strategic thinker.
- Network effectively.

So what was your score? If you got 8 or more, you'd probably be a great entrepreneur -- and might find yourself chafing under the constraints of working for somebody else. Here is one online resource for checking out whether entrepreneurship might be for you:

On the Web: Definitely visit the online version of Entrepreneur Magazine.

The magazine in its print form is a great resource, too. It's well worth the inexpensive price of a subscription to have great ideas for being your own boss arrive in your mailbox every month.

So if you're about to go into job-search mode and feeling less than excited about it, perhaps you should think about whether you wouldn't really rather be doing your own thing one of these days!

Fashion Industry Job Hunt

Question: I am a college student who is relocating to Boston and in need of employment. Fashion design is a hard job to look for. Since I'm new, I need to find out how to look for jobs in my field. ... PLEASE HELP ME!

Answer: You're right that fashion design is a hard job to find. In fact, if you want to be doing work directly related to design, at this stage of your career you won't be able to find a job -- only an internship. Go to or call your college career office and find out if there are alums in Boston working in the field. Calling them for information interviews would be the most effective thing to do. The next-best thing would be to use the directories in the office to find the names of fashion industry companies in the area. Then, call these companies and let them know you're interested in an internship. Do this FAST, since the good spots are filling up. There are also two professional associations in New York City related to fashion design and design education. If you catch them on a good day, they might be willing to drop some hints about internships:

Council of Fashion Designers of America (212-302-1821)

Educational Foundation for the Fashion Industry (212-760-7641)

You'll probably have to pay your dues and be a starving artist for a while in order to get launched in this field. One route you might take is to earn money working in fashion retail nights and weekends, and at the same time try to find an internship for 15 to 20 hours a week.

So, if you're still at school, be sure to get yourself to the career office today. If you're long distance, you can still use the office. Also, check the Networking/Your Industry boards here on AboutWork -- you'll find lots of designers inviting questions and dialogue. Good luck!

Getting a Job on Wall Street

Question: How do I get a job on Wall Street?

Answer: To all college students interested in working on Wall Street: The rules are simple, and no, you don't have to have gone to an Ivy League college. Here's what you do:

Major in economics or math (or at least have very strong quantitative skills).

Bust your buns to keep your grades up -- a 3.6 GPA is the minimum; a 3.8 or higher is desirable.

Find at least one activity or sport and play a leadership role.

Here's the critical one -- get an internship on Wall Street or at a brokerage firm or bank in your hometown every summer and holiday, and do a damn good job! An internship at an investment firm that you'd like to work in during the winter break and rising senior summer is essential. In fact, many firms reserve a few slots for the best of their interns.

Be in touch with your college alums on Wall Street, do information interviews with them, and ask their advice on the best ways to land those precious internships. Be polite, strategic, humble, yet aggressive in your desire to succeed on the street, and maybe one of them will "adopt" you!

Getting a slot on Wall Street at graduation (and that's the time to do it) is incredibly competitive. So take almost any financial internship you can get this summer, then work your way up to increasingly prestigious firms!

How Do I Get an Internship?

Question: I'd like to get an internship. How do I go about it?

Answer: The summer before senior year is exactly the time to have a plum internship, as many companies are now looking to take their new hires from the

batch of wannabes who come to interns before the summer here; if you can expect. I'd also get some alumni names from your career office and do some fast information interviewing about what kinds of internships lead to what kinds of entry-level jobs.

The library will have lots of formal lists of internships, but you should just assume that every organization is a potential intern sponsor, so don't be limited by what's in the books. Particularly if you can afford to do an unpaid internship (and most creative ones are unpaid) by having an evening and weekend job to make ends meet, then you can brazenly offer to come and work free for somebody. Do it with style and you'll be surprised how fast they'll take you.

The "style" part is key -- be sure you check your resumes and cover letters with your career office (and remember to customize each one -- no one-size-fits-all allowed), and do some role playing/practicing for the interviews.

I Don't Know, I Don't Care, Don't Ask

All over the country, college students are preparing to head home for Thanksgiving, bracing themselves for the inevitable probing conversations with several generations of relatives and family friends. Parents of seniors are preparing, too. They're anxious to get their offspring home alone to pop that all-important question, the one that Smith College seniors were anticipating several years ago when they came up with sweatshirts that warned "I don't know, I don't care, don't ask." The question in question? "What are you going to do when you graduate?" This column is dedicated to those millions of college seniors and their families who will be staring at each other suspiciously over the holiday bird.

The fact is that there is not necessarily any reason to know for sure on Thanksgiving what you'll be doing in June. Research shows that only about 25% of college seniors will end up wanting the jobs they thought they wanted at the start of their senior year. For many students, especially those who thrive on last-minute living, senior year is a critical period for considering many options. It's the season for information sessions on campus several times a week, where you can attend employer-sponsored meetings and learn about different career choices and organizations.

Now, some seniors have known since third grade that they were going to medical school or into the theater, but for the vast majority of students, senior year is an important year for taking your time -- taking most of the year -- to decide what to do first after graduation. Today's seniors will probably face eight career paths in their lifetimes, so they should do some exploring. It can be very helpful for them to apply to several graduate programs and jobs at the same time. The process of applying, interviewing and "considering" (also known as waiting to hear) is very instructive. Often, when students get graduate school applications in the mail in January, then interview for jobs in February and March, and then sit back to think critically and comparatively about the various ponds into which they've just tossed a line, lots of really good values clarification actually ends up happening.

Parents are often concerned that students who don't have all their ducks in order early won't get the plum jobs. In my years of advising college students (as well as older adults trying to "undo" the "nailed down too early" senior year choices they now regret), I have decided that for most seniors getting too focused too early is not the best way to go.

So, if you're a student headed home for Thanksgiving, carry these ideas with you. Advise the folks that you'll be keeping your options open and using the career office at school all during second semester. If you're a parent lying in wait for your senior, the better thing to do would be to ask yourself a few questions about how much you're enjoying your own work and what new choices you might enjoy making. Midlife is, after all, adolescence with a paunch: The same questions pop up all over again. That will probably make for a more interesting, authentic and hassle-free Thanksgiving for everyone.

International Business

Question: How do I get a job working for a company that has an overseas presence?

Answer: International business is hot these days -- but it's very hard to break into, because most companies want you to pay your dues stateside before sending you abroad. Job descriptions are actually hard to come by in written form, because the jobs are evolving all the time. You might try the HR departments of some companies doing business overseas (the smaller ones may be more hospitable) to see if you could pry some out of them. There are some headhunters who specialize in international placements, but headhunters aren't much good until you get to the \$75,000 to \$100,000+ salary range. Still, get hold of the Directory Of Executive Recruiters and write a few query letters. Do this knowing full well that you may not get a red carpet welcome. But every once in awhile, something turns up.

Your very best resource is your college or university -- whether you have an undergraduate or graduate degree in international business, the professors and advisors who know you or knew you there are going to have the best contacts to share with you. Also ask for some networking/information interview lists from your alumni association or career office. See who's coming to campus for recruiting this year, and whether they're willing to see you.

My final suggestion may seem unusual, but while you are looking for just the right lead, you might consider temping with a high-end agency, telling them that you want to be placed with international firms. That will give you some time inside an organization to meet people, let them know you're on your way to a more serious position, and figure out how to get yourself positioned for a leap to what you're looking for. The route into organizations these days is a lot more circuitous than it used to be, even a few years ago.

Good luck, and come on back to let us know how it goes.

How do I Get a Job in Finance?

Question: I am a finance student who will be graduating in May. I have no experience and I desperately want a job in the industry before I graduate. How do I find a job in my field of study that will take a student with no experience? How do I find a job to work around my school schedule until I do graduate? What are my options if I decide that this is not the career for me?

Answer: Getting a job in finance before May is possible if you meet these criteria:

- a high GPA, preferably above 3.5
- successful completion of several demanding internships in a financial institution
- strong quantitative skills
- major or strong coursework in economics

Folks with that profile will no doubt find themselves hired before graduation. Without those criteria, you had best plan on an internship after graduation or lots of networking with alums from your college. I'd suggest a visit to your career office soon to see which financial firms are coming to campus and who'll be doing resume referrals later in the spring. Some smaller financial firms come later in the year, hire through the summer and are a little less picky than the high-end employers who come early in the year.

Now about the desperation you feel right now -- don't hang all your hopes on a job in May or you'll be tempted to marry the first one that comes along, which is often a big mistake. Hold out for one that really seems right. As for what to do if you don't like it: Just move on. Lots of mind-changing goes on for a year or so after graduation, so it won't be a big deal if you switch tracks a couple of times. Of course, this is a good case for having done several internships in earlier years, so you'd have a clearer sense of what you wanted AND a leg up in the competition. But if you kissed that train goodbye already, there are other things you can do.

Meanwhile, get to the career office -- while it's still free!

Job Interview Follow-Up

Question: I interviewed recently for an education and sales position. I feel that I met all their position criteria and the interview went fairly well. The interviewers said that they would notify me within four weeks one way or the other. It has been over four weeks since the interview; is it appropriate to contact them for an update, or should I continue to wait?

Answer: You -- and other folks waiting to hear after interviews -- should realize that hiring committees (or individuals, for that matter) are absolutely glacial in their speed. Always wait a week after the time they SAID they'd get back to you, and then IN YOUR MOST CHEERFUL, ACCOMMODATING TONE, call to ask about the process. Don't be whiny and don't be aggressive, or you'll be out of luck. View this as another chance to let the team know what a great, funny, agreeable addition you'd be. Since receptionists or administrative assistants will likely field the call (and they have lots of influence in who gets through to the hirers), be sure to be oozing charm when you speak with them.

Now, should the worst happen and you not get the job this time, be sure to view this as a "laboratory" for your job search. Ask if you could have a brief conversation either in person or on the phone about what qualities you would need to beef up in order to be a competitive candidate for another job with them. You'd be surprised how often hirings go sour and the folks need a replacement within weeks or months. If you've gotten to know them and have shown yourself to be eager to learn and please (and someone who takes feedback well), you're just the person they'll call. But hopefully, you'll never need this advice! Good luck!

Career in Human Resources

Question: I would like a career in human resources. What do I need to do to break in to this field?

Answer: To all those others interested in Human Resources: It is a neat field, but there are distinct components to most HR departments -- employment, benefits, training and Employee Assistance Programs. In some companies, organizational development and career development are also part of the mix. The best things to do to figure out where you belong in this mushrooming field, gone are the days when a company had a "personnel office" with a few people who kept lists of things. Here are a few ideas:

See who you know who knows people working in HR and arrange to talk to them about the field, and perhaps even visit them at their office to see how it feels to you. Call your college to get a list of alums in the field for information interviews.

Get hold of The Encyclopedia of Associations at your library (a big set of 4 volumes in the reference section) and look up the associations related to these different fields. They are a good source of information.

Consider doing an apprenticeship in an HR unit of an organization to get some experience -- you can put it on your resume whether you get paid or not.

Consider taking a course in HR Management as a special student at your local college.

Making Your Internship Work

Everybody knows that internships have become the "insurance policy" of an undergraduate experience -- and that you'll need several on your resume, preferably 3 or 4, to land the job you want when you graduate. But how can you be sure to have good ones?

Sometimes the pressure to find internships makes you lose sight of the fact that there are some great sites and some losers. The ones you don't want are those that take advantage of you, treat you disrespectfully, ask much of you and give little or no mentoring in return, or don't offer you a chance to observe the field you're working in from a perspective larger than the cubbyhole in which you are slaving away. To run a check on how good a site might be for you, here are 10 easy questions you can ask prospective supervisors and internship sponsors:

- (1) What kind of supervision do you offer regularly to your interns?
- (2) How often would we meet to discuss how my projects are going?
- (3) What kinds of tasks and projects have interns been responsible for in the past? What projects do you have in mind for this internship?
- (4) With whom would I be able to work out a "learning contract" for this experience?
- (5) What kinds of people have generally been most successful here? (Note: does this sound like you? If not, beware!) Are there specific skills or attributes one needs to be effective in this internship and in this organization? (Do you have them?)
- (6) What opportunities would there be for me to meet and observe people working in other areas of this organization? Could I gain a perspective on your organization and your field from my experience with you?
- (7) Who would my co-workers be? How would we work together?
- (8) What kinds of training will your organization be offering the interns?
- (9) Looking at my experience and skills, what are you hoping I can contribute to your organization during this internship?
- (10) Who would write my evaluation? What would the criteria for success be?

The point of asking all these questions (tactfully and professionally, of course) is that it sends a clear message that you're going to take this internship seriously, and that you expect they will, too. Sadly, some folks who advertise for interns only want to get free labor without giving much in return -- and that's a situation you want to ferret out and avoid! This hard-nosed list of questions will bring clarity to the process and ensure that you are an applicant and not a supplicant. That's a good thing to learn how to do early in your career.

Should I Take the First Job I'm Offered?

Question: I'm a graduating senior and have been offered a good job. I'm afraid that it's not exactly what I want and if I accept it I'll be trapped.

Answer: First off, you sound as if taking a job will be the equivalent of an indeterminate prison sentence. You won't be a "lifer" at whatever job you take at this point. You're likely to want a master's degree some day, probably an MBA if you like general management or a master's in a specific field such as information systems if you decide to go a more specialized route. It's early, so don't try to make big decisions too soon. For now, your task is to get a job in a place that offers you a chance to grow and maybe even pays for your MBA if there's a nearby program that's good. This job should feel right to you for a three- to five-year stint. Then you'll need to be off to someplace else to grow your career.

If the place that has offered you a job doesn't seem to meet those criteria, then simply tell them "Not quite yet, thank you" and continue to look. They'll probably give you a raincheck, and you can look around to see what else is available. So don't panic and marry the first job that asks you: This is a good year for employment, and there are lots of other options out there.

Congratulations on being wanted, that's always a great antidote to senior anxiety.

So Maybe I'll Just Go To Graduate School ...

November is just about the last time to think realistically about getting your act together to apply to grad school for next year. So this month, the thought of graduate school is probably swirling through lots of heads, young and old. Seniors who find that platoon of dark-suited recruiters from banks and consulting firms too much to tolerate are thinking about it. So are recent grads who've found that the freedom of entry-level work without much in the way of professional credentials isn't that much freedom after all. The plan-ahead-type college juniors are preparing to take exams, building a list of schools they are interested in, corraling references and the like.

What's more, thousands of folks ages 30 to 70 are also considering what graduate work they might like to do. I've worked with a 75-year-old who came to me for career advice on how to use the doctorate in future studies that she had just earned. So, truly, it's never too soon and it's never too late to think about getting a postgraduate education.

How do you decide whether to go to graduate school, and when? Here are some guidelines to use:

REASONS TO GO NOW

The sooner you start, the sooner you finish.

You are likely to have fewer personal commitments now than you will have later.

The field that interests you is changing quickly and you want to keep up.

You want to maintain your academic momentum.

REASONS TO GO LATER

Postponing further study will give you time to develop the focus and purpose you need for graduate-level work.

You need a break from studying after four years of college.

Work experience gives you perspective on your field and a context for your choice of schools. It may also make you a stronger applicant.

You need time to save money and establish legal and financial independence. Once you've done that, you can apply for financial aid independently rather than through your parents.

You've been in the workplace for a while and want to change careers. The new field you're interested in requires a graduate degree.

After working for a while you know for sure that you love learning -- nothing makes you feel as happy as sitting in a classroom.

Still not decided? Here are some steps to take: Visit your college career center or, if you're older and your college doesn't offer counseling to alums, call your state employment department and ask for some advising about various kinds of graduate training for different careers. Have some conversations with your professors (current or former). Set up some information interviews with alumni from your college to talk about their perspective on graduate training. And visit some Web sites in the fields you're considering.

But hurry -- if you want to do a good job on graduate school applications for next year, time is running out!

So Whose Life Is It?

Parents pay a lot for their kids' college educations -- and so they often feel they ought to help select their kids' future occupations. Sometimes it's subtle, and sometimes it's right out there in-your-face coercion. In my experience, arranged careers are much worse than arranged marriages -- they almost never work out in the long run. If you're going along with accounting, consulting or law school because your folks think that would be dandy for you rather than because YOU would love to do it, watch out: you're planting the seeds for a mega midlife crisis! There's no taking the path of least resistance for a good long term result -- you need to be getting experience now testing out various career options based on what FEELS RIGHT to you. And you'd better get good at that sorting out process because you'll do it 5 to 8 times during your adult life.

So here's a quickie quiz you can take to help you figure out whether the career(s) you're considering are really your own idea AND well matched to the kinds of things you love to do. For each of the 10 questions below, give a numerical response (1= no, not much; 5= yes, a great deal) that indicates how well this statement describes YOU and your thought processes. Just keep a running score on a separate piece of paper and then you can check back over the questions when you've finished.

SCORE (1 to 5) HOW TRUE IS THIS FOR ME?

_____ (1) The tasks required for this field really match what I love to do.

_____ (2) My parents and I have talked about it, and they're willing to let me do whatever work I think I'd really like.

_____ (3) I've tried an internship in this field and I really liked it.

_____ (4) I've had several information interviews with people in this field and I like what they've told me about it.

_____ (5) I've told my folks about this field or job and they agree I'd be good at it.

_____ (6) I found this career field by researching various possibilities.

_____ (7) I can tell you several bad things about the field or job I'm considering, but I still think it would work for me because the good fit outweighs the problems.

(8) I've made it clear in discussions with family members and other advisors that this is a decision I need to make for myself.

(9) When I think about the things I love to do now and the things I dreamed about doing as a kid, it's obvious how this kind of work fits me.

(10) When I think of actually doing this work, I really get excited.

SO WHAT SCORE DID YOU GET? Between 45 and 50, you're in great shape! Chances are you'll make terrific choices for yourself, this time and again throughout your working life. 35 to 44 -- maybe you're not thinking for yourself enough, or maybe you're not doing your homework. OR you might not be having enough independent communication with family members about your choices. This career exploration thing doesn't just happen by itself. Below 35, you're in trouble. Get yourself over to your Career Center as fast as possible, and sign on for whatever self-assessment activities they offer and a few counseling sessions to help you debrief them. And while you wait for your appointment, consider a great online self-assessment resource: Career Key. You can find it at <http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/l/lkj/>

IT'S YOUR LIFE -- get busy planning it!

Top 10 Reasons To Visit Your Career Center Today

No doubt about it: at your friendly college career center there's something for everyone. No matter what year you're in (the sooner the better -- preferably just after you get unpacked freshman year) you should get to know the place. Why not go there today and take a friend? Here are the reasons why:

1. You'll need to have at least two or three internship-type experiences if you want to be a competitive candidate for grad school or employment when you graduate. Unless you're prepared to do some creative resume writing, it helps to get advice on how to make that happen.
 2. You will have something to tell your family when they ask you (again) what you're going to be if you ever decide to grow up. (Translate: "How worthwhile was our considerable investment in your education?")
 3. The folks at the career center will give you permission to follow your own dreams.
 4. You will learn how to network through alumni and through social and family connections. Remember: for the rest of your life there will be 2 choices: networking or not working.
 5. Most career centers will do practice interviews on videotape or audio tape. Nothing improves your interview style more than hearing or seeing yourself in action.
 6. Your resume can get reviewed by an expert, so you won't look like an amateur.
 7. A career counselor can show you how to connect with internship sponsors and employers all over the world. Some will be on the net while others may be coming directly to your campus. Don't delay or you may miss important deadlines.
 8. At your career center there's no pressure unless you put it on yourself. staff members or counselors can coach you on handling your anxiety about that "rest of my life thing."
 9. Once you get past your fear, it's fun to explore all the possibilities. Your career center has information about pathways you could easily overlook.
1. The people there are friendly -- and we all need a smile to get through the day!

So get on down to the career center and then come on back to StudentCenter.com (link please) -- it's a winning combination!

Where to Get Internship

Here's a question for you: What do IBM, hospitals, think tanks, lawyer's offices, the White House, the LA Times, the Chicago Bulls, Web sites, your local chamber of commerce, museums, nonprofit organizations and the new start-up business in town have in common? You guessed it -- they all have internships available for next summer!

Q: OK, so where can I find the names and addresses of some of these organizations?

A: Here are just a few places to search:

- phone books -- call the organization you're interested in interning with and ask who is in charge of hiring summer interns.
- online listings -- try Hoover's online (http://www.aboutwork.com/hoovers/aw_search.html) to find large corporations, for instance. Most college Web pages are also linked directly to organizations in a variety of fields. Check the list here.
- directories in your local library or career development office -- such as the Directory of Museums, the Literary Marketplace or the Encyclopedia of Associations.
- state and federal directories of offices and agencies.
- people you know or alums who went to your college and have volunteered to help.

Q: Who do you talk to about an internship?

A: Preferably someone inside an organization to whom you've been referred. Remember to ask your family, friends, friends of your parents, parents of your friends, professors, advisors, ministers, coaches and, again, alums. In short, once you know the kind of organization you're interested in, talk to everyone you can think of to get "warm leads" in that field. But don't panic if no one surfaces -- every year folks get internships by writing compelling, well-researched letters to the director of a nonprofit group or the human resources or personnel department of companies. Then you follow up with a professional-sounding phone call (it's best to practice and even tape a practice session to hear your voice and smooth out your script). You'll probably be pleasantly surprised at the doors that swing open for you!

Q: Can I make lots of money in an internship?

A: Sorry, probably not! That's one of the reasons the doors swing open easily. Of course there are exceptions -- corporations, banks, hospitals and law firms have all been known to pay between \$3,000 and \$5,000 for a summer of really demanding work. Most sponsors, however, will pay a small stipend or maybe nothing at all. The emphasis in internships is on learning, not earning. But there are ways to work nights and weekends to earn the money you'll need to go back to school. Trust me -- it will be worth it in terms of the eventual career payoff.

Working with Animals

Question: How do you get a job working with animals?

Answer: Many people have found that working with animals is a great antidote to the craziness of the high stress/low meaning jobs that seem to abound these days. There are hundreds of ways to bring animals into your daily work life -- as a zoo attendant, pet sitter (lots of money there taking care of pets who are being neglected by their work-addicted owners), animal trainer, wildlife conservationist, pet therapist, pet groomer, pet product salesperson or pet photographer, to name a very few.

You can find out about some non-DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) work also by writing to professional groups.

Here are two:

American Veterinary Medicine Association

1931 N. Meacham Rd. Suite 100

South Chauburg, IL 60173

Veterinary Technicians and Private Managers

2614 SW 34th St. Suite 4

Gainesville, FLA 32608

Remember also that any kind of work you do can be done in places or organizations where animal life is the main purpose of the organization -- SPCA, children's or science museums, camps, animal magazines, pet stores, etc. Research shows that being around animals is one of the healthiest things you can do, so you're barking up the right tree, it seems to me. Good luck!

Working with Children

Question: I am a liberal studies major and I'm not sure if I want to go into teaching. I know there are other fields I can enter. I'm interested in finding information about jobs in children's services. Can you advise me about where to find information on this and other related fields?

Answer: You and other folks who want to work with kids but are not sure about the "chalk under your fingernails" approach should take heart. Children's services is an expanding field -- you can do everything from running a Big Sister organization (Big Brother/Big Sister national office, 215-567-7000) to teaching parenting skills to at-risk moms to providing play therapy for abuse survivors. Here are two organizations that can put you on their mailing lists and give you some insight as to whether you want a degree in human services or social work:

National Association of Social Workers, 750 1st St. NE, Suite 700, Silver Spring, MD, 20910, 202-408-8600.

National Organization for Human Services Education, Brookdale Community College, Lyncroft, NJ 07730, 908-224-2595 offers an associates degree in Human Services working with children, senior citizens and psychiatric patients in hospitals, mental health centers, social service agencies, and substance abuse counseling sites.

Also, why not visit the career center at your college and ask for the names of some alumni who could offer you informational interviews in a range of children's services fields? Good luck!

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