

Educated, Now What? Jo Leonard

Internships are integral building blocks

My son is a junior in college and so far has had no internships that are relevant to his major or proposed career path which is marketing. Is this a problem? What should he be doing this summer to make sure he's competing with others who are graduating next year?

Sabrina
Hopewell, N.J.

Internships, are, of course, a very important aspect of a college education, especially these days when hiring managers across all industries are looking for candidates who can, sorry for the cliché, "hit the road running."

This means that they want to hire graduates who have some experience in the real world. For a student to successfully and quickly transition from campus to career he must have had some kind of professional experience.

Having spent 13 years in the corporate world, I can tell you that dealing with people, places and things outside of the academic campus will seem very, very foreign to a graduate fresh out of school with no work experience. The hours are longer, the down time and play time is shorter, the pressure is greater and the need to illustrate results is always looming.

Time spent in a professional environment, corporate or not, is valuable time, but please bear in mind any experience is better than none at all, even if it isn't in the field in which you hope to head after college.

So, Sabrina, the best path would, of course, be for your son to take an internship, which offers him opportunities to learn about the more practical aspects of marketing. Marketing, however, is a huge term and there are many ways he can get this experience. Here's a few specific suggestions.

1. He may be interested in

the more traditional route, which is to get an organized internship in a corporate marketing department. You will probably find that the larger firms have already filled these spots as they generally start to recruit in February and March, but oftentimes positions will open up at the last minute due to ad hoc needs. He will need to network his way into these situations.

2. Consider the non-for-profit foundations and organizations in the area. Spring and summer are their busy seasons, running fund-raising events and the like, and they love to bring in young, committed and motivated college students who have a passion for their cause. Public relations, direct relationship marketing, branding and business development are all forms of marketing and he'll get a taste of all of these elements in a nonprofit situation such as this.

In addition, he'll get something great to put on his resume and no doubt continue to develop his communication and interpersonal skills. Note: Communication and interpersonal skills remain the No. 1 strength required by hiring managers, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers.)

3. Take a look at some smaller businesses in your area. Small firms offer tremendous opportunities for both development and experience. Seeing how a business works from the inside will give him an invaluable glance

small local company that was looking for a business student to help with its general day-to-day operations and also help it develop a business plan.

John wasn't at all sure that working for a small company

most of their college experience my advice is:

1. Encourage any and all work experience they select, whether or not you think it is relevant. It will give them life experience and the opportunity to try things out. The Elimination Game (see previous column) is a very important aspect of a college education and a career search.

2. Encourage them to approach hiring managers with great marketing materials (i.e. a resume, portfolio, marketing plan) and make sure their interviewing skills are outstanding. If you have contacts for them to network with, please make sure they know how to prepare for a networking meeting.

There's nothing worse than your daughter or son walking into the office of a senior VP at IBM and not knowing quite why they're there and how they're going to maximize the meeting. It's a waste of everyone's time and a waste of a good contact.

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into all aspects of building and managing a product in a competitive environment. Have him do some of the assessment exercises I talked about in last week's column to find an industry that interests him and then discover who falls into that space in your geographic area.

Develop a marketing campaign and then deliver it to some potential targets with a well-written resume.

The other enormous benefit of taking an internship during college is the fantastic networking opportunities that it will afford.

Let me emphasize how vital it is to develop a strong professional network during college. Let's take John, for example. John decided to apply for an internship at a

like this would help him out, but he was wrong. Not only did he get a very comprehensive understanding of how a business functions but he also made a lot of contacts that summer and became very comfortable talking to clients and partners about the business and, more importantly, about himself.

When it came time to graduate, John had a long list of people he had met and kept in touch with throughout his final year. Two months before graduation he landed a job at a large medical company in New Jersey and he's loving it.

To all parents out there who worry that their college students aren't making the

Kostmayer to speak at graduation


Solebury School will hold its 78th high school commencement ceremony June 11, 11 a.m., at its Phillips' Mill Road campus in Solebury.

Forty-three seniors will receive their diplomas, and all have plans to attend college in the fall.

Peter Kostmayer, who graduated from the school in 1965 and who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1977 to 1981 and again from 1983 to 1993 as Pennsylvania representative, will serve as the ceremony's keynote speaker.

In March 1994, Kostmayer was appointed to the Environmental Protection Agency by President Bill Clinton. He served there until June 1995 before becoming a spokesman for Population Connection, an advocacy group for grassroots volunteer programs on local school campuses and communities.

He worked as the organization's executive director and then its president until December 2004. He currently works as a public relations consultant to corporations and nonprofits on environmental issues.



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