

Sharpening your skills set

It is never too early to groom yourself to be a prime candidate

In today's highly competitive environment, you need to make an impression and showcase your talents in your initial meeting with any recruitment consultant or potential employer. Simply having a tertiary qualification is no longer enough.

Certain pro-active steps can enable you to market yourself in the workplace while still on campus.

UPSKILLING

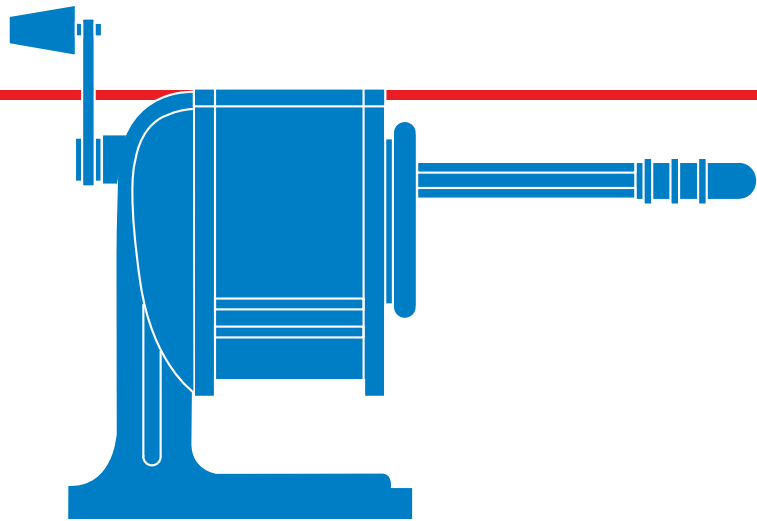
You need to have a skill set that includes: computer literacy, business communication, customer service and general business and financial awareness. Good communication is a prerequisite and should never be underestimated. Maintaining eye contact illustrates confidence. It is also critical to broaden your horizons, so you should embrace new technology in the highly competitive world of commerce. Motivation and drive are not enough to achieve recognition.

PART-TIME WORK EXPERIENCE

This is an excellent point of entrance into the workforce. It provides you with traceable references and invaluable and varied work experience. It is imperative that you, as a graduate, are selective about the type of work you choose, relating it to your skills and industry where possible. Maintaining professional relationships with all the individuals in your career development is of the utmost importance.

NETWORKING

Prior to embarking on a networking exercise, it is imperative that you make a memorable first impression. Focus on grooming, body language and the professional manner in which you present yourself to others. Discernment is also necessary in selecting networks. To be most effective, you should research companies in relevant industries in order to discuss and answer relevant questions. Word of mouth is beneficial to any new job seeker, so utilise all the opportunities to network by informing family, friends and colleagues of your quest. If given the opportunity, mention your achievements at school and university in order to sell your attributes and make yourself more marketable.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Your level of emotional intelligence is based on the extent of your maturity and responsibility. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise feelings and emotions and manage them effectively. By developing insight into the behaviour and actions of others, you should develop the ability to respond in an appropriate manner. This is achievable through communicating daily with various individuals at different levels and taking cognisance of the behaviour and reactions of others in certain situations.

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

These associations can provide a forum to network and introduce you to influential industry specialists, as well as allow you to gain broader business knowledge. You should preferably join an association while at university, as this adds value to your CV when you start your career. Graduates should also explore their individual entrepreneurial spirit, as excellent ideas could be shared later by the company they join. And remember the importance of maintaining an impeccable personal record and credit clearance when entering the financial arena.

MULTITASKING

While being a specialist is no longer a prerequisite, you must strive to demonstrate your ability to multitask. Don't specialise too early on in your career, as a young professional with broad but extensive skills is more attractive in the marketplace.

FINAL SUGGESTION

Bear in mind that the "real world" is competitive at a national and international level. Realise that the days of picking and choosing the positions you want are over and only the best talent will get the prime positions. In taking into account the points above, you equip yourself with an excellent chance of fitting the profile of today's prime candidate.

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