



Job Search Strategies: Insider Insight into Finding the Job that Best Fits You

By Emily Breckenridge

On Thursday, October 25, Mr. Gary Schreiber, VP and Partner of Power Construction and Ms. Emily Steffenhagen, Recruiting Coordinator for Power Construction, facilitated a workshop hosted by the Career Management Center. The workshop focused on how to search for, and land a permanent job, co-op or internship that best fits you, and challenged the traditional thinking and ideas on the job search process by encouraging students to first think about what you need in a job and an employer before you think about the companies to which you wish to apply. Then, Schreiber and Steffenhagen suggest, you should decide on target organizations based on that “you” criteria, and begin actively transforming yourself into a successful candidate for that organization.

You – The job search process should begin with you. The questions that Schreiber and Steffenhagen invited students to ask themselves were “What do I need out of my work?;” “At what do I excel?;” “What things am I passionate about?;” “How do I differentiate myself?” By answering these questions honestly for yourself, you are more likely to find a job that will fit you – one that will satisfy your needs and passions, and allow you to succeed.

The Organization – After examining what kind of job best fits you, you can begin to research organizations that will provide that kind of job in the right work environment. To do so, create a list for yourself of all of the information that is not already available on their website that you want to know about each company. From that list, pick out the pieces of information that are most important for you to know – what information do you need to know in order to decide whether the company will fit you well? Where can you find this information? You may be able to find some information at websites such as hoovers.com, but for questions relating to whether it will be a good fit for you, you will probably need to talk to someone who works for the company. You’ll also need to find out what the organization is looking for in a candidate. Schreiber and Steffenhagen suggest that you find the “doers,” or the proactive employees in the target organization, and track him/her down on his/her cell phone. Once you have his/her contact information, come up with a plan. You shouldn’t ask for a job right off the bat, but should instead ask if you can arrange a time to talk to him/her about what it’s like to work for that company or in that type of position, and what the company seeks in candidates. If you make a good impression on him/her when you meet, you may be asked to come in for an interview.

Traits of Success – Though the definition of a successful candidate is different for each organization, Schreiber and Steffenhagen stress that Power Construction looks for candidates who can demonstrate that they are proactive. They want to hire candidates who have done more than just studied while in school. Successful candidates, in their

opinion, are people who have maintained high GPAs, while being involved on-campus and/or working. Involvement and work alone, however, do not make you successful. You have to show that you have made a difference in the groups, organizations and/or companies with which you are involved. Other important traits in candidates include a track record of multi-tasking, industry knowledge usually gained through reading industry publications, a clear sense of passion and purpose, confidence and humility, preparedness, ability to improvise and energy.

Becoming the Successful Candidate – To become the successful candidate, it is essential that you begin your job search early. Schreiber and Steffenhagen suggest that you attack your job search as if it is a job, preferably in your freshman or sophomore year. Begin to develop yourself as a successful candidate by finding summer jobs or internships in your field, by becoming a “doer” in student organizations, by reading industry publications and finding out who the “players” are, by earning competitive grades, by talking with people and asking questions, and by researching the web.

Visit www.jobsearchbooster.com for an interactive job search strategy website hosted by Power Construction. For more information on Power Construction, visit www.powerconstruction.net. To learn about upcoming Career Management Center workshops, and for a list of workshops hosted by other insiders to the recruiting and hiring process, visit www.cmc.iit.edu/students/workshopSchedule.asp or contact the Career Management Center at cmc@iit.edu.