

College grads, welcome to the real world of jobs

Despite having a diploma or advanced degree, there is much that new college grads need to know about being successful at finding a job.

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For this spring's new batch of college graduates, the job market presents a decidedly mixed picture. It made me think, "What career advice would I give a grad in these strange economic times?"

I remember the uncertainty I felt when I took off my cap and gown without a job lined up. In the years that followed, I discovered that, regardless of what career you pursue, to advance you must put in more hours than what's on paper. This is a lot easier if, like me, you enjoy what you do to earn a paycheck.

Inevitably, you will struggle with the balance between your job and your life outside of it.

There will be times when you will have to refocus your priorities and make choices. I would tell a grad, "Never be afraid to make a change that you believe will improve your life."

I asked an assortment of people in various industries for their career advice for the horde of fresh-faced young Americans seeking to enter the workforce. Below are their suggestions.

- **Connections are crucial.** In trying to achieve work-life balance, time for networking must be part of the mix. Today, opportunities abound to join professional groups and network. Dorothy Eisenberg, a partner at Gerson, Preston, Robinson & Co., made the time and reaped huge rewards. She wishes she had known years earlier the value of joining networking groups. "Your first job probably is not going to be your last one. Think of it as a stepping stone and keep circulating."

- **Conduct yourself with integrity.** In business, it's easy to cut corners to save time or clinch a deal. Amy Sussman of EWM Realtors in Coral Gables says she has learned the value of honesty and a good reputation. "If you treat people well, you can have a prosperous career and family life." Sussman says she just landed a referral from a new friend who admired her integrity. "It can become as viral as a great story on the Internet."

- **Love your work.** Tim Petrillo, owner of several of Fort Lauderdale's most popular dining spots, Tarpon Bend, YOLO and O Lounge, encourages college grads to find a career they enjoy. He says if you love what you do, work will be fun and success will follow. Petrillo the father of young girls, puts in long hours as a Fort

Lauderdale restaurateur and knows that to be successful it takes hard work, energy and sacrifice. "If it's a job you're not interested in doing, it becomes a pain and you don't put in the extra effort."

- **Don't stop learning.** Elaine Szeto, a senior vice president with PNC Financial Services Group, believes learning is ongoing. She wishes she knew earlier in her career that you don't have to be all-knowing all the time. "Give yourself permission to ask questions. I think that's the way to be successful."

- **Experience matters.** Many of today's graduates want to be entrepreneurs right out of school. I read a blog post by Scott K. Field, an Austin, Texas, solo law practitioner, who had some great advice to graduates considering immediately going solo: Don't. "A recent graduate should find a job somewhere where he can gain experience and receive on-the-job training." Field insists. "Experience matters."

- **Seek a mentor.** Aida Levitan broke barriers as a leader in Hispanic marketing and advertising. Levitan says as a young up-and-comer trying to have an outside life and get ahead, she found it difficult to find a mentor who understood the challenges that Hispanic women face. Even more, she was afraid to ask, worried it looked as if she were a slacker.

"I wish I had taken the initiative, identified someone and asked to be mentored." She considers mentoring critical to getting on the fast track today. "Find someone who likes to teach and share and go to that person and ask for help," she advises.

- **Don't expect too much too soon.** Few of us are lucky enough to land the perfect job in our 20s. Eduardo Marturet, music director and conductor of The Miami Symphony, sees college graduates getting easily frustrated if they don't land the ideal job immediately. His advice: "You have to have a good deal of experience from other jobs in order to be ready for the ideal job."

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