

Introduction

The College of Business sponsored a networking event hosted by Equifax in Atlanta, on Friday, October 30, 2009. Thirty-one business majors and 25 alumni/friends, including Business Advisory Board members and two members of the University's Foundation Board, attended the event.

Participants had 45 minutes to interact with each other prior to lunch. After lunch, students were given hiring tips from two Equifax HR representatives – Amy Smith and Jeff Kimball. Then, alumni and Advisory Board members offered suggestions in a round-table format. After the presentations, alumni and students continued to network for another 30-40 minutes.

The College of Business thanks our alumni and friends for participating in this event.



HR Presentation

Students heard about three important characteristics for new hires:

- Their major – you must be able to relate the specific content of the major to the needs of the employer through practical application of that course-specific knowledge.
- Added-value experiences – What have you done besides go to class? Examples include internships, which in some cases may be more important than a very high GPA.
- Social/interviewing skills – you must be able to interact effectively (written and verbal), provide evidence of leadership experiences, and exhibit problem-solving skills.

Three Piles of Resumes!

To be in the best position for an interview, applicants must get into “pile three” of a sorted stack of resumes. Acceptable (“pile one”) candidates have the necessary job skills. Good (“pile two”) candidates have practical, external experiences such as an internship. The best candidates present a complete package of professional appearance and interpersonal skills – they effectively relate what they have learned in a very specific manner to the needs of the employer.

Vision and Networking

You should be able to clearly articulate to the employer what you want to do. Tell how you, personally, can relate to that employer and the position for which you are interviewing. Network constantly – leverage your network all the time, not just during a job search. Remember that the hiring manager may be two or three contacts removed from the person you are currently working with. You must act as your own personal marketing rep; don't post a resume on line then expect people to call you. A survey of HR managers reveals that many recent grads lack professionalism and express a sense of entitlement. You should target firms you are interested in, and then find a way to reach out to top managers there who can pass along your name to hiring managers or HR representatives.

Round-table Discussion

Jeff Wansley moderated the panel of James Wall, James Robertson, and Kim Wall. They addressed questions such as: What do employers look for in new hires? How can a new hire differentiate himself/herself? What are some of the best ways to grow professionally after entering a career?

Prior to the interview: be honest and accurate on your resume and on the application because firms will check names and dates to confirm accuracy. Any inaccuracies can eliminate you from consideration. Employers want to see your GPA on the resume. Be upfront about any prior convictions; they will come out during the background check.

Prepare yourself for the interview; the interviewer may form an opinion of you during the first seven seconds. Identify focus areas you want the interviewer to remember about you; emphasize those during the interview. You should do your homework on the firm in case you are asked; "Tell me about this company and why you want to come here." Research the firm so you can ask questions, especially at the end of an interview ("That's it" is an unacceptable close!). At the end of the interview ask about next steps and if the interviewer needs any other information from you.

Think about what characteristics make you memorable, because many will meet the basic qualifications for the job. You should "Google" common interviewing questions and develop answers. Be prepared for hard questions that will make you uncomfortable. Clean up your Facebook page. Follow the interview with a hand-written note (but don't give the interviewer the note at the interview!). Turn off your cell phone and anything else with an alarm. Don't answer your cell phone during an interview! Be prepared for "screwball" questions that are designed to trip you up. Questions such as "When have you failed?" will reveal your character and your ability to recover. Be careful about giving too much information in response to an open-ended question because you may dig yourself into a hole.

One panelist related a story of an interviewee for a senior position who brought in a business proposal for addressing a problem in the firm. However, that interviewee tripped up too many times during the interview by not being completely prepared. You need to present a complete package of functional-area knowledge, prior field experiences, and professionalism (e.g., appearance, communication patterns, self-confidence, and eye contact). Hiring is a long complex process, so be prepared.

Look for opportunities to grow in/with a firm, for example, ask about leadership development programs. However, these programs are often very competitive so be ready to work very hard. Push yourself outside your comfort zone in order to grow professionally. In today's market many people with lots of experience are ahead of you already (or are looking themselves), so don't be afraid of a job that doesn't have a big title. After you get your foot in the door, don't expect a promotion in three months; pay your dues. Find a mentor early on who can help you develop professionally.

In order to grow professionally, you can: take courses, get involved in the community – as a way to network and develop leadership skills, take on new tasks within the firm ("outside the box" activities), join professional organizations, and volunteer with non-profits or industry groups.

