

First Jobs Offer Major Lessons for Minor Employees

By Bruce A. Love

As summer approaches, many teens hope to land their first job. Those who succeed in this pursuit will be waiting tables, flipping burgers, taking tickets, cutting grass, or any of the other activities that many of us did in our younger years. This is an exciting time for teens, and a great opportunity for them to earn some money while learning valuable life lessons.

Next week, my daughter, like many teens, will start her first “real” job in the fast food industry. Alysia has had other assorted jobs, but this is the first one requiring her to fill out official forms and start contributing to the social security of seniors. Even before starting her job, Alysia has already learned some valuable lessons.

One of the first things jobseekers learn is: Getting a job requires initiative, perseverance, and determination. There is no time like the present to look for summer employment! By starting now, you beat the hordes of students who wait until the school year ends. Job seekers should expect some rejection before landing a job. Get used to it, deal with it, learn from it, and move on! In addition to checking the want ads, go into businesses and ask managers if they have any job openings. This demonstrates your confidence and initiative, which are desirable qualities in any employee.

Networking is a great way to find unadvertised jobs. Some of the best job leads come from friends. Teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, clergy, and relatives also are potential leads for jobs. With their permission, these acquaintances also make great references, who can vouch for your character and abilities.

Another lesson teen jobseekers learn is: Appearance matters! When you go to an interview, or fill out applications, make sure you are well dressed and well groomed. You don't need to wear a suit, just make sure you look presentable.

Attitude and poise are also important. When introduced to a hiring manager, act confident, smile, maintain eye contact, give a firm handshake, and say something like, “it's a pleasure to meet you,” or “thank you for taking time to meet with me.” During interviews, demonstrate that you are interested, qualified and eager to start the job. Thank the interviewer as you leave the meeting, and ask when you can expect to hear from them. If you

haven't heard from the business in about a week, call the hiring manager to check on the status of your application. This will help keep your name and application fresh in the minds of managers.

By definition, teens seeking their first job will have little in the way of experience. For this reason, it may not seem reasonable to put together a resume. However, everyone has some noteworthy accomplishments to showcase. Your resume can list scholastic activities (academic and sports), awards, interests, and/or other community activities in which you have participated. Just submitting a resume will demonstrate how serious you are about landing a job, and set your application apart from others. Likewise, a “thank you” letter after an interview is a nice touch, though rarely expected from teens.

When applying for employment, have information handy so you can fill out applications on the spot. A sheet with names, phone numbers, and addresses of schools and other references is very useful to have as you visit potential employers. If you haven't memorized your social security number yet, put that on the sheet too.

State and Federal laws govern the employment of minors (anyone under the age of 18). All minors are required to have “working papers” before starting a “real job.” The official name of this form is the “Application for Employment Certificate or Transferable Work Permit,” and is available at your school's guidance office. A doctor also will need to sign this prior to your employment, so it is best to take care of this step ASAP.

State and Federal laws also establish the hours teens may work. These vary with the age of the applicant, time of year, and duties of the job. For more information about the Pennsylvania Child Labor Law, including restrictions in specific industries, visit www.dli.state.pa.us and click on Labor Law Compliance, or call 1-800-932-0665. The Federal Government has additional regulations relating to the employment of minors. Learn more about Federal child labor laws by visiting: www.youthrules.dol.gov or call 1-866-4-USWAGE.

Good luck and much success in your first job!

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