

HOW TO GET ANY JOB YOU WANT

SOME ADVICE FOR YOUNG CAREER SEEKERS

EDITED BY DEREK MAGILL

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YOU NEED A VALUE PROPOSITION, NOT A RESUME BY DEREK MAGILL

Picture this—two people want a job at a growing startup.

Person one sends in his application and resume. He's confident, because he's put hours into it, digging up every award, achievement and accolade to his name since high school. He's confident because on paper, he looks like the ideal candidate. He was the captain of his sports teams and the senior class president. He made excellent grades in college and he studied abroad. He interned for a political campaign. He's a natural leader, his resume says, and he works well with others. He's a shoe in, everyone tells him.

But he doesn't realize that hundreds of others applying have the same, or similar, resume. They've all jumped through the hoops, played by the same rules, interned here and there. They've all been told their entire lives that they're the best and brightest—their resumes speak for themselves, they think.

Person two sends an application, but it's different from all the others. The resume is there, but it's restrained. He included only enough to let the team know about him, but not enough to distract them from what he wants them to focus on—his value proposition. He spent the days leading up to the application learning about the business, its industry, its digital presence, its successes and its failures.

He asked himself, “What can I do, Day 1 on the job, to create value for this company? What can I do long term that justifies bringing me on board?” He's not afraid to tell them, “Here's what I would be doing differently. Here's how I would do things better than you're doing

them now.” He identifies and outlines a few of these and offers some relevant skills he has and steps he would take towards accomplishing them.

His application is NOT just about him, it’s about them. It’s about the things they know they need and the things they don’t yet know they need, and how he would create both if he were on the team.

Who do you think gets hired?

Here’s the thing...

Your resume doesn’t mean as much as it used to.

The credential you paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for? Most people applying have one.

That study abroad semester where you partied your way across Europe? You aren’t unique.

That “A” you got on a term paper? So did the other applicants. You did Greek life? Great, that tells me very little.

We live in a period of resume inflation.

When you apply to a job, you’re competing with hundreds, if not thousands, of people who are, on paper, just as qualified as you.

So if you want that job, if you want to stand out, if you want to be the person that is “a shoe in,” you don’t need a resume, you need a value proposition.

HOW TO GET A JOB WITHOUT FORMAL CREDENTIALS BY DEREK MAGILL

Since I dropped out of college about a year and half ago, I've had the opportunity to speak and work with tons of young professionals in the process of applying for their first job. Often, in fact most of the time, an employer's decision to hire them has little to do with formalized credentials, and everything to do with the approach that person takes during the application process.

Here is an example email, written by a friend/client of mine who doesn't have a college degree, to a potential employer, with 5 tips on how to get a job by me at the end. Whether you have a degree or not, there is a lesson to be learned from this.

Hi Jack,

I hope you had a great weekend.

As you said, you're looking for someone with a bit more experience for the position, so I have a proposal:

I want to work for you. Let me start at half the price of what you are offering – I'll create a curriculum for myself outside of the job to get myself caught up to speed. If you don't see me operating at the level you want within one month, let me go.

I'll also develop your social media presence, which if you don't mind me saying, could use some help. I've had some good experience in this, and I've built both the Facebook and Instagram accounts for the

company my father works at and for an annual conference I marketed. I'll develop a regular posting schedule and ensure a stream of custom content using tools like Canva and Adobe Illustrator. I also think the customer service department could benefit from being on social media, and I'd like to create a strategy for how we could implement this. I've seen quite a few big name companies doing it with a ton of success.

I think this can be a win-win for both of us. You'll be getting a hardworking young person at half the cost of anyone else, and I'll be getting the opportunity to prove that I can create a hell of a lot of value at your company.

Please let me know how this sounds and/or if there is any other way that we can make my working for you possible.

I appreciate your time.

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He got the job (At full salary). Here are five reasons why:

1. He took an entrepreneurial approach to the situation and created his own work proposal to which his potential employer would have to respond. His employer hadn't even considered this as a potential option.
2. He offered to take lower pay as a way of competing with people who have more formal credentials and/or more experience. (He's able to do this because he doesn't have student debt)
3. He delivered a clear value proposition by offering to develop the social media channels for the company, something the employer hadn't thought of, and he showed an interest in the overall success of

4. He gave the employer a clear timeline in which he was to deliver the results he wanted and an agreed upon exit if he couldn't meet the expectations.

5. He demonstrates, through this email, that he is driven, bright, creative, and confident in a way that a resume never could. This was intentional.

Naturally, there are more things you can do, but the above 5 tips should be considered a good starting point for anyone looking to get a job without a degree or certification.

ADVICE TO AMBITIOUS YOUNG PEOPLE: JUST BUILD SOMETHING

BY ZACHARY SLAYBACK

“I’m an ambitious young person who wants to always be moving forward in my education and career. What should I be doing?”

Building something.

The best thing that an ambitious young person can do at age 18, 19, or 20 is to be building something. They should be spending as much of their free time as possible actively contributing to a tangible, real project that is completely outside of the school setting.

Actively building something is the best thing an ambitious young person can do for their personal and professional development. It makes them better people, sets them up for better career opportunities, and sets in process the long and worthwhile goal of becoming a creator who is motivated by their own desire to control their lives, not simply one who creates to pad a resume or get offered a job at a major corporation.

“But I just spent the past couple of years building up my personal accomplishments and resume so that I could get more opportunities... how is your advice any different?”

If you were like me when I was in high school, a good chunk of your time “building” was devoted towards activities and extracurriculars you were hoping would bolster your resume for applying to elite colleges or programs. Sure, you may have really liked some of them, but your time was likely split between a half-dozen or more of these.

Even if you were president of your FBLA chapter, a debater on your student congress team, and a member of your Science Olympiad team, you spent so much of your time curating a diverse resume that it was hard to really become an expert at building in any given area.

Or maybe you participate in a few hackathons a year where you build apps and programs within 24 hours in the hopes of beating out other teams and the recognition brought with that. Developing the skill set necessary is itself an astonishing tool and one you can use to build even better and more diverse projects at the end of the day. But why are you building? Are you building for the satisfaction of engaging in meaningful work? Or are you building for the approval of some outside authority?

An app, a book, a blog, a podcast, a building, a program – whatever it is, starting (or joining) a project that allows you to actively build is the best thing you can do for yourself and your future. If even as a side-project during school, in the summer, or outside of your full-time job, starting to build can be the best action you can start to make yourself a better person, student, and creator.

Personal Development: Building is Hard

Engaging in the active pursuit of building is not something easy. Waking up and committing to making some headway on a project that you started in a fit of inspiration is easy in the days immediately following the genesis, but becomes increasingly difficult a week, month, or quarter after you started.

Even more, we must develop the standards for success (and failure!) of the building ourselves. Each major decision can be taken dozens of ways, each one bringing with it a set of different outcomes (seen and unseen) and other decisions to be made down the road. It is unlikely

there will be obvious “right” and “wrong” options. Some provide more favorable predicted outcomes than others, but how we determine which outcomes are more favorable and likely than others is a decision to be made by our own judgment.

When we are in school or a hierarchical workplace, we have people to check our progress and provide a rubric for success. Multiple choice tests provide keys to tell which answers are clearly correct and incorrect. Even open ended answers have rubrics to assist in grading. Answers with certain clear elements are more right than those without these elements.

Building your own project doesn't bring with it these same checks. You have to build them yourself. You have set the standard for success and failure and be prepared to adjust accordingly in light of new information that you determine is worth paying attention to.

This takes responsibility and drive. It takes the ability to develop a habit of creation and success. It takes being willing to do something very difficult.

Even if your project is a flop, your undertaking the project will not be a failure if you actively follow the self-guidance of creation – setting goals, checking those goals against self-set standards, and actively working towards building every day.

Professional Development: The Age of the Credential is in its Twilight

Most of the building that ambitious young people do in their youth is in pursuit of some kind of credential. The credential, it is believed, will show that they know their stuff and ought to be trusted to create and build – either by joining a company or by joining the next tier of

higher education.

This mythos is growing weaker by the day. The importance and weight of actually building a project is stronger than ever with the advent of the Internet and the ability to see for yourself what people have built and the quality of their work with a simple Google search.

Career pages at company websites echo this assertion. Portfolio and experience requirements are posted in lieu of BA requirements. “BA or equivalent work experience” is found when just years ago “BA” would be all that is listed.

Employers and potential colleagues are looking for your ability to identify a valuable pursuit, cut your losses when necessary, launch a project in line with that pursuit, carry through, and develop the skills and responsibility necessary to finish that pursuit. An actual track-record of creating speaks more than a simple credential ever could.

Motivational Development: Creation Begets Creation

“Okay, but where can I start? What if I don’t have a great idea for a project I want to build?”

Just start building.

Author Steven Pressfield writes of the morning routines of the best writers in his book *The War of Art*, noting that the “professionals” don’t wait for inspiration to strike and then start working. They just start working. Creation begets creation. Building begets building.

Start building by blogging every day. Start building by learning a new skill set. Start building by devoting yourself an hour to sit down and write no matter what – even if you don’t have a topic. You’ll find in

motivation to learn the skills you need.

Engaging in meaningful work motivates the individual. It creates a feedback loop by which we become more motivated to better ourselves in the pursuit of our work. If we find creating an app to be fulfilling and meaningful but require a new coding skill set to get to the next phase of the project, it is astonishingly easier to pick up this skill set than if we just decided to learn it in a vacuum.

If you find yourself agreeing with the advice to just be building but have no idea what to build, then just start on the path of building something. You'll be amazed at the motivation and creativity you unlock in the pursuit of building.

HOW TO GO LEVEL 5 IN YOUR JOB SEARCH BY ISAAC MOREHOUSE

A lot of people are looking for jobs. The thing is, not all job searches are equal.

“Looking for a job” might actually mean hoping someone finds your resume online, shooting out a few emails, or posting unsolicited comments on Facebook pages that say, “Are you hiring?”

If you want a job—really want a job—you’ve got to go level five with your job hunt. And call it a hunt, not a search. You’re not hoping to stumble into a pot of gold, you’re tracking your prey and bagging it.

Let’s take a look at how to do it.

Level 1: A Good Resume

While most of the best jobs you’ll get in life will be gotten without a resume, if you’re job hunting you should have one on hand. I don’t particularly like them, but a lot of people expect them. A good resume will never get you a job, but a bad resume could lose you one.

For a resume to actually convey something, serve as a starting point for interview questions, and keep you from being dismissed out of hand, there are really just two main features: Nice appearance and outcomes-based content.

For appearance, keep it simple, clean, a single page, uniform use of line breaks or bullets, not too many indents and sub-sub points, and a clear order top-to-bottom of what’s most important. (Hint: experience is more important than education to most people, even if

you assume otherwise). Oh, and get your spelling and capitalization triple checked.

For content most people simply list credentials they have and activities they engaged in. This is boring and conveys a lot less about your ability to create value than what kind of outcomes you produced. Don't just list that you were a digital marketing intern and ran email campaigns. Show that your A/B test improved open rates by 10%.

Even if you were waiting tables, see if you can demonstrate value created. "Server at Applebee's" is less interesting than, "My section consistently brought in 15% more tips than average sections."

Anyone can have a title and do a task. The good ones create value and can show positive outcomes.

Level 2: Good Profiles on LinkedIn, etc.

Whether you like it or not, LinkedIn is hugely valuable in the working world, especially for those making hiring decisions. Have a profile. Have a decent headshot that actually looks like you. Have accurate information. Keep it up to date.

Your LinkedIn profile should be consistent with your resume, but it is not the same thing. It allows you to go a little deeper into who you are, what drives you, who you've worked with, what you did. Same goes for Twitter, Facebook, and whatever else you kids are using these days. Be you, but use good judgement. If someone only ever found your online accounts, would they have an accurate idea of who you are and what you want to be known as?

Many people fear all social media and online presence because they

think of it as a liability. Some people try to stay undiscoverable online as a protective measure.

This is a terrible idea.

First, always assume if some hacker wants to find your stuff bad enough they'll find a way, regardless of your settings. But more importantly, seeing social media as a liability blinds you to the fact that it can be a huge asset. There is no neutral. It's either helping you or hurting you. Being completely anonymous online hurts you. Take charge of your online presence and make it an asset.

Level 3: A Personal Website

It's easier than ever to setup a personal website. If you're serious about finding a great job, just do it. Go over to WordPress and get started. In a few hours you can have a clean, simple website that serves as a repository of all the things you enjoy and want to be known for.

A personal website gives you far more control than profiles on third party sites. You can feature whatever you wish, you can blog, share video, include a longer bio, express aspects of yourself you wouldn't cram into a LinkedIn profile, and really use the blank canvas to create whatever you wish.

But more than what you have on your site is the fact that you have one. Anyone who has put together a basic, neat, up to date personal website stands out. Not many people do, despite how easy it is, and if you do you'll have something that gives you far more cred than just a decent resume in a pile.

If you really want to gain an edge, overcome fear, build confidence,

and become a better communicator and thinker then take the next step and blog on your site regularly. I recommend blogging daily, but if that's daunting, try weekly. You can always hide bad posts, but the act of doing it and knowing it can be seen by others will do more for your creative capacity and productive power than any other simple activity I know of.

Level 4: A Portfolio of Projects

If you've already setup your personal website here's a way to really beef up the value. Beyond a nice homepage and about page with a bio, your website can feature projects you've completed.

Remember when I said the resume should show outcomes instead of just telling about activities? A portfolio allows you to show in much greater detail what you've created. It's especially easy for those with skills in art or coding or engineering to share publicly what you've produced. You may think that your management or communication or sales skills can't really be put into a portfolio that shows what you've done, but it can.

Go to a freelancer website and pay someone \$50 to design a nice one-pager that shows the results of that event your organized and executed. Have someone build an interactive graph tracking your fundraising or sales campaign. Show articles you've written and clicks they received.

If you can think of nothing tangible that you've completed to put in a portfolio it's a good sign you should get cracking! Writers and photographers know that their portfolio of work is what really matters. If they have none, they start out just doing things for free to build it up. You can do the same. Just get started creating something and share the results. Do projects for free that will help you get something under your belt.

The great thing is, the success or failure of your projects is less important at this stage than that you completed it. I've talked with tech companies who say they'd rather hire someone who built a cheesy, non-innovative notepad app than someone with a stellar resume who never built and "shipped" anything at all.

Level 5: Unique, Stand-Alone Websites, Videos, InfoGraphics for Your Target Company

Here's where the great stand apart from the very good. If you really, truly, deeply want to work for a company why not devote yourself to studying them in depth and presenting your unique take?

Remember Nina, whose resume was lost in the heap at AirBnB? She went level five and became internet famous. She put together an impressive site that deserved attention, still it's telling of just how low the bar is among job-seekers that a simple website was such a viral sensation. No one is doing this. But you can.

One thing employers will tell you when sifting through job applications is that too many people talk about themselves and too few talk about the company they claim to want to work for. "I'm Joe and I'm great at XYZ" tells me nothing about why Joe applied specifically for my company. Does he just want a paycheck, or is he passionate about my business? Does he even know what we do and what we value?

There's no better way to demonstrate your knowledge and passion for a company than to dig into the industry, business model, customer base, competitors, and build something unique that describes what you love about and what you would do for the company. Don't think about what would make you look good, think

about what would actually be valuable to the company.

I guarantee spending 30 days doing a deep dive on your target company will be more valuable than spending an entire year getting a second major and more clubs to list on your resume. If you can create something of value to the company before you're even working for them that sends a strong signal that you're a person they want on board.

What Are You Waiting For?

One of the reasons I launched my company Praxis is precisely because so few young people realize that they have the power to create their own professional future. There are more tools available than ever and more opportunities but so few realize it. You can't sit on the conveyor belt and expect it to drop you at a fulfilling job.

Look, I'm not saying it's easy. But don't tell me there's no way to get a great job if you aren't willing to push yourself to level four, or ideally level five. You can probably think of ten more things I didn't even list here if you really try.

The days of buying a degree and hoping it buys you a job are over. Be your own credential and prove through the work you do that you can create value

YOUR RESUME IS BORING, DO THESE FIVE THINGS INSTEAD BY ISAAC MOREHOUSE

The resume is supposed to be a relatively quick way for someone to get to know your personal and professional accomplishments, skills, interests, and the potential you have to create value in a given setting. The thing is, it's pretty outdated.

In fact, it never worked all that well, evidenced by the fact that most people do not get jobs because of a great resume but because of a personal connection. Resumes have always been a poor substitute for other, more robust ways to get to know someone. There just weren't too many other ways once upon a time. But things change.

Today we have so many ways to paint a picture of who we are, what we love, and what we can do than we ever did before. It's time to stop leaning on a sheet of paper with boring bullet points and begin building better ways for people to see what you're all about. When I get resumes now I barely look at them. A quick scan, then I immediately jump on Google to find the things that give me better signals. Here are five of them.

1. Create a personal website.

This might sound daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Go to WordPress, get a domain with your name in it if you can, pick a basic theme, complete an "About" page with a few photos and a bio, and write a few blog posts on what you care about and what you do.

Update it at least once a month so it doesn't look dead. Don't feel

too much pressure if you're not a great writer. The content is less important than that you have a site. Someone who has taken the time and developed the basic skills to set one up has already set herself well above the crowd.

2. Have a LinkedIn profile.

Most young people hate LinkedIn. So do most of the adults they spend most of their time with—teachers and professors. But in the professional world outside of academia, LinkedIn is gold. It is everything your resume is but far less boring and with several added benefits. You need to have a profile there. It can house all your basic experience and skills and other stuff that goes on a resume, but it also has some color, endorsements, and a way for people to see shared connections, what kind of articles you've liked, and more. When you send a resume to someone they are going to look for you on LinkedIn whether you like it or not. If you're not there, or if you have a shabby, out of date profile, your stock will drop.

3. Make use of Facebook and other social profiles.

Everyone uses at least one social platform. Most are on Facebook, or Twitter, or Pinterest, or others. My advice here is controversial, but I stand by it: make your social media pages publicly viewable.

Look, if you have something really incriminating on there someone could find it anyway if they were motivated enough. Making your profile public is a good way to keep a check in your mind on what kinds of things you may and may not want to share. This doesn't mean your entire Facebook presence needs to become whitewashed of anything personal or fun. Far from it. That's good stuff, even to a potential employer, and a completely polished presence is slightly disconcerting. But if you're constantly in name-calling flame wars

over political issues on Facebook, for example, that's probably not good for most jobs and probably not good for you.

Let the world see a little bit of the real you, and let that be a you you're proud of. Again, when you send your resume people are going to look for you on social platforms anyway. They tend to get frustrated when they can see that you exist but can't view any details without a friend request. Let them in. They'll get a flavor for so much of the richness that a resume simply cannot provide.

4. Review books on Amazon.

This is an underutilized gem. Amazon has a wonderful reviewing community, and reviews you post there under your real name have pretty decent search engine results. One thing that's hard to gauge from a static list of activities is a person's intellectual depth and passion for learning new things. Curious, interested people are people employers want to hire. Everyone does a few classes and clubs, but how many people read interesting books and take the time to write a review? It's a good practice in general for your writing and thinking skills, and it really gives you an edge in demonstrating your interests and abilities.

5. Build something.

Anything. Outcomes are more valuable than inputs. Products are more valuable than paper. Everyone can list activities they've done from date X to date Y. But what did it result in? What did you create? The ability to build and "ship" something is rare and valuable. Most people get stuck thinking about the article they want to write, the app they want to build, the event they want to run, the group they want to launch, or the painting they want to do. It takes guts, discipline, humility, and grit to actually finish it. Think of projects

you care about that have a tangible, demonstrable result you can put out there for the world to see (another great use of your personal website). Saying “I worked here” is so much less powerful than showing “I built this.” Showing beats telling, so find more things you can show.

If these sound like interesting ideas but you’re a little overwhelmed, take them one at a time. And, of course, you can join Praxis, where we have one-on-one coaching and an intensive educational experience focused on helping you learn how to do these things and do them well.

5 COLLEGE AND CAREER FALLACIES YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD AVOID BY ISAAC MOREHOUSE

It's possible you're preparing for an economy that no longer exists. Let's explore five common myths and mistakes when it comes to getting educated, building a resume, landing a job, and starting off on the right foot in the professional world.

Fallacy #1: You can't turn down "free" opportunities

Things too good to resist can be dangerous.

So many young people suffer through stuff they don't like with no clear future benefit just because everyone else calls it a great opportunity, or something they'd be crazy to turn down. "If you get in to an Ivy, you go!", or, "If Goldman offers you a job, you take it!", or, "If your parents will pay for this expensive education, you can't walk away from that free experience!".

But it's not free. Every action has an opportunity cost – what other things you're giving up in order to do it – and money is the least important. "Free" comes with strings attached, just like your parents' money. Most unhappy young students and workers are unhappy because they feel like they can't turn down something someone offered them. You can. In fact, you probably should.

The more skin you have in the game, the more likely you are to succeed. Watch students who are paying their own way through a school or educational program.

Watch people who pay to go to conferences or professional development trainings out of their own rather than their companies pocket. Consider books you buy for yourself vs. those gifted to you. Which do you get more out of?

There's a reason Bruce Wayne couldn't climb out of the prison until he tried it without the rope. There's a reason Vegas is better than experts at predicting sports outcomes. When you have something of your own to lose, you sharpen your focus and perform your best. Place a bet on yourself. Put yourself in positions where you stand to lose or gain based on your failure or success.

Don't do things you don't like doing just because they are "free". It can tether you to the expectations of others and make you a worse decision maker.

Make it a goal to become independent of the goodwill of others and dependent on your own success as soon as possible, even if that means turning down opportunities others would salivate over. They don't have to live your life. You do.

Fallacy #2: You major matters

What you know matters. What you study in school not so much. (With the exception of legally required majors for heavily regulated industries).

All the most valuable things you'll learn in life won't come from a classroom. How to walk, talk, drive, use Google, navigate social situations, and creatively solve problems are learned by doing. The most important ideas you'll deal with are more likely to come from your own experience, reading, and discussing than from assignments. You can't outsource the development of knowledge to a department,

program, or credential.

Studies and majors won't automatically grant you useful knowledge, nor will they provide a deep and rich network. We all need one. A pool of people with whom we've established social capital, and who we can work with and call on for resources, expertise, and support is indispensable. It's not uncommon for a university experience to provide you with some friends and future associates, but never assume just being around a bunch of other students with similar interests is enough. That's a recipe for building a horizontal network, not a vertical one. You need both.

A network of people mostly the same age with mostly the same interests at mostly the same skill and experience level is a start, but only a very small start. You need to step outside the institutional setting and build a network that includes retired pros, middle-aged managers, young investors, old experts, and an array of people up and down the world of enterprise across a diverse set of industries.

Fallacy #3: "Leadership" is a skill

In the real world product beats paper every time.

I read a lot of resumes from people who clearly obsess over them. They are spattered with a diverse array of activities and list vague skills like, "Leadership", and "Integrity". These don't indicate anything but an obsession with credentials and titles. You've got to demonstrate value creation.

Resumes and degrees are signals. Their only purpose is to let you broadcast that you pass some minimum bar of intelligence and ability. They can't do much more, and increasingly, they don't even do well at that minimum signal. Activities are not outcomes. Anyone can

join a club or be named treasurer. Few can actually create value in a demonstrable way. The latter crushes the former every time.

Can you show something you've actually "shipped"? Do you have an easily verifiable reputation for getting stuff done? Show, don't tell. Show them the website you built. Show them the number of new page likes your Facebook ad campaign generated. Let them see the customers you served, the money you raised, the newsletter you produced, or the app you launched.

Whether any of these tangible creations succeeded is far less important than whether you finished them. Everyone can sign up for stuff and spout about ideas.

Everyone can pass a class. Very few can deliver results on time. Almost no one can conceive an idea and bring it to life without being forced to be some authority figure.

Focus less on the resume and more on the product.

Fallacy #4: There is one right path

Most likely your future job doesn't exist yet. Don't stress about it, this is a good thing.

It's ridiculously painful to decide what your calling in life is, and what educational and career steps you must take to live it.

Relax. There isn't a single path that, if missed, will doom you forever. You're travelling to a largely unknown destination.

How can you plan for that? Simple: don't try to do what you love, just try to avoid what you don't.

Make a list of things you really don't like, aren't good at, and don't even really want to be good at. Anything not on that list is fair game. Go try it. When you discover through experience more things you dislike, add them to the list. Pretty soon the field of viable options will begin to narrow. Any step within that field is a step in the right direction.

Fallacy #5: You are an employee

Machines and software are better employees than humans. So what.

You've got one amazing advantage: humans are wonderfully creative and adaptive. Use it. You can't afford the employee mindset, where you simply specialize, follow orders, and expect your company to do the heavy lifting when it comes to your financial support, happiness, and reputation. You are your own firm, wherever your paycheck may come from.

You've got to think like an entrepreneur.

Take ownership of the company vision, whether you created it or not. Understand that you're not just laying bricks, but building a cathedral. Ask questions. Look for ways to improve, even things outside of your department or direct control. Do one thing to add value to yourself and your company every single day.

This doesn't mean you should ever consider yourself too good for old fashioned grunt work. Ask any entrepreneur if they've ever done their own data entry or toilet scrubbing. They have. It does mean you have to adopt a big-picture mindset and don't wait for assignments, but look for ways to create value. Whenever possible, just do them rather than asking permission.

As the market changes demand for whatever specialized skills you have may grow or shrink. The one thing that will always be in demand is creative problem solvers who think big and act swiftly.

Conclusion

What does combating all these myths have in common? You can't wait around for other people to confer status, knowledge, or success on you.

You've got to take the reins and build your own education and career, and it all begins with a mindset shift.

A QUICK TIP FOR INTERVIEWS BY ISAAC MOREHOUSE

It's not about getting it right, it's about getting to know each other.

When asked a question in an interview the instinctive reaction is to scan your brain for the "right" answer. The one that is truthful, but also most likely to give what the interviewer wants to hear. Interviewees search for subtlety or hidden meanings in the question, or ways in which the most obvious response might not do the trick. Relax, you're over-thinking it.

Let me give just one example. I often ask an interview question that presents two types of people. I describe the extremes on both ends of a continuum, then I ask which end of the continuum the interviewee falls closer to. No one, and I mean no one, simply responds, "I'm definitely closer to X". Everyone says something like, "I'm probably closer to X, but I understand the importance of Y, so I

try to balance it and in situations where Y is really important.” It’s a boring response. It tells me little about the interviewee except that they fear giving a wrong answer. The thing is, there is no wrong answer. It’s not an absolute question, just a relative question about general tendencies. It’s not even about discovering the tendency itself as much as it is the level of self-knowledge and self honesty.

Most people actually know pretty quickly, but they pause and give a hedged answer, so as not to appear extreme. It ends up making the whole thing very un-enlightening for both parties.

Here’s a trick that I think improves the outcome of interviews: when faced with such questions, imagine you are being asked by a friend in a purely social context, because they genuinely want to get to know you. If a friend asked you, “Are you more of a thinker than a feeler?”, or, “Are you more action biased or analysis biased?” how would you answer, if your goal was for them to really understand and know the real you? Do likewise in an interview.

Remember, an interview is not just a way to rattle off a checklist of specific skills and experiences. A resume or LinkedIn profile can do that. It’s a chance to let the interviewer get to know you, your personality, what motivates and makes you tick, what you do and don’t enjoy. It’s also a chance for you to get to know them and their company in the same way. The goal is not to get it right so they pick you, but to get to know them and let them get to know you, so that if it’s a good match, it will almost seem inevitable.

WHY YOU SHOULD WORK FOR FREE

BY JEFFREY TUCKER

With young people nearly shut out of the market by recession and regulation, I would like to suggest the unthinkable: young people should work for free wherever they can and whenever they can. The reason is to acquire a good reputation and earn a good recommendation. A person who will give you a positive reference on demand is worth gold, and certainly far more than the money you might otherwise earn.

Many of the essays in my book *Bourbon for Breakfast* turn out to have forecasted both the current mess and this solution. But first let me tell a story of two cases in point, the first an example of the worst possible kind of worker, and the second an example of brilliant foresight.

The first case comes from a job I had in my teens. I was standing around with a few other employees in a clothing shop. The boss walked by and said to my co-worker: “please straighten these ties on this table.” My co-worker waited until the boss walked away and then muttered under his breath: “I’m not doing that for minimum wage.”

That comment seared right through me, and I thought about it a very long time. The worker was effectively asking for money up front before working, even though he was employed to do things like straighten ties. This was even worse than insubordination. He had this idea that the value he contributes to the firm should never exceed the value of the money he is earning. If that must be true, one wonders why anyone should ever hire him.

The goal of every employer is to gain more value for the firm from workers than the firm pays out in wages; otherwise, there is no growth, no advance, and no advantage for the employer. Conversely, the goal of every employee should be to contribute more to the firm than he or she receives in wages, and thereby provide a solid rationale for receiving raises and advancement in the firm.

I don't need to tell you that the refusenik didn't last long in this job.

In contrast, here is a story from last week. My phone rang. It was the employment division of a major university. The man on the phone was inquiring about the performance of a person who did some site work on Mises.org last year. I was able to tell him about a remarkable young man who swung into action during a crisis, and how he worked three 19-hour days, three days in a row, how he learned new software with diligence, how he kept his cool, how he navigated his way with grace and expertise amidst some eighty different third-party plugins and databases, how he saw his way around the inevitable problems, how he assumed responsibility for the results, and much more.

What I didn't tell the interviewer was that this person did all this without asking for any payment. Did that fact influence my report on his performance? I'm not entirely sure but he probably sensed in my voice my sense of awe toward what this person had done for the Mises Institute. The interviewer told me that he had written down 15 different questions to ask me but that I had answered them all already in the course of my monologue, and that he was thrilled to hear all these specifics. The person was offered the job. This worker had done a very wise thing. He earned a devotee for life.

The harder the economic times, the more employers need to know what they are getting when they hire someone. The job applications pour in by the buckets, all padded with degrees and made to look as

impressive as possible. It's all just paper. What matters today is what a person can do for a firm. The résumé becomes pro forma but not decisive under these conditions. But for a former boss or manager to rave about you to a potential employer? That's worth everything.

Sadly, many young people who can't get jobs have no work experience to show for themselves at all. They have been wildly misled all their lives about the great glories that await anyone who "stays in school" and gets great grades. There are innumerable aerospace engineers, mathematicians, and even lawyers who are in this situation, to say nothing of sociologists, historians, and people with degrees in communications and marketing.

Adding to the problem today is the burden of student loans. Kids are graduating today with six figures in debt that they will immediately be forced to service if they accept employment. But with no prospects outside Wal-Mart and Starbucks, they opt to stay in school and get yet another degree, hoping all the while that the labor market will turn around. This is a terrible trap. They structured their lives around the speculation that a high-paying job awaits following graduation. But there is no such thing. A low-paying job isn't even enough to pay the rent plus debt service.

It was a very bad speculation. Their dreams are being killed by a desperately tight labor market for anyone without work experience or any kind of work reference at all. Under these conditions, the solution is to gain that thing of highest value. That means volunteering. The state can't come after you to start paying the student loan debt, and yet you gain people will become your benefactors later.

Where to volunteer? A non-profit such as a church or educational group would be fine. But also fine might be a local plant nursery, lawn service, mail house or printer, or even at a law firm. You can make an application informally but be clear that you want no payment. If you are accepted (not a foregone conclusion), set hours for yourself and stick with them. Make yourself super useful, super dependable. Get to know as many people as possible. Explain that you are working only for the experience, which you value. Do this for six months up to a year. Then you will have something interesting and wonderful to tell future employers about.

A time will come when one of the people who came to know you will receive a phone call. They will be asked their opinion of you and your work. That's when the whole of your life can change for the better. Is that six months to one year of volunteer work worth it at that moment? It is worth everything.

On the other hand, you can spend your life refusing to straighten ties because you aren't paid enough to do that. That person will never be paid to do anything.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PRAXIS

If you want to take the reins and create your own education and if you have any entrepreneurial urges, I encourage you to apply for Praxis. Grab your phone or laptop and check out www.discoverpraxis.com to learn about the intensive 12-month program designed for young people just like you. This program will equip you with a world class network, teach you the skills of entrepreneurship, and give you real world experience in a real job. It just might be the spark you've been looking for.

HOW TO GET ANY JOB YOU WANT *edited by* DEREK MAGILL