

Unexpected Riches: The Six Advantages College Grads Have in a Job Search

As a college student getting ready to graduate, do you find yourself worrying that you’re at a disadvantage in the job pool because you don’t have as much experience as older applicants? If so, you’ll be glad to hear that you have some definite advantages while looking for a job just by virtue of being young and new to your job search. If that sounds too good to be true, here are six reasons you may very well be chosen for a job over an older, more experienced candidate:

The Millennium Generation Perspective. No one knows the needs and interests of younger customers better than ... well, a younger customer! And that means you — a college grad. You can leverage this knowledge in your job interviews by helping potential employers see how you can uncover the needs of the company’s young target market and find a way to respond to those needs.

IT Skills. Unlike many older job applicants, you have grown up with computers as a natural part of your life. You probably understand software, hardware, and the Internet — including social media — better than anyone who is older than you. Never underestimate the importance of this knowledge!

Multi-Tasking Abilities. If you’re like most people in their late teens/early 20s, you’re probably capable of listening to your MP3 player, talking on your cell phone, texting someone, checking Facebook, and answering a Skype message all at once. Studies show that people from ages 12-24 today use an average of 5.5 media at the same time, while people over 40 only use 1.7 media at the same time. This means that you’re probably better at juggling a lot more things at once than an older candidate who is competing for the same job as you. And what employer wouldn’t want that?

Lack of Baggage from Past Jobs. You come to the job market with very few preconceived notions, a fresh perspective, and a clean slate. Some older job candidates can get set in their ways. They learn how to do things at one job and then, find it hard to learn new ways of doing those things at a new job. So, make it clear in your job interviews that you’re open to learning the company’s system and that you’re excited about discovering their processes.

Lower Salary Expectations. In tough economic times, older candidates often apply for lower-level jobs, but companies are reluctant to hire them because they might bolt to a better job as soon as one comes along. This is why a company could actually find it more attractive to hire someone like you for a starting position. So, be open about your willingness to begin a new job at a lower salary so that you can prove yourself in that position.

Willingness and Hunger. When you’re just starting out in the job market, you may have more of a “hunger” than the person who’s been working for a number of years. That willingness to do whatever it takes is key to success, now more than ever. Companies want people with a “can-do” attitude.

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So, don't concern yourself with your title or whether you're doing work that you feel is “beneath” you. Everyone has to start somewhere, and the difference between success and failure is often the attitude and willingness you show toward helping your employer. Use every job as an opportunity to learn and grow, and you're almost sure to be rewarded in a big way.

Billie Burke — the actress who played Glenda the Good Witch in the original *Wizard of Oz* movie — once said, “Age is something that doesn't matter unless you are a cheese.” Change your mindset from what you *don't* have as a college grad to what you *do* have, and remember these six advantages.

Brenda S. Bence is an internationally-recognized branding expert, Certified Executive Coach, dynamic trainer and Certified Speaking Professional, and the author of several books. Her award-winning *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding book series includes *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo for College Graduates: The Complete Personal Branding System to Define, Position, and Market Yourself and Land a Job You Love*. Filled with dozens of job search and interview tips from the country's top college recruiters and university placement professionals, the book contains the only personal branding system focused on helping college grads craft and communicate a personal brand to sail through interviews and land a job they love – right after college.



With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda's career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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