



# Pros Share Post Entry-Level Advice

*Benefit from the hindsight and experience of young professionals.*

Ever wish you knew where you'll be in 10 years? Or, what career mistakes you're making now? We asked 20- and 30-something professionals who've been through the entry-level job search to share what they wish they had known when first entering the job market. Here's what their rearview mirrors reveal.

## **"Your degree is only a foot in the door."**

"When I first graduated with a degree in Journalism, I thought that I could only work for a newspaper, magazine, or website. Luckily, I had a great internship my junior year at a local paper. I was tasked with writing stories about the school system and editing. Working with the graphic design team also led me to realize that I actually really liked marketing. I was able to use the skills I gained at the internship and my communication strengths to get an entry-level marketing role at that same paper the following year. I wish I had known that your major doesn't determine your career—this would have saved me a lot of stress! I was lucky my degree got me that first internship. But, once I was working, my colleagues focused mostly on my work output, rather than on my degree or alma mater."

## **"Find a company that offers training."**

"Some companies will offer training for new graduates, which is one reason I chose to work for a large Fortune 500 Company as my first job out of school. I knew that they offered a really thorough training program. I took advantage of a few leadership training courses when I first started working there, which helped me to build up my public speaking, management, and strategic skills. I probably learned more from these courses than I did from my business courses in school—ha!"

## **"Jobs are not about the title, but about building a passionate skill set."**

"Your first job and internships should be about building skills more than about your title. When you go to look for your second job, your skills are what will get you the job more than the title of your prior role. When I graduated, I was the assistant to the vice president of a small production company. I was very concerned because my title was 'assistant' and

not 'coordinator' like many of my friends'. It turns out, my first role had me working closely with one of the leaders in my company. I was exposed to so much more early on than many of my peers, and was able to more quickly build a skill set that led to a promotion. Funny enough, my next role was also as 'Assistant,' but it was with a much higher salary and more responsibilities than for many others my age."

## **"Workplace relationships are key."**

"I wish I had understood the importance of relationships. Building relationships and treating others with respect can propel you ahead of a colleague who works just as hard, but who doesn't know how to build relationships. You also need to learn to speak your mind in a way that gets your point across. Even if you are entry-level, learning how to stand your ground early on, in a nice way, sets the tone for the type of employee you will be later down the line. Also, who you know can be more valuable than what you know. Keeping a professional network is a vital skill. Keep professional relationships with current and past colleagues. Most jobs are found through your professional network, rather than through online job postings."

## **"Do what you love."**

"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do it. Don't do what your parents or others expect of you or what you think you 'should' do. It's cliché, but *'do what you love and the money will follow.'* Also, *'do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life.'* My parents really wanted me to be a lawyer, but I knew from some of my classes that wasn't for me. I always liked planning my sorority socials, so I decided to get an entry-level job in event planning. Truthfully, it took my parents a while to adjust to the career change, but now they love that I am happy and successful."



## **i n a nutshell:**

To avoid a career "if only," put what others have learned to good use:

- **Performance speaks louder than pedigree**
- **Take advantage of company resources to expand your knowledge base**
- **Skills transcend titles**
- **Be a nice person; it can get you much further in your career**
- **Who you know can be more valuable than what you know**
- **Learn to communicate effectively early on**
- **If possible, do what you love. Definitely, love what you do**

Learn from others' wisdom. It's a good way to avoid career mousetraps.