

# WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

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Looking for a job can be a very intimidating process. You may find yourself in a similar situation as me when I was just about to finish college, and every relative would ask me at every holiday or family gathering the same question. "What are you going to do when you are done with school?" The simple answer would have been I don't know which would lead to more questions. However, I had a standard, yet complicated, answer about how I enjoyed agribusiness and saw myself working in a marketing and sales capacity.

After going on for a couple minutes my relatives seemed satisfied that I had direction in my life and they had no need to worry. Only in truth, I really had NO IDEA what I was going to do after graduation!

Looking back, here are some lessons that I learned along the way. Hopefully they will help prepare you as you look for your first job after graduation. Be prepared to start digging deep and try to be true to yourself.

**Lesson 1: Take advantage of every opportunity while still in school.** I learned from my family at an early age the importance of meeting new people and taking advantage of every opportunity that comes your way. I strongly encourage students to take advantage of international travel opportunities, join interest clubs or a group that you would like to learn more about. If you are not the type of person to travel, be sure to join your student government organizations, toast masters or volunteer with an organization in your spare time. You never know when these opportunities can lead to a future job. I was actually interviewed for a position while taking part in a student exchange program in New Zealand. Through my travels I have learned the value of another language, if you have the chance to take a language course in school, I highly recommend this



Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) students explore career opportunities from AgCareers.com at the MANRRS National Convention.

opportunity. Having a second language is a very attractive skill to potential employers.

**Lesson 2: Start your job search NOW!** Even if you are just starting college, now is the time to start taking advantage of every networking opportunity and internship to get the most out of your university experience. Let's recap a few things about searching for the right job.

**First question: What makes you tick?** Are you the type of person who enjoys speaking to people on a daily basis? Do you enjoy numbers? Are you a hands on type person? You may have been asked: What do you enjoy doing?

When you are looking for a job you need to know what you enjoy doing and what makes you happy. In my experience, I enjoy interacting and speaking to people, I love to travel, and meet new people. At the same time, you should think about your strengths and weaknesses. Also, what type of lifestyle would you like to have when beginning your professional career?

You may be saying to yourself, "Hold on, I am flat broke from student debt and bills are piling up, I just need a job that pays and I don't care about what makes me happy. Right now money makes me happy." **WRONG ANSWER!** You will soon find out, it is more important to do what makes you happy rather than live for a paycheck.

**Second Question: Which companies will allow me to continue doing what I enjoy in life?** Make a list of ten companies that you think are strong possibilities and begin your research. You will see in this booklet, some great companies, offering a lot of opportunities. Maybe you know a sales representative who works there or a relative. Give them a call and see if they can help you get a foot in the door.

Ask questions to find out what it is like to work there, who the key contacts are, and the current opportunities that are available. Now that you have completed your research, you need some sales tools to help you land the job.



**Third Question: What sales tools do I need?** When looking for a job the best sales tools, if you can not be physically present, are your cover letter, resume and references. These sales tools need to be perfect!

**Lesson 3: Use up-to-date self sales tools to your advantage.**

Many people overlook the benefits of including a cover letter. The cover letter gives you opportunities to show your personality, creativity and explain anything that your resume cannot, such as a gap in your work history or having paid your way through school by doing part-time work. Always include a cover letter (unless specified not to)!

If you do not have a current resume, start today and keep a running copy you can constantly update. If you are not sure how to write a resume check out *www.AgCareers.com*, your school career services department or local employment office. The Internet can be a great resource for suggestions, just use caution.

When writing a resume, make sure that it does not read like a job description of your previous work experiences. Employers want to know about what you accomplished. Use action verbs and "measurables," for example, "Increased sales by 15% in my five state sales territory."

References do not need to be included on your resume, unless the employer has specifically requested them. Don't be afraid to ask your references what they will say about you. This is very important. Make sure to provide at least three. One reference should be an employment reference, an industry or field reference and the other a community reference. When selecting references, choose people that have had experience working with you or can comment on your personal character. It is generally best practice to avoid using relatives as references unless you have worked in a business setting for them. Be sure to contact those that you plan to include as references and ask for their permission to do so. More than likely the potential employer will call on your references, make sure your reference is



Students and parents can take advantage of open houses to learn more about local organizations.

not caught off guard and should expect a phone call.

**Lesson 4: Sometimes, it's not what you know, it's who you know.** Yes this statement is true — **NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK.** Now is the time to make a list of key people that may be in the field or know someone who is related to the list of ten companies you have researched inside and out! You need to arrange a time to drop an e-mail or make sure to talk to them about your upcoming graduation and that you are currently looking for a full-time job. You may have completed internships throughout school. This is a good time to follow up with those contacts as well.

Participate and look for leadership opportunities through clubs and organizations within your school. These will not only help to build your network, but will also help build your resume. Remember that when you network, part of your responsibility is to look for opportunities for people within your network. Networking is not a one way street!

Now we need to start putting all of the pieces of the puzzle together. With the list of companies you have compiled we need to find out what current opportunities are available. The Web is an excellent resource to find jobs. *AgCareers.com* has the latest jobs available in agriculture, food, biotechnology and natural resources. You can also use company Web sites

and your university career services Web site.

**Lesson 5: Don't be afraid to take a risk when applying for jobs, because you never know unless you try.** If you would really like to work for a specific company, make sure you apply to their vacant positions as well as make contact with the human resources department. If you have the foundation of skills they are looking for, they may make a position for you or keep you in mind for future job openings. If there doesn't seem to be any job openings in the near future, ask if you would be able to volunteer at the company or job shadow in a department to see if it is what you are looking for in a full-time job. An opportunity like this will allow you to make important contacts within the company and can lead to a full-time position if one becomes available, granted you made a very positive first impression. This is a great way to get your foot in the door.

Now that you have all angles covered including your research, resume and cover letter, networking skills, references lined up and have some expectations for a possible interview, you should be set to apply for those positions of interest and head on to the interviewing phase of the job search process. Good luck!