

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO SOW CAREER SEEDS

Summary: Find out how to lay the groundwork for your professional business career while still in college.



Question: I'm a first-year business student at Louisiana State University, so my entrance into the business world is still a few years down the road. Other than maintaining a high grade-point average, what should I focus on to better prepare myself?

Answer: There's no time like the present to lay the groundwork for your career. To add substance to your grade-point average, take demanding classes with the best professors. Employ the following four initiatives to pave your entry into the business world.

Gain experience. Employers love candidates who have worked in a business setting and developed a preliminary understanding of the rules of the game. Complete as many internships or co-ops as possible and arrange to shadow professionals for a week on the job. If your college provides any opportunities for entrepreneurial pursuits, jump on the bandwagon. These types of work experiences will enhance your resume immeasurably.

Get involved. Take a leadership role in on-campus activities and clubs. Become a student member of a professional association that relates to your career interest. (For example, if you're considering a career in marketing, you may want to join a local chapter of the American Marketing Association that accepts student members). Volunteer for a cause you believe in. While you may have to be selective in your time commitments, any of these opportunities will broaden your learning and enhance your leadership skills.

Develop contacts. A major benefit of using your time to become involved in extracurricular pursuits is the exposure to a variety of people. Anyone you come in contact with is a source of potential business leads. Be sure to establish a give-and-take relationship, thank people for their assistance and keep the door open for future associations. Make a point, while you are in college, of conducting informational interviews with LSU alumni in the business world.

Track trends. Develop a "trend-tracking" routine in which you stay abreast of current events by scanning a variety of business newspapers and periodicals, bookmarking relevant web sites and watching news coverage on television. Be sure to include some lighter reading in your diet to maintain perspective and keep a sense of humor.

- See [Career Tips for Soon-to-be- College Graduates](#) for more information.