

Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 19, 1992

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE FOR CAREER PLANNING AND EFFECTIVE JOB SEARCH PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a unique experiential assignment designed to assist students in career planning and preparation for an effective job search campaign. The assignment is the development of a "Job Strategy Notebook." Once the notebook has been developed as a course assignment it can be revised and modified by the individual during their entire professional life. This experiential assignment has been used in previous business courses at several universities in the southeast. It has received a significant amount of recognition from placement directors, faculty, recruiters, and career counselors.

BACKGROUND

Career counselors, placement officers, and recruiters all agree that in order to obtain a desirable position, students should research, plan, and organize themselves and the search process. This includes such steps as assessment of the student and their qualifications, exploring different career opportunities, researching potential employers, developing an effective resume and cover letter, creating a personal marketing plan to develop sources of job leads, and preparing for job interviews. This is the primary purpose of the "Job Strategy Notebook." It is designed to integrate most of the steps necessary for an effective job search.

THE EXPERIENTIAL ASSIGNMENT

The "Job Strategy Notebook" is an actual three-ring binder notebook that consists of five major sections: (1) Skills/Interests, (2) Working Resume, (3) Career Information, (4) Company Research, and (5) Interviews/Company Visits.

Section 1: Skills/Interests

The first section of the notebook, "Skills/Interests," is similar to a self-assessment unit. Each student is asked to conduct a detailed appraisal of their background and experiences. This appraisal will enable them to identify what assets they have to offer to an employer. A strong personal inventory of a job seeker's interests, abilities, and skills will make it easier for them to target possible careers and potential employers.

Section 2: Working Resume

The second section of the "Job Strategy Notebook" is a collection of working papers to be used to design and develop an effective resume. It consists of details of the student's background and activities. It will be a time consuming process for the students to gather this information. Once they have, the idea is to periodically add to and update this section as the student goes through their

professional life. After researching a particular career and company, a student could then selectively pick the most significant highlights of their background to advertise on their resume.

Section 3: Career Information

The purpose of this section of the notebook is for students to gather Information about careers that interest them. During the career exploration component of the job search process, a student should research and gather Information on several careers. The purpose of this information is to assist the student in making a career decision. There are a variety of articles and books written on certain occupations and this is certainly valuable information for a student to have.

Section 14: Company Research

Knowledge of the company is of crucial importance in the job interview. Students who have this information prior to the interview can spend time developing a presentation that will interweave their background and Interests into what the employer has to offer. This section of the notebook is for organizing the company information. Students are suggested to research companies using the following framework: industry, competition, company, position, and recruiter. The more information the student has on each of these areas, the better job they can do on adapting their qualifications and background to the recruiter and to the needs of the company in an actual job interview.

Section 5: Interviews/Company Visits

This final section of the Job Strategy Notebook consists of notes and other information obtained from actual job interviews and company visits. Most students and other job seekers will go on many interviews and company visits. If the person does not keep records of these interviews and visits, important information could be forgotten. Such information could include the recruiter's name, the company address and telephone number, details of the job, salary, company benefits, names of other individuals the job seeker met during the company visit, and notes about any follow up action that has been requested.

CONCLUSION

The "Job Strategy Notebook" has proven to be a valuable resource tool for students and other job seekers. It helps organize the job seeking process by having the student collect Information about their background and qualifications, their skills and abilities, research on alternative careers, and information about a company or agency. It also serves as a recordkeeping device for job interviews and company visits.