

## College Grads Aren't Getting Jobs, But You Can!

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*Job Wanted.*

When we all entered our senior year of high school, the question on everyone's mind was where they'd be going to college. We worked our asses off to get decent SAT scores and spent every weekend for months writing essays about why we were more wonderful than the thousands of other students applying for the same coveted place on campus.

Four years and a degree later, I now find myself asking a different question: I did all of this for what, exactly?

Of course, I've had the time of my life in college. The parties, the late night gossip fests with my roommate, the 4 a.m. diner visits – all of it was totally worth memorizing SAT vocab words and relearning geometry. But when it's all said and done (which in my case is way too close for comfort), with \$120,000 down the hole, what does my little graduation certificate get me exactly?

Apparently, not much.

As news of the drop in the unemployment rate circulated last last month I felt my heart skip a beat. "Thank God! I won't be spending the next four years in my parent's basement mulling my resume to every company in the country." But I spoke too soon. The truth is, while the unemployment rate is, in fact, down, the unemployment rate of recent grads is *up*.

According to [Don Lee at the Los Angeles Times](#), "For 20- to 24-year-olds, the jobless rate rose four-tenths of a percent to 16% in November." It doesn't seem like much, but that is not good for us seniors. "The unemployment figure for college graduates in that age group was 10.6% in the third quarter — the highest since early 1983 and more than double the rate for older college-educated workers."

Apparently an undergraduate degree isn't worth much anymore, since now we are also competing for jobs with adults who have lost their's due to the recession, and they are packing a whole lot more work experience on their resume than we are.

I'll give you a moment to cry.

And now I'll give you 5 things you can do right now to set yourself apart from the millions of other job-hunters out there so you can beat the odds and not take your place on your parents' couch come May:

### 1. Network!!

Lisa Quast, President and Founder of [Career Woman, Inc.](#) says, "Networking is a great way to get to know people who could potentially help with your job search. Research local associations and groups you can either join or attend individual meetings so you can expand your circle of friends and make new allies."

### 2. Plan Ahead

This means more than tweaking your resume every semester. Take some time now to really consider what you want to do after graduation and work towards that goal. It looks much more appealing to the people hiring to see that you were focused and built up your experience in that specific field than to see a resume spanning from marketing internships to the pre-med fraternity and everything in between.

### 3. Build Relationships

Dr. Debi Yohn, author of, "[Parenting College Students: 27 Winning Strategies for Success](#)" urges the importance of teamwork to employers. "Employers are hiring more than a degree. They are hiring a complete person. With the competition in the job market, an employer will be attracted to a person that is multi faceted, interesting and can show that they can get along with people. Being successfully involved in outside activities or teams can be an indication of future success."

### 4. Be Prepared

When it comes time to interview, preparation is about more than picking out the right outfit or practicing in front of a mirror. There is a lot to learn and in order to stand out, you must internalize it all. According to JR Rodrigues, a hiring manager with 25 years of experience, the biggest issue with recent college grads is their "lack of preparation and general lackadaisical attitude." He recommends setting yourself apart by "coming to an interview prepared and then carefully follow[ing] through with the entire hiring process." That means researching the company, knowing your answers and doing the **important follow-up** after the fact.

### 5. Get Experience

This goes without saying, but get out there and *do something now*. Get an internship, get a job, just do *something* that proves you've got the skills (even basic office skills are important!) to handle a real job and you can do more than regurgitate information on a written exam. Grades are important. Leadership is important. But when you're competing with a lot of people (many with years of experience under their belts), experience and knowledge are the most important.