

How to Get Your College Grad Hired

Workplace Contributor Tory Johnson Gives Parents the 411 on Getting Their Kids Hired

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More than a million students will graduate from college this spring, and many have jittery parents worried about the job search, especially during an economic slump. Folks want their offspring to be financially independent, and mom and dad certainly wouldn't mind bragging about the new hire.

Yet making the transition from college to career doesn't come easily for many students. It's a life-changing moment for new grads at a time when parents must dance the thin line between helping and harassing.

The best thing parents can do at this point is to help build self-confidence and independence so kids can do it on their own. And there are some concrete steps parents can take to do just that.

Use campus career services. Don't let your kid come home without having spent time in career services. Access to career services is included in the price of their education. But the help won't just appear; kids have to seek it out. Career service offices offer free assessments to help students pick the right career path, provide information on who's hiring, and connect kids with alumni in the field they want to pursue. These offices will also ensure that kids graduate with a polished resume ready to send out.

Share your job search experiences. Parents know from their own careers that getting a job is never easy. Share those experiences — successes and mistakes that got you where you are — because it'll set the tone from the top that you've been there, and you get what they're going through.

Create a game plan. The steps between applying to hearing "you're hired" are steep and overwhelming. Break down the steps, from pinpointing a goal to making a list of target industries and employers to setting up networking conversations and so on. Work together to create a game plan and keep tabs on their process without micro-managing it.

Prep for interviews. Help get them ready for the interview process. Go shopping together for that interview outfit, work on mock interviews, review and clean up digital dirt. If your kid doesn't want you to see his or her Facebook or MySpace profile, ask, "Is it really OK for a prospective boss to see

it?" Share examples of entry-level people in your own workplace — how they have succeeded or fallen short — with specific examples of acceptable communication skills and attire.

Suggest volunteering or internships during the job search. Job searching is a full-time effort, but there will be plenty of days when they've just made a few calls or sent out a couple of resumes, which leaves lots of time for unproductive lounging. Instead, encourage them to volunteer or intern, which isn't just for students anymore. It's also a way to get in the door at a company in a target field. This will give structure to the day, help break the habits of college life and emphasize productivity in general. Plus, it adds another line to a resume and something to talk about during networking conversations and interviewing.

Don't go to career fairs or interviews together. Never attend career fairs, interviews or networking events with your kid. What you may think is supportive actually undercuts the impression your kid makes on prospective contacts and employers. I've seen it over and over at job fairs: Mothers do all the talking, while their kid, who needs to make a strong impression, stands silently nearby. Lend moral support, but do it from home.

Don't press peers to hire your offspring. Don't lean aggressively on friends or colleagues to hire your kid. You should definitely make introductions among any and all of your contacts, friends, family, co-workers and peers. But stop short of overdoing the "hire her" pitch. It turns your kid into a burden instead of a possibility for these potential employers.

Don't be negative about the job search. Always avoid talking negatively about your child's job search to anyone. That includes friends, family, colleagues, neighbors and so on. Don't tell friends, "Oh gee, Mary is having such a hard time finding a job; she's just not aggressive enough and her ambition is really lacking, so I'm going to have to do the work to find a job for her." That's the wrong approach and the wrong message to send. Instead, you can say, "Mary's about to graduate, and she's getting ready to launch her career. If you know anyone in whatever industry, I know she'd appreciate the introduction." Just as the job-seeker has to be optimistic and upbeat, so do you as his or her parent.

Tory Johnson is the workplace contributor for "Good Morning America" and the CEO of Women for Hire. For more advice for parents and recent graduates on the job search process, visit

www.womenforhire.com.