

Retooling the employment strategy for today's college students

Written by Dr. Daryl Green
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Picking the right job candidate is not easy. I was given the task of recommending college students for summer employment for my organization. I promptly pulled together a team of both seasoned professionals and recent college grads to make the job selection. We reviewed more than 100 resumes and interviewed several candidates. We had to make these selections quickly. To my surprise, I was flabbergasted at the lack of employment preparation for by some people.

For example, some students did not have the correct phone number listed on their resumes. In one situation, we had called a prospect to interview him but missed him on our call to set up an interview. He called us back with a list of times he was available to be interviewed. In other words, he expected us to work our interview schedule around his. Needless to say, we did not call him back. We were fortunate to land two quality candidates. Sadly, these miscues in understanding the hiring process of employers could jeopardize these students' future. This article examines the current economic crisis and how students and parents can better position themselves for more employment opportunities.

The current economic forecast looks bleak in the near term for college grads and those preparing to graduate in 2013. The U.S. Labor Department estimates that the unemployment rate for recent college grads between ages 21 to 24 has averaged over 8%. According to the Economic Policy Institute, recent grads will probably need to settle for low-level positions. In

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fact, about 52% of employed college grads under age 25 were not working jobs that require a college degree according to a Northeastern University economist.

College grads and current students must find alternative strategies to overcome employment obstacles. Rising tuition costs, a stagnate economy, and lack of career advancement continue to haunt ambitious young professionals. Seasoned professionals are too cautious to retire early due to the uncertainty in their own future with the rising health care costs as they age. In fact, getting a college education appears to be a big liability and financial load for students.

As the clock struck midnight several days ago, interest rates on federally subsidized Stafford student loans jumped from 3.4% to 6.8% until Congress can change it. Some estimates conclude that the average college student will see an additional \$2,600 cost for his or her loan. According to the Project on Student Debt, two-thirds of 2011 college graduates had an average debt of more than \$26,000.

Consequently, millions of college grads will see themselves carrying massive college debt loads with dim hopes of finding jobs in their majors. Columnist Hadley Malcolm summed up this situation best, "Like countless Millennials across the country, they find themselves tethered to that debt load, stuck between the desire to become fully independent adults and not being able to afford the financial and cultural milestones traditionally associated with young adults."

Employment opportunities have changed because the hiring processes have changed, yet most individuals do not realize this fact. Peter Cappelli, author of *Why Good People Can't Get Jobs*, explains that employers have shifted their expectations on prospective employees: "With an abundance of workers to choose from, employers are demanding more of job candidates than ever before...To get a job, you have to have that job already. It's a catch-22 situation for workers - and it's hurting companies and the economy."

Regardless of where you stand on today's college students, it is clear that some intervention is necessary if they are to be successful in this troubled market. The following is a short list of job strategies for college grads: (a) get an independent assessment on your resume and job strategies, (b) develop a personal brand that will create an image of indispensability and uniqueness, (c) showcase your expertise on a variety of levels (blogs, media expert, etc.), (d) obtain special training or certifications to become more competitive, and (e) extend your network globally with social media platforms such as LinkedIn.com.

With the increases in college debt and lack of significant job opportunities, college grads must retool their job strategies. Additionally, with the continuing financial crisis, parents cannot afford to idly sit by and watch their child wander aimlessly through life. Individuals can help themselves by becoming knowledgeable in all aspects of the employment process. The road will not be easy, but planning will create the right environment for success in the future.

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*About Daryl Green: Dr. Daryl Green has done extensive research on cultural issues impacting today and future leaders. His last book, *Job Strategies for the 21st Century: How to Assist**

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Today's College Students during Economic Turbulence, has been rated number one on Amazon.com. For more information, you can contact him at

www.darylgreen.org

www.darylgreen.org

or [www](http://www.nuleadership.com)

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