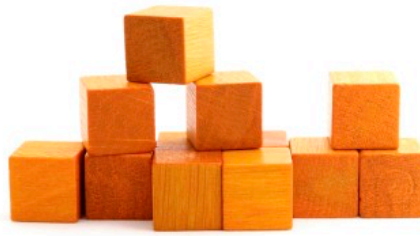


How to Build Career Experience on Your Own



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There's no time like the present to take steps toward landing the job of your dreams. Plenty of opportunities exist to develop the background and skills needed to set you up as an attractive candidate. Take matters into your own hands by creating eye-catching career experience using the strategies listed below.

Become a consultant.

Develop the mindset that you're a professional always on the lookout for chances to offer your services, not a job seeker at the mercy of whatever positions are open. Consultants are doers who actively cultivate relationships and put their talents on display. Today's project may be redesigning your neighborhood association's webpage for free, but tomorrow's may be creating a new look for a Fortune 500 company.

Think beyond traditional employment.

While a full-time job in your desired field may be the ultimate goal, other types of work opportunities can be powerful resume builders. Many companies (especially smaller ones and startups) simply do not have the resources to add to their full-time staff and depend on part-timers. Exceed the employer's expectations in this capacity and you may be first in line when a regular position opens up. Freelancing and temping are two other foot-in-the-door methods of developing connections with companies of interest while accumulating real-world career experience that can be touted to any future employer.

Develop transferable skills.

A hiring manager can get a feel for a candidate's potential ability to perform industry-specific tasks by looking at degrees, certifications, and other educational credentials. However, coveted applicants also present evidence of qualities valued across fields. Identify traits employers in your goal career might find most useful, and look for ways to develop those talents at your present job. Hone your negotiation skills, develop a reputation for excellent customer service, or train a newcomer—whatever might boost your marketability down the line.

Address weaknesses.

Lastly, figure out where you stand currently. An honest assessment of where you should improve in order to be attractive going forward can direct you to what type of career experience you need to create. Lacking proof that you can manage people? Perhaps volunteering to head a project at a nonprofit organization can solidify your leadership abilities. Insufficient evidence of keeping up to date in your field? Write a guest blog for a professional organization or trade publication offering your take on a hot topic. Then, lay everything out on the table for potential employers.

Lisa Quast, president of [Career Woman, Inc.](#) and author of *Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want—Every Time*, says: "Companies look for trustworthy individuals who are self-motivated, and millennials can demonstrate these attributes through volunteer work, temp jobs, freelance work, even paid and unpaid internships. Be prepared to explain your responsibilities, the main tasks, and your accomplishment or results (quantified) of any projects and work (paid or unpaid) that you completed. Show recruiters and hiring managers how you proactively created your own career experiences, so they can gain a better understanding of your future potential."

Readers, how have you created your own career experience? Do you have any work tips for younger millennials? Share with us below!



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