

TOUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO SECURE AN OFFER

Summary: Find out how you can use your strengths to increase your chances of receiving an offer in this article.



Question: I am a senior at Louisiana State University and will be graduating with a degree in management information systems. I have a very high grade-point average but haven't been active in school activities. I do have past job experience and am currently gaining technical experience as a student worker. I have had a few interviews with recruiters from prominent firms but haven't received a single offer. What can I focus on to improve my chances of getting an internship or permanent offer in such a soft job market?

Answer: You are already headed in the right direction with the stellar GPA, past work experience, and initiative to develop hands-on technical expertise. To close in on those elusive offers, try this three-pronged approach:

1. Obtain feedback. Approach the career-counseling staff at the university to critique your interviewing skills and review your background for strategies on strengths and gaps that they think you should address in your conversations with recruiters. Don't be afraid to go straight to the source. Contact the recruiters who interviewed you and ask for specific feedback that might benefit you in future interviews. The career staff may be able to gain some insights if recruiters are reluctant to share their comments directly with you.

2. Practice your presentation. Be sure to focus on your strengths as they relate to the needs of the employers you are interviewing with. Do your homework ahead of time by researching companies so that you can highlight the areas that match the profile they seek in candidates. Techies aren't necessarily known for strong interpersonal skills, so if you can distinguish yourself in this area you will stand out in a crowd of technically qualified candidates. Early on in the interview, ask, "What do you personally think is most important in this position?" The response generally yields a personal perspective on priorities and underlying issues that will allow you to tailor your responses more closely to employer needs.

3. Increase your target audience. Prominent firms may be at the top of your list, but they offer a limited number of opportunities. There are many excellent smaller and lesser-known firms that provide excellent training and promotional opportunities. You may even decide to use such experience as a springboard into top companies. Identifying the companies you want to approach requires researching, trend tracking and tapping into the word on the street about these hidden treasures. Once you have your select list of employers, try to work through an alumni connection or contact them directly to express your interest.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Answer "What Are Your Strengths" with Ease](#)
- [How to Play up Your Strengths as a Recent Graduate in a Tough Economy](#)
- ["They Just Aren't That into You": Why You Aren't Getting Job Offers and What You Can Do about It](#)