



Solutions

NEWSLETTER

Issue 52

Helping Youth with that Next Career Step

Summer is here! However, for many of us it's a time when we become concerned with helping daughters or sons to obtain summer work or that first full-time job.

There are two different ways parents and their sons and daughters seem to approach this. The first is to take any job that is interesting and easily available. The second is to focus on obtaining job skills that will build into an envisioned career. A balanced approach involves both.

Young people are still trying to get a sense of who they are and what works for them, and a job, any job, will help them do this. The employment gurus tell us that young people will have several careers during their lifetime, so it is important to encourage young people to remain open to possibilities. Having several different kinds of jobs will broaden a young person's data base about who they are, what they are capable of and what they enjoy. The purpose of this early experience is also to learn how to get a job, how to hold a job, how to navigate being employed and how to move on. The purpose of early experience is to prepare them to do well at work.

It is beneficial if parents can help the young people in their lives prepare for work, prepare for obtaining employment, reflect on what they have learned from the experience they are having, normalize the learning process and support them through the expected difficulties. It is also important to encourage young people to reach for rich and challenging opportunities -- to invite them to be the best they can be in any employment situation.

Helpful Tips

Employment is like distillation -- it is important to do the best we can do, learn what we enjoy and do best, find a job that seems to offer more of that, and repeat the process.

Following are a few tips that can be of help to the younger person in your life, in assisting them to identify and obtain meaningful work.

1. Self-Assessment

Assessing one's strengths and interests is a very important first step to take. Suggest your teen ask themselves the following questions to get them started:

- What type of work interests me?
- How do I like to spend my time? (Socializing? Reading? Playing sports?)
- Do I prefer to be with others or to be on my own?
- What do I like to learn about? (Fitness? Technology? The environment? Politics? Cars? Sports? Health? Fashion?)
- What type of task or activity gives me satisfaction?
- In any paid or volunteer work I've done before, what did I like and not like about it?
- What type of task or activity am I good at, or that others tell me I'm good at?

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2. Options and Opportunities

After the self-assessment, it's time to explore opportunities that encompass these elements. The internet is a rich source of job ads and information related to various occupations and related experience requirements. There are also many other sources of information such as school career resources, government employment centres and libraries.

3. Networking

Networking is also an invaluable option. Suggest your teen or young adult talk to friends and family members they might know in the area of work that interests them. They might be able to research and make an appointment with someone who is employed in this line of work. This is a superb opportunity to ask questions about the work and find out if it truly has the elements they've identified as important.

Steps to Landing the Job

Once your teen has found an opening that grabs their interest or they feel suits their strengths and abilities, they still have a few steps to actually get the job. Here are some suggestions you can offer to help them get the job they want.

The Job Posting

Almost every job posting gives an indication of the items that will be used as "screening" factors – the items that will determine whether or not the applicant will be called in for an interview.

Screening factors almost always target Education and training, Experience, Skills and Personal Qualities, and will follow phrases such as "The person we are seeking will have..." or will fall under the title "*Qualifications*" or "*Requirements*".

The following list is a sample of possible screening items in a job posting. These are key items to look for and identify when writing the resume.

- ✓ "Completion of (a certain level of schooling)",
- ✓ "experience dealing with the public",
- ✓ "mechanically inclined",
- ✓ "ability to work under pressure"
- ✓ "ability to work without supervision".
- ✓ "strong communication skills",
- ✓ "organized and detail-oriented",

You can help your teen by going over their resume with them to ensure they have clearly demonstrated how they meet each screening criterion. This is an essential step – if the employer has identified key qualities they are looking for, they will be looking for these qualities in the resume and in the interview.

The Resume

A resume can be presented in different lengths and formats, depending on the amount of education and experience your young person has, as well as on the type of work they are looking for. Resume samples can be found in various resource locations, such as those mentioned – libraries, employment centres and the internet.

Summary – You can help your son or daughter compose a section near the top of the resume that summarizes how they meet the screening criteria. This makes it easy for the person doing the screening to see that they have what the job or company requires. This section can be titled "Summary of Qualifications" or "Summary of Skills and Experience".

The summary should be a brief section of bulleted information. For example, if the posting "Requirements" section asks for "Experience in serving the public", and your teen has done this in the past, the Summary of Qualifications section could read as follows:

"(x) summers / (x) years' experience in dealing with the public". It's as simple as that!

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Work or Volunteer Experience -- This section outlines your son or daughter's work or volunteer experience. The descriptions under each job title should be brief, clear and in reverse chronological order (most recent experience first, oldest experience last). Avoid long narrative sentences. A preferred format is to present the duties performed in each role in bullet form, beginning with the ones most relevant to the job, and highlighting any duties performed that match the screening items!!

Spelling and Grammar – Once your son or daughter has completed and proofread their resume, as well as performed a spelling and grammar check, you can help them by giving the resume a final look. It is essential to avoid spelling and grammatical errors.

The Cover Letter

In many cases, it is best to include a cover letter with the resume. It does not need to be long or detailed. It simply needs to show that your teen meets the screening requirements and is interested in the position.

The Interview

The job posting will often give clues as to what the interview will cover. When your son or daughter is called to interview, you can help prepare them for the interview by going over together and writing down any experience they've had where they've demonstrated the "abilities" and "interpersonal skills" sought. Your youngster can review these before the interview, so they can more readily respond to any questions presented to them.

The better prepared they are, the more at ease they will feel in the interview, and each interview will prepare them for the next one.

Work can be fun!

Although many teens are nervous about getting their first job, assure them that the key to success is to determine what elements they need to make work meaningful and satisfying, and then pursue that work. If they don't find it the first time, they can chalk it up to experience and use that learning to help them with the next opportunity.

If they have an enjoyable first experience, they will be less hesitant about the next job. Also, chances are if they find a job they enjoy and get something out of, they will do well at it, be recognized and be asked to come back next summer!

FSEAP offers confidential professional assistance on a wide variety of personal and work-related issues. For more information call:

1-800-390-3258

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1-800-668-9920