

## Chart a Course to Your New Career

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Let's be honest, the job market for any industry is a tough one. New college graduates, who were once fought over like first-round draft picks by employers, now face competition from those with proven results and experience. Recent graduates across disciplines immediately assume that technical skills determine who gets hired; however, anyone who can think and learn can be trained in the technical aspects of most jobs.

What makes the difference for employers is one's ability to communicate, learn, grow a network and develop long-term goals.

Many cringe at the word sales, but everyone must be a good sales person in the professional realm in at least three instances: 1) The interview; 2) Negotiating for future benefits and raises; 3) Attempting to gain approval for an idea.

Success in landing the career of your dreams is based on very basic, but crucial non-technical skills: 1) Time-management; 2) Effective communication; 3) Goal setting and achievement; 4) Relationship building (networking).

Every job position within every industry requires new college graduates and seasoned professionals alike to communicate and demonstrate these skills in the interview, and throughout their career.

In order to stand out and be viewed as the right candidate, job seekers need to determine what the hiring firms are missing and communicate their ability to fill the need. The ability to identify gaps and create solutions provides a strong competitive advantage whether you are interviewing for a job or looking to increase productivity in your current position. Demonstrating this ability will set you apart from your peers and set you up for long-term success.

Consider the concept of consultative selling, a model that teaches individuals to engage in a dialogue that brings the buyer's needs to the forefront of any customized solution. The skill sets needed to successfully complete this model include relationship building, identifying the gaps between "what is" and "what should be" and strong communication skills. What makes this model so essential is its application outside the traditional selling career.

Medical professionals are faced with selling their patients on changing damaging lifestyle behaviors and actively participating in a long-term, mutually agreed upon health program. Engineers often have to sell changes to specifications demanded by clients/owners due to budget constraints, regulations or aesthetic harmony. Accountants and financial advisors must sell clients on the most appropriate investments options, balancing the client's risk, trust level and desired level of return. And small business owners and entrepreneurs need to sell themselves to investors in order to obtain required start-up capital for growth, creation or expansion.

You don't need a college degree for many entry level jobs. But taking a sales course

and refining your communication skills can make the difference between getting an entry-level job, or an entry-level career.

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