

APPENDIX A

Careers in Business

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the difference between a job and a career.
2. Identify the important factors in making job or career decisions.
3. List several sources of career information and discuss the search procedure.
4. Describe the steps involved in getting a job and explain the role of planning in each step.

INSIDE BUSINESS

Reality 101: Transition from College to Career

What a feeling! Clarence Wainwright finally made it! Four years of college courses, studying, and exams. Six months of job searching, writing letters and résumés, and preparing for interviews. And now the work has finally paid off! After advancing through several interviews with the McKenna Corporation, Clarence has been offered a position and begins his new job three weeks after graduation. To ensure that the transition from college to the world of work is a smooth one, Clarence should keep the following pointers in mind.

First, Clarence was hired for his ability and the skills he learned in college. But in order to perform at his best and become the professional he envisions himself to be, he should not be afraid to ask questions. More important, he must learn to *listen* to what others have to say. Also, the image Clarence projects to others will be important to his success. His positive, businesslike manner can be demonstrated to others through his appearance and body language.

Second, every morning for the first few weeks of Clarence's new job will be exciting. But once he settles into the routine of his work environment, he may find himself feeling confined, doing the same thing at least eight hours a day, five days a week. Clarence will need to learn patience and look for ways to make his job more interesting. If he partied on a Wednesday night while he was in college, he could sleep in the next morning and miss a class and no one minded or cared. But that attitude doesn't work in the real world. A company expects its employees to be on time every day—not just when they feel like showing up.

Third, throughout Clarence's college years, he usually associated with people who were like himself with similar tastes and ideas. Now he will meet individuals of all ages, with different personalities, lifestyles, and backgrounds. In order to be a productive team member, it will be imperative for Clarence to keep an open mind and learn how to get along with others.

Fourth, in the real world, getting ahead is dependent on how employees manage their long-term relationships with their supervisors. It is critical that Clarence begin on a positive note by immediately adapting his work habits to the management style of his supervisor.

Clarence will begin his new position at the bottom of the organization chart. As he moves up the ladder to success, he will discover that employers want employees who not only do what is expected, but who

also perform above and beyond what their job description calls for. It is up to Clarence to use this opportunity to gain all the experience he can, learn how to get along with a diverse assortment of people, and handle every assignment to the best of his ability!

RETURN TO INSIDE BUSINESS

After Clarence settles into his job and learns what is expected of him, he should probably try to expand his skills. That will make him more valuable not only to his present employer, but to other potential employers in the future. It will also make Clarence a more well-rounded person. By offering to take on extra work or to help out on special projects, Clarence can enhance his abilities and make himself even more successful. Clarence may also determine that although he learned many skills in college, he could perhaps use some additional refinement in some areas, such as interpersonal relations or problem solving.

As time goes on, it would be good for Clarence to review some of the traits that successful people usually possess and work on developing those traits. These include an ability to work well with others in a variety of settings; a desire to do tasks better than they have to be done; an interest in reading a wide variety and a large quantity of materials; a willingness to cope with conflict and adapt to change; an ability to anticipate problems; a working knowledge of a variety of computer software applications, including word processing, spreadsheet, and database programs; an ability to solve problems creatively; a knowledge of research techniques and source materials; well-developed written and oral communication skills; and an understanding of one's own motivations and the motivations of others.

Questions

1. How can Clarence best determine his strengths and weaknesses?
2. How might Clarence approach his supervisor to gain additional knowledge and training?

APPENDIX REVIEW

Summary

1. Explain the difference between a job and a career.

A job is a position a person takes primarily to make money. This money may be to provide for basic survival or to earn money for a specific goal, such as college or a trip or a car. A career implies an individual's commitment to both a profession as well as to one's own interests and talents. Both require an examination of your priorities before making a final decision.

2. Identify the important factors to consider when making job or career decisions.

Whether you are in the market for a job or a career, it is important to know what motivates you and what skills you can offer to a potential employer. To help determine what is most important to you, you should ask yourself four questions. (1) What types of activities do you enjoy? You should be as specific as possible, perhaps by taking an interest inventory test to help you narrow down those areas you particularly like, as well as those that you don't. (2) What do you do best? It may help to list your strongest job-related skills in order to see yourself as an employer would see you. (3) What kind of education will you need? This depends on the type of career you choose. Some careers require a college degree, some focus more on experience, and others look for specific skills. (4) Where do you want to live? Depending on your career choice, certain areas of the country are more likely than others to be hiring for certain positions. Population growth trends also affect hiring patterns—currently, the western and southern regions of the United States are experiencing the greatest population growth. Finally, it is

important to consider employment trends. Jobs in service industries will continue to increase, as will jobs requiring a solid education and computer skills.

3. List several sources of career information and discuss the search procedure.

Four primary sources of career information are the library and the Internet, campus placement offices, professional sources and networks, and employment agencies. In the library or on the Internet, you can find newspapers, career information, government materials, and annual reports and business brochures. Campus placement offices provide listings of available jobs, career planning publications, workshops and seminars, and job fairs. Professional sources and networks include friends, relatives, and colleagues; teachers, employers, and businesspeople; trade associations; trade journals; industry newsletters; and business and civic groups. Finally, employment agencies offer listings of available jobs, career counseling, career development sessions, and temporary employment services.

4. Describe the steps involved in getting a job and explain the role of planning in each step.

Early planning for a career, including not only taking the appropriate courses in college, but also having work experience, the ability to communicate well, and clear and realistic job and career goals can make all the difference in getting the career you want. Planning and preparation are also important when you want to apply for a position. The first step is often a carefully written letter to the firm and a copy of your résumé. Your résumé may be in a chronological or functional format. If the potential employer is interested, the next step usually involves a job application and an interview, which allow you another opportunity to sell your particular talents and skills. The application should be completed carefully, neatly, honestly, and thoroughly. Read over the application before you start to write so you can plan what and how much to write in each blank. To prepare for the interview, research the firm so you can ask some questions, be on time, and dress in a businesslike manner. As a final step, successful candidates may then receive an offer of employment. Your written acceptance of the job should restate the job salary, benefits, and responsibilities as you understand them.

Review Questions

1. How does a job differ from a career?
2. Describe at least four personal factors that influence career decisions.
3. Identify and briefly describe the employment trends presented in this appendix. How will these trends affect your own career?
4. Assume that you would like to be a computer programmer when you graduate. How can you find career information about this particular profession?
5. What services are provided by a campus placement office, a private employment agency, and a state employment agency? How do the services differ?
6. What is the purpose of networking?
7. What information should you include in a résumé? What information should you include in a cover letter?
8. Describe the types of information that are usually requested on an employment application.
9. What are some typical interview questions? How would you answer those questions if you were the job applicant?
10. Why should a job applicant restate the conditions of employment before accepting a job offer?
11. What type of activities would you recommend to individuals who desire career advancement and professional growth?

Discussion Questions

1. Based on the information presented in Inside Business, what steps help ensure a successful transition from college to the world of work?
2. In order to be a productive team member, Clarence Wainwright, the college student profiled in the appendix opening, must have mastered certain technical skills required to perform a specific job. What other qualities does an employee like Wainwright need?
3. How do the activities you enjoy and the skills you possess relate to success on the job?
4. According to this appendix, more education increases your earning power. Do you agree with this statement?
5. What factors are most important when choosing a city in which to live?
6. How can a person prepare for a job interview?
7. Under what conditions would you change jobs? Under what conditions would you change careers?
8. How do you define *success*? What specific traits make people successful?

CASE

Employment Agency Scams Bilk Millions

After working three years for small companies in his home town of Erie, Pennsylvania, Bart Blackburn, a 24-year-old computer programmer, dreamed of working for Apple Computer or one of California's other Silicon Valley computer firms. Intrigued by a newspaper ad for an employment agency that promised jobs with major computer firms, Blackburn called the toll-free telephone number for more information. The employment counselor with whom he talked promised the agency would prepare a résumé for Blackburn and would distribute it to the "right" people in the "right" companies. All he had to do was fill out an application and send a check for \$295. Three months after sending the completed application and the money, Blackburn still hadn't heard a word, so he called the employment agency. The firm's telephone had been disconnected.

Unfortunately, Bart Blackburn is not the only job hopeful to be exploited by unethical employment agencies. Employment scams like this one are quite common—especially when unemployment rates are high and jobs are scarce. In fact, government authorities estimate that employment scams take in at least \$100 million a year. To get you to sign up, phone "counselors" promise jobs in the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, or Australia. In addition to a vacation paradise setting, many of these jobs also offer food, housing, and hospitalization. And all you have to do to get one of these "perfect" jobs is fill out an application and send in a "small" fee that ranges from \$99 to \$1,000. Some unethical agencies prey on white-collar executives by promising high-level management positions. Others entice blue-collar workers with high-salaried, exotic overseas jobs. In many cases, the only "help" job applicants receive is information that is easily available (for free) at the local library or through government sources.

Despite the large number of unethical and illegal employment agencies today, most firms in the employment industry are both ethical and legal. Most legitimate employment agencies don't ask for money up front. They begin by interviewing unemployed clients. Based on the information obtained in the interview, they match clients with prospective employers. The better employment agencies also help prepare clients for employment interviews by giving them important information about job responsibilities, history of the prospective employer, the company's management style, future development plans, and the firm's dress code, if any.

When a client obtains a job, the employment agency collects a placement fee, either from the employer or from the new employee. In both cases, typical fees range from 15 to 20 percent of the applicant's first-year salary. When the applicant is responsible for the fee, it is usually paid in installments over a 12-month period. Obviously, most employees would prefer that the employer pay the fee, and in fact that is the most common arrangement today.

Case Questions

1. What types of questions could a job applicant like Bart Blackburn ask to evaluate an employment agency?
2. Although employment agencies can help you get your foot in the door, you are the one who must go through the interview process. How can you convince prospective employers that you are the best applicant for the job?
3. Why would an organization use an employment agency instead of recruiting and hiring its employees directly?

BUILDING SKILLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

1. Exploring the Internet

Several possible careers are likely to be open to you with your business skills. Think about a few that are particularly appealing to you. It is important that you have a good overall idea of the potential growth in those occupational areas, including where the jobs are, what the average salaries for entry-level employees are, and what the most desirable skills are. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics offers a wealth of employment-related information. In fact, because the breadth of information is so vast, it makes sense to try to set some parameters to narrow the search. If a particular area doesn't immediately appear to be a growth area, don't be discouraged. It just may take a little longer to find a job or you may have to arrive at your goal through a different route.

Assignment

1. Make a list of five jobs that most appeal to you. Go to the Office of Employment Projection website at <http://www.bls.gov/emp/> and see how the projected employment trends match up with your ideal jobs. Briefly summarize your findings.
2. Most companies put their annual reports or new information on their websites. Choose two or three companies that appeal to you and research their websites. Look for information you could ask about if you were in an interview situation and write three questions for each company that you would ask the interviewer.

2. Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Most people send out more than one letter of interest and résumé when they are doing their first job hunt. Very often, especially if you are looking for an entry-level job to start your business career, you may get more than one positive response. How can you decide which type of job is best for you, assuming you are fortunate enough to have more than one possibility? One way is to develop a grid that helps you compare certain aspects of particular jobs. You may find that when final decisions have to be made, certain features may outweigh others.

Assignment

1. Make a list of the characteristics of a job or firm that are important to you. You may want to consider growth potential and career path, salary, geographical area, large vs. small firm, urban vs. suburban setting, training and skills needed or to be provided, etc. Compare your list with a partner or small group to see if there are any important factors you may have left out.
2. Go to your campus placement office and pick up a copy of the available jobs listings. Find at least two that might be of interest to you and compare those descriptions to your skill set and career plans. Then look at the list of characteristics that are important to you that you prepared in the first part of this exercise. If you were offered both of these jobs, which one would you select and why?

3. Building Team Skills

Since your first approach to a company is likely to be through a letter of interest, it is important that your letter and your enclosed résumé showcase your talents and skills to their best advantage. Many people have multiple letters and résumés that can be altered or adjusted to focus on the particular skills a particular job may require. For example, you may be interested in advertising but unsure whether you would rather be at an advertising firm or work in the marketing department of a large company not in the advertising field. As a result, you may have to have multiple letters and multiple résumés, with each one geared to the requirements of a specific job.

Assignment

1. Write a draft of a letter to a firm that interests you. Ask a partner to do the same. Peer edit each other's drafts until you finally have a working copy that can be adjusted as necessary to suit the job you are applying for.
2. Draft a résumé and ask your partner to edit it. Be sure you include action-oriented verbs that show what you have already accomplished. Then work in small groups to compare the effectiveness of the overall setup of each person's résumé.

4. Researching Different Careers

People with a background in business have a wide variety of career paths available to them. The same job in different industries can be either very similar or decidedly different. An accountant working for an airline may worry less about inventory and more about capital expenditures, whereas an accountant working for a steel manufacturer may be critically concerned with inventory and an accountant with a high-tech firm may spend a lot of time dealing with such intangibles as copyright. How do you know which may be right for you?

Assignment

1. Hone your networking skills by contacting two or three people who work in fields or for companies that interest you. Ask them to allow you to interview them about what they do during the day, what they like and don't like about it, and how they would advise you to continue your job search. Write up the results of your interviews and share them with your class.
2. Visit one or more sources of employment information, including the campus placement office, a public or private employment agency, or a state employment agency. Talk to one or more people at each place to learn what types of positions are available and what fees, if any, are included. Briefly summarize your findings.

5. Improving Communication Skills

Although it is exciting to hear from a firm that you are being called in for an interview, it can also create anxiety. You want to present yourself as capable, professional, and articulate, but you are in an unfamiliar situation talking with someone you don't know about your professional future—a stressful situation for most people. How can you put your best foot forward and show them who you are without being afraid you will make a mistake? One answer is to practice. The more times you rehearse a particular scenario, the more comfortable you will feel with it.

Assignment

1. Work with a partner. Using the questions listed in Table A.3, practice a simulated interview. One partner is the interviewer and uses the sample questions and the other answers the questions. Then reverse roles. When you have finished playing both roles, critique each other's performance.
2. Work with the same or a different partner. Now combine the questions in Table A.3 with the results of your research from one of the companies in Assignment 2, Exploring the Internet. Add more questions that an interviewer might ask about you and your background, skills, and experience, and the notes you have made about a certain company you are interested in. Ask a third person to videotape the interview. When all interviews have been completed, invite comments from all who took part.