Your First Post-Graduate Job: Tips I Wish I’d Had

By Michael Goode, Graduate Advising Intern, Career Center

Transitions are always difficult. They are, at least, for me. And no transitional phase was fraught with more pressure and anxiety than the shift I experienced between my senior year of college and my first “real” job. The direct result of my time at DePaul was looming over the horizon, staring me in the face with its 40-hour workweek and $25,000 a year salary. Not exactly what I had in mind for my future while I was writing dozens of papers, sitting for tests, and spending hours in class during the waning days of my youth.

I quickly grew frustrated with my post-grad position, which was at a company I had just completed my senior year internship for. The low pay, lack of direct relation to my Political Science major, and slow-paced work environment lead me to quit within a few months. While at the time it seemed like the best decision for me, I still wonder what my life would be like now if I had stuck with it. After all, it was a new company with a small, tight-knit staff, in a very niche market, right in the middle of downtown Chicago. Did I let my initial expectations about what my job should be right out of college ruin an opportunity that I should have taken the time to make my own?

For those uncertain about their first post-college jobs, here are a few points to ponder while you prepare for graduation and entry into the workforce:

1. **Your first job is not the rest of your life.** It’s a challenge to not believe that your first job is the only direct result of the four (or more) years of academic work and $150,000 (again, or more) load of debt you’ve accumulated during your undergrad years. But in all likelihood, your first job is just another stepping stone in the journey to reach your ultimate vocational goals.

Social media is a great way to stay connected with family, friends and current events. As the world becomes increasingly digital, professional networking is integrating with social networking. How do you maintain professionalism on the Internet? ASK Mentor and 2007 Kellstadt graduate Mike Crawford shares his thoughts on how you can use the three largest social sites to further your career.

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1. **Build insightful content.** For students, the projects section is a key area to demonstrate skills that can translate into the workplace. A good rule of thumb for students is to update their profile following every quarter; for professionals, update it as you complete your periodic performance review.

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Read more about **Using Social Media for Networking** on page 2
It is also the result of strategizing and career planning you’ve been conducting as an undergrad, but that does not mean that career development ends once you enter the workforce. Your life as a professional is just beginning, so expect your roles and responsibilities to grow and develop over time.

2. Take the time to adjust to your new surroundings, schedule, and people you encounter on a daily basis.

No matter where you land, your first post-college job is likely to be a new experience that is bound to have a level of uncertainty attached to it. Even seemingly small aspects of your environment, like the appearance of your workspace, can affect how you feel about what you’re doing. However, don’t become too discouraged if things are not immediately to your liking. Get to know the people you work with, adjust to how your work week is structured, and take the effort to develop your relationship with your new organization. The “rule” about sticking with a new job for at least a year is not just in place for professional appearances, but also because it might take that long to really know if the relationship between the job and yourself is a match.

3. You might not be using some of your favorite knowledge from your college courses, and that’s ok.

It would be great if we could design our own jobs for ourselves after we graduate; directly utilizing what we’ve learned from our classes and majors. However, in all likelihood we will be called upon to transfer our skills and knowledge bases to a role that is new and will require a bit of training and more “education” by learning on the job. Don’t underestimate your ability to adapt and learn.

4. If we tire of our jobs, we can easily get caught in the trap of endlessly complaining about them without even imagining what we could be doing to make things better. Rather than simply hoping that things get better, work on creating a vision about how you’d like things to be. Ask yourself a “miracle” question - if things were perfect, what would my job look like? Take initiative to pursue new opportunities, projects, and roles either within your current position or, at some point, elsewhere.

Practicing self-awareness and taking inventory about your current feelings regarding your new role is also essential in assessing your new situation. Think back to your first days of college - did you fall in love with DePaul right away, or was there doubt and uneasiness? If you were like me, it took some time to really become comfortable and adjust to that transition. In that respect, your post-college career should be no different. Take charge by being confident that your skills have landed you a job, and believe that the best experiences are yet to come.

Using social media for networking

2. Build a far-reaching network. As you get business cards and meet acquaintances, invite them to your LinkedIn network; because content is not the main purpose of this network, it can and should be a much broader collection of contacts than your other networks.

3. Add value to the network. Think about your desired next job (inside or outside your current company) and as you come across interesting and relevant content, post it and find groups with similar interests and lead/contribute to the discussion.

Twitter: From a purely professional standpoint, Twitter is a great way to build a brand and learn more about your industry. Students and professionals should think about Twitter as the means to be seen as a primary source of relevant knowledge in a field. Relevance is key as most are on Twitter because it is limited to 140 characters; they want short, pithy insight. That said, it is still a social network, so connecting with people through commenting and adding personal touches (to generate a deeper connection than just content) is still important. The viral nature of Twitter should present more of a “pause before you post” mentality though as 140 characters are easy to interpret through different (and not always positive) paradigms.

Facebook: Facebook is truly the social network for personal relationships. It is also where employers/recruiters are going to look to peek under a candidate or employee’s curtain. It is important that students and professionals take one of two approaches: either completely lock down your sharing and privacy settings, keeping your connections to personal only and leaving you free to be less cautious with sharing; or, ensure that the content that you post on the site (and others tag you in) cannot be interpreted negatively by a third-party.

Mike Crawford, Fifth Third Bank, Assistant Vice President, Strategic Planning Group. Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, MBA 2007 International Business

To connect with Mike and other ASK mentors like him, visit ask.depaul.edu.
Polish Your Professional Interviewing Skills

Refresh your interviewing skills and learn how to prepare for advanced interviewing techniques including critical behavioral, panel and case interviews. Review the dos and don’ts for interview situations and learn how to address the most difficult questions.

Tuesday, August 6
12:00-1:30pm  DPC 9500

Strengths Your Resume and Cover Letter

Learn about different resume formats and how to best market your accomplishments for specific audiences. This workshop is ideal for someone who has already written a resume and is looking to enhance or change the text or structure.

Monday, July 29
3:30-5:00pm  SAC 151

A = This workshop is for working professionals, alumni, adult, and graduate students.

Workshops

30 in 30: Perfecting your Pitch

Get ready for upcoming job fairs and networking opportunities. Join us for a 30-minute workshop to perfect your 30-second pitch. Learn the components in developing a strong and effective pitch and have an opportunity to practice.

Wednesday, July 24
5:15-5:45pm  DPC 9500

Ace Your First Professional Interview

Preparing for interviews can give you the confidence you need to highlight your strengths. This workshop teaches you how to prepare for the interviewing and post-interview follow-up process. You will be introduced to the various types of interviews, including behavioral interviewing.

Tuesday, July 9
12:00-1:30pm  DPC 9500

Connecting Your Values to Career Satisfaction

Your work values play a very important role in determining what kind of work you find fulfilling. Through this workshop, you’ll assess and prioritize your most important work values, and discover how to use what you’ve learned about your work values to help guide your career decisions.

Thursday, July 11
1:30-3:00pm  SAC 151

Demystify Networking and Create Connections

Developing a strong professional network has become an increasingly important and powerful strategy used by effective job seekers in all fields. In this workshop, you will learn how to maximize your networking opportunities and build a set of contacts.

Wednesday, July 31
12:00-1:30pm  DPC 9500

Handling Job Offers

Determine the best techniques and practices to negotiate your compensation package. This workshop will include a discussion on salary, benefits negotiation, and offer advice on how to handle salary requests and multiple offers.

Thursday, August 15
12:00-1:30pm  DPC 9500

How Can Alumni Help Me Plan My Career?

What are your plans after getting your degree? Do you know what kinds of jobs you can get with your major? DePaul alumni can help! Learn about the different resources available to you as you think about classes to take and skills to build while you’re a student. We’ll talk about where to find alumni who can help you and how to approach them. It’s easier than you think!

Tuesday, July 16
4:30-6:00pm  DPC 9500

Wednesday, August 7
11:30am-1:00pm  Webinar

How to Build a Career Portfolio

A professional career portfolio provides you with a tremendous resource for showcasing your work skills and experiences to an employer. In this workshop, you’ll learn how to conceptualize and compile an effective portfolio.

Wednesday, July 10
3:30-5:00pm  SAC 151

Identify Your Skills and Accomplishments

Skills are the currency of the job market; you get a paycheck in exchange for the skills you use in your job. Through this workshop, you’ll assess your skills, determine which ones you want to acquire or further develop, and identify ways to do so.

Wednesday, June 26
2:00-3:30pm  SAC 151

iPrep – Find Your Dream Internship Workshop

This workshop will help you create a strategy for applying to and securing your dream internship. You will also learn about the University Internship Program as a way for undergraduate students to receive academic credit for an internship and fulfill the Junior Year Experiential Learning (JYEL) requirement. This workshop also meets the University Internship Program Orientation requirement.

Tuesday, August 6
12:00-1:30pm  DPC 9500

Monday, July 29
3:30-5:00pm  SAC 151

Wednesday, August 7
4:00-5:30pm  DPC 9500

Job Search Strategies in a Challenging Job Market

Learn how to identify effective job search strategies in a challenging job market. Get an overview of a multitude of job search tactics and begin the process of selecting the strategies that make the most sense for you. Learn how to maximize the numerous job search resources available at DePaul and beyond.

Thursday, July 25
12:00-1:30pm  SAC 151

Love What You Do – DePaul Interest Finder (DIF)

This workshop is ideal for students who are exploring major and career options. Research has shown a strong correlation between incorporating interests into your career planning process and ultimate workplace satisfaction. Participants will take the DePaul Interest Finder (DIF), a tailored survey designed to specifically help DePaul students explore their interests and identify related majors, student organizations, and careers.

Wednesday, August 14
11:00am-12:30pm  SAC 151

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Looking for work that is intrinsically interesting and gratifying to you? The MBTI is used to assist individuals in identifying their personality strengths, preferred work environments, communication styles and career possibilities. While few occupations provide a “perfect” match between personality and work tasks, this indicator and workshop will assist you in making an informed decision.

Thursday, August 8
1:30-3:30pm  SAC 151
LinkedIn series

LinkedIn Basics for Job Searching
This is a hands-on workshop held in a computer lab and is the first in a two part LinkedIn workshop series. Learn the value of LinkedIn as an online networking tool and the basics of building a professional profile that represents your online brand. After building your profile, we will also discuss and demonstrate making connections to build your network, joining relevant groups, and cover some basic job searching tips on LinkedIn. Please be sure to create a LinkedIn account before the workshop so you have a starting point when you attend the workshop.

Thursday, July 18
12:00-1:30pm  Loop TBD

Leveraging LinkedIn: Using Your Profile to Create Results
This is a hands-on workshop held in a computer lab and is the second in a two part LinkedIn workshop series. Do you already have a profile, made some connections, joined some groups, but still want to know how to use your profile to get results? This workshop is for people who are already comfortable with the basics of LinkedIn, but want to learn more about leveraging their network, utilizing 2nd and 3rd degree connections, advanced job searching techniques, and much more. Workshop participants should be active LinkedIn users as we will not cover the basics of building your LinkedIn profile in this workshop. Please come to the workshop ready to work live on your profile as we discuss these techniques.

Tuesday, August 6
12:00-1:30pm  Loop TBD

program orientations

University Internship Program (UIP) Orientation
This is a prerequisite workshop for UIP and must be completed in order to enroll in an academic internship course to earn Experiential Learning credit. Students who have not yet secured an internship are welcome to attend this workshop.

Note: For UIP Webinars, you will receive instructions via email the day before the scheduled webinar. An internet connection and the ability to hear audio is required to participate.

Wednesday, July 10
3:00-4:00pm  Webinar
Tuesday, July 16
10:00-11:00am  Webinar
Thursday, July 18
10:00-11:00am  Webinar
Tuesday, July 23
4:00-5:00pm  Webinar
Thursday, July 25
1:00-2:00pm  Webinar
Thursday, August 1
1:00-2:00pm  Webinar
Monday, August 12
4:00-5:00pm  Webinar
Thursday, August 15
11:00am –12:00pm  Webinar
Tuesday, August 27
10:00-11:00am  Webinar
Wednesday, August 28
5:00-6:00pm  Webinar
Tuesday, September 10
11:00am –12:00pm  DPC 9500
Thursday, September 12
5:30-6:30pm  Webinar
Monday, September 16
2:00-3:00pm  SAC 151

financial fitness workshops

Demystifying Student Loans
Attend this workshop to gain a deeper understanding of your student loans. This workshop will cover the different types of student loans, how to estimate your debt load upon graduation, and what some of your repayment options may be.

Wednesday, June 26
12:00-1:00pm  SAC 151
Thursday, August 15
4:00-5:00pm  DPC 9500

How’s Your Credit History?
Do you know how your credit habits will affect your lifestyle? Learn important information about choosing credit cards, understanding credit reports and credit scores and managing existing credit card debt.

Tuesday, July 2
12:00-1:00pm  DPC 9500
Wednesday, July 31
4:00-5:00pm  SAC 151

Managing College Costs *NEW*
Paying for school can cost a fortune if you don’t plan correctly. Attend this workshop to get practical tips on how to save thousands of dollars. We will review tips on how to cut costs as well as how to secure scholarships.

Thursday, July 11
4:00-5:00pm  DPC 9500
Tuesday, August 6
12:00-1:00pm  SAC 151

The Graduate’s Guide to Financial Success
This workshop will provide graduating students with simple strategies to help them become financially successful. Topics covered include repayment of school loans, how to create a realistic budget for a full-time job and credit strategies.

Wednesday, July 24
12:00-1:00pm  DPC 9500
Thursday, August 8
4:00-5:00pm  SAC 151

editorial information

Career Connections is published quarterly by the Career Center at DePaul University. It is intended as a career planning resource for all DePaul students and alumni, and is also available in downloadable PDF format at careercenter.depaul.edu.

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