



A Message from the CEO:

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The Job Hunt – Part I “The Informational Interview”

In my last letter, I wrote about what defines a good career candidate. We are frequently asked by clients and friends for advice about the early stages of a career search. I've had some recent personal experience in coaching a promising young candidate.

As our son approached college graduation last year, he started to ask general questions about the job hunting process. In one of our first conversations, I asked him “What’s the rush?...maybe you want to be a ski-bum or travel around Europe with a backpack for a year?” (I had a personal regret that I had never done that.) He told me that since he had skied from an early age and had spent a college semester abroad that he already fulfilled those desires and was very excited about starting a career - a very good outlook to start. Having that conviction is a necessary component in successfully searching for and settling into a career you genuinely want.

At the risk of upsetting a parent or two, if a young person has wanderlust I'd advocate letting them go - not because I didn't have this opportunity and want to live vicariously through their travels, but because if they go they'll likely grow from the experience and may even find work along the way to pay for their own broadening experience.

My son's first question was, “What if I'm not sure what I want to do and is that going to come across as unfocused?” The answer to that question is – it depends. Some great companies are completely turned off if you don't tell them that securing a job with them is your #1 goal. They'll feel that you should have researched the market and believe that they are best in class. I told my son, “It's completely okay not to know where your passion lies, young people change jobs an average of four times in their first ten years, mostly due to the fact that they're still trying to figure things out.”

Go Meet with 100 People

I suggested the following strategy for my son which he followed with great success. I told him to meet with 100 people who are in the industry he was interested in. I suggested that he ask them three questions: 1) How they got their job? 2) What they liked about it?

3) What they didn't like about it? Then I suggested that he open his ears, prepare to learn and take written notes.

I told him I frequently wish I could anonymously interview in the real estate industry because it would be an incredible learning opportunity. I told him, “By the way...you'll probably be offered a job(s) well before you get to 100 but don't jump at the first offer or two – enjoy the process and make use of a once in a lifetime opportunity.”

My son did have the normal trepidations of anyone embarking in a job search:

“I'm not sure I know 100 people”

“Well,...I said, “Do you know Mr. Garry, Mr. McVicker, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Ruderman?

Yes!” he exclaimed.

“Well, do you think they know ten (10) people in their own industry?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“Well, you're more than one third (1/3) of the way there aren't you?”

“Some of the people I want to meet are busy and important – do you think they'll agree to meet?”

I explained to my son that almost everybody wants to help young people. If he is clear that he is not seeking a job from them, but is genuinely interested in hearing their story he will easily secure as many meetings as he needs. In addition, because the experienced person feels no obligation regarding employment the meetings will be relaxed and many times more frank.

At Massey Knakal, we encourage the informational interview. In fact, our HR and Recruiting Department are incredibly generous with their time and will conduct hundreds of these a year. They even assist younger people by connecting them with others in our industry. Our goal is to provide mentorship not only to our employees, but to help support those interested in a potential career in our industry.