It is officially graduation season! Many high school and college graduates are preparing to plunge into the job market. Unfortunately, the average college graduate takes 3 to 9 months to obtain employment, with over 50% jobless or underemployed. Approximately one-third of high school graduates not heading to college were unemployed. Here are some tips to market yourself for success in a difficult job market:

**Network, network, network:** One of the keys to professional success is networking, even before you are on the hunt for a new job.

- **Create networking business cards:** Even if you are still a student, business cards are a great networking tool. You never know when you’ll encounter a potential colleague or employer! Many sites offer free business cards, including www.vistaprint.com.

- **Join professional organizations and listservs:** Attend conferences to network with possible employers. Listservs also frequently advertise job opportunities.

- **Clean up your communications:** Create a professional voicemail and e-mail address. Also, scrub your Facebook and Twitter accounts or create accounts for professional use. Although no content on the Internet ever really goes away, it’s good for your new professional identity. In many states, employers can ask for your social networking passwords.

- **Use your social networks:** Many professional organizations maintain social network pages. Joining can help you stay up-to-date in your field and find out about opportunities.
Marketing Yourself for Success

Use multiple job-searching sources: In addition to the main job search engines, consider industry specific sites or the human resources page of a prospective employer’s website.

Create (and proofread) a solid resume: Be honest, but sell yourself. Use verbs to start each bullet point (e.g. Created, Developed, Distributed.) Identify what sets you apart from everyone else who may be applying for the same position.

Meet with a career counselor: Many psychologists and counselors specialize in career counseling and/or assessment to help guide individuals with professional development.

Dress for success: Whether headed for an interview or just to drop off your résumé, dress professionally. For interviews, a suit is always a great option. For ideas, Google image search “interview attire.”

• On interview day, always be prepared: A great interview is essential to secure employment. Here are some specifics to keep in mind.

  • Practice, practice, practice: Role-playing is a great way to practice for the interview. A Google search for “interview questions” will give you some great ideas.

  • Arrive early: Give yourself ample time to arrive early for the interview. If you’re not familiar with the location of the interview, do a test drive the day before.

  • Have extra copies of your résumé: Buy a portfolio, and keep extra copies of your résumé in your portfolio to bring with you to the interview.

  • Write down questions you have for the employer: The interview is not just for the employer to meet you, but for you to meet them! Research the company ahead of time, and keep questions in your portfolio. Bring a pen so you can jot down notes if necessary.

  • Say thanks: A thank-you note is a great way to reinforce your interest in the company.

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