

HOW CURRENT COLLEAGUES CAN HELP YOU LAND A JOB

Summary: Learn how you can use your current colleagues to conduct a successful job search and land another position.



Question: I'm currently working in a temporary position as a job development specialist for a university career center, where I also did my internship. I love the college setting and would like to pursue a career here related more to student advising and counseling. (My master's degree is in human resources with a concentration in career development.) I have done informational interviews and sent letters of inquiry to some departments, but nothing has come from them. Could it be because I'm young with no work experience? My current supervisors have offered to help, but I want to use them appropriately for an internal search before my temporary job concludes. How should I proceed?

Answer: You have a prime set up in that you're inside the organization you want to work for, with supportive supervisors. Not to minimize the challenge at hand of securing a position, but this is a great entry. Having worked in a career center, you're on the right path with informational interviewing and networking.

Revise your thinking, though, on "no work experience." Not only do you have work experience, but it's related to the work you want to pursue (advising/counseling). You have workplace savvy about the environment (academic setting and the culture of that particular university), and you have experience with the audience/customer (students). Your background provides a tremendous foundation for building a case for your candidacy, so highlight these strengths in informal conversations, through formal job-search correspondence, and in interviews.

To expand your options, consider every possible area of student assistance, from residence life to continuing education to the registrar's office to international students. Personal- and career-counseling positions generally require a master's degree in counseling, so if you decide to go that route, you may need additional coursework. In presenting yourself, be sure to focus on the counseling-related courses and experiential learning that you completed in your master's program.

As for your supervisors, don't be shy about enlisting their assistance. One way to respectfully take them up on their offers is to generate a list of people within the university that you're most interested in talking with. Suggest to your supervisors, if they're willing, that they place a call or send a quick e-mail on your behalf, indicating that they would like to refer you for a conversation to learn about their department and potential opportunities even if none currently exist. This is an opportunity for your supervisors to mention, also, what a great asset you've been in their office and that they would be thrilled for the university to continue to benefit from your contributions.

This exact scenario occurred last week when a colleague contacted me about an intern working in her office, and she was hoping that I could take a half-hour for a conversation with her. I agreed. The intern then contacted me about scheduling, and we had a productive and enjoyable 30 minutes that generated new ideas and resources for the intern. My colleague's enthusiastic request opened the door to a conversation that might otherwise have been more complicated to arrange. Your supervisors can play the same role for you.

Set a time frame to begin an external search if openings are limited on campus. Using a similar approach, highlight your relevant experiences to land an entry-level position of choice in another academic setting. Come next year with the additional experience and your existing network. You may secure that coveted spot back at your current university.

- See **33 Quick Tips to Improve Your Networking Experience** for more information.