

STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

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Two Rivier professors offer advice to recent grads and career changers



Starting your professional career as a recent graduate or changing careers mid-stream can be an intimidating process. What they say about first impressions is true...so, how can the recent graduate or career changer prepare to make the best possible impression on the first day of a new job? What mistakes are commonly made at the start that can set the stage for a negative experience?

Associate Professor of Business Eric Drouart and Associate Professor of English Tim Doherty share the advice they frequently offer to Rivier graduates. Whether you are seeking a corporate position in the finance industry or starting your first day as a high school English teacher, you'll find that job search basics apply regardless of the industry.

What is the number one piece of advice you offer recent graduates starting their first job?

ED: Show great enthusiasm and always act in a professional manner. Since today's graduates are very likely to work in teams, demonstrate solid interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate and work well with others.

TD: Ask questions about the history of the company and expectations for your job. Keep a journal to write down the answers.

What do you think are the three most important things the recent college graduate can do on their first day of employment?

ED: 1) Project a professional image and attitude as they connect with people, co-workers, colleagues, and customers. 2) Be observant and a good listener. 3) Take notes of important information.

TD: 1) Listen. 2) Question. 3) Listen some more.

What are some common mistakes that recent graduates make at the start of their first jobs?

ED: They should not think that certain tasks are beneath them because they have earned a college degree. They need to demonstrate that they are team players.

TD: They should not provide an ear to gossip. They should not act as though they know all the answers: be open about mistakes and learn from them.

What advice would you offer a recent college graduate who is still looking for work?

ED: Focus on their objectives and be aware of their own requirements and constraints. Make use of their network of family members, friends, and acquaintances. Request information interviews with companies in the industries they are interested in.

TD: Talk to the Career Development Center at Rivier. It's never too late.

What tips do you offer students about the interview process?

ED: You only have about 30 seconds to make a positive impression. Be on time, even early. Communicate enthusiasm and personal confidence with a strong handshake, direct eye contact, and good posture.

TD: Just before the interview, calmly realize that you are filled with good purpose, if just given the chance to realize it. Take a breath and let your spirit do the talking. Be sure you have thought in advance about why you fit the company. Be prepared to ask questions.

Can you offer advice to recent graduates looking to build their professional networks?

ED: Networking is a numbers game. The more people who are aware of your objectives, the more likely you are to find a contact in the company or field you are interested in. Utilize job fairs. Participate in relevant professional associations.

TD: Contact people who have the job you want; conduct information interviews; shadow the same people as they perform their job; join professional organizations.

***Editor's Note:** Your local Chamber of Commerce can be a great resource for locating professional networking organizations in your area. Recent graduates starting out their careers in the Greater Nashua area can connect with hundreds of other young professionals through IUGO, a social and professional networking organization for 22-40 year olds. Visit www.iugonashua.com to learn more.*

What advice would you offer a working professional who is thinking about a career change?

ED: Never quit your current job until you have identified a new one. Plan carefully and understand why you want to make this change and which factors are fueling your desire for change.

TD: Do not choose the new path only because the old one is worn and ugly. ■

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