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## Job Search Tips for 2014 College Grads

– Sharon Florentine, CIO

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If you're graduating from college as a member of the Class of 2014 and you haven't already begun your job search - or already landed a position to start after you graduate - you may be at a disadvantage.



Much like the "early admission" process at the beginning of your college days, expressing early interest in a profession, company and a role can give you an edge over the competition, says [Rick Gillis](#), an author, career consultant and resume expert.

### Ahead of the Tech Jobs Curve

"Estimates vary, but I'd say there's about a million and a half new graduates every year -- from community colleges to career certificates to Bachelor's degrees to Ph.D.s.," Gillis says. "The job market gets flooded and with every passing semester even more competition enters the market. Getting your resume and your search out in front of the crowd gives you an advantage," he says.

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Mark O'Toole, managing director of public relations and content marketing for HB Agency says as an employer, he'd encourage any college graduate to begin their search as early as possible to gain an advantage. In fact, he says, his firm began searching to fill an open position early this year, and has already made an offer to a candidate who'll be graduating later this spring.

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-- [Rick Gillis](#)

"The woman we've hired applied with our firm early, and took time over her spring break to meet with us and interview," he says. The candidate stood out for his agency because of her early application, and because she was willing to make the effort before others in her class, he says.

"Because she showed such interest and initiative, we were able to spend much more time with her and really be sure she was the right fit for the role, rather than during the late spring timeframe when we get bombarded with resumes, candidates and interviews," he says.

## The Early Bird Gets the Best Candidate

And it's not just candidates who are beginning their job searches before diplomas are even handed out; many organizations begin the recruiting, screening and hiring process almost a full year in advance when looking to fill entry-level roles, says Dan Black, Americas director of recruiting for EY (formerly known as Ernst & Young).

"Sooner is really better; especially in the professional services sector, where we operate, most of the folks in our industry do the bulk of campus recruiting in the fall," Black says.

"We do virtually all of our hiring based on the efforts from the previous year, so when spring comes the job market and the number of available openings can be anemic," Black says.

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Black says EY starts the process so early because many other competitors began to recruit earlier and earlier; "& identifying and hiring top talent is so competitive, we want to get to them first," he says.

## It's a Good Time to Be Graduating

The outlook for 2014 graduates is bright, says Black. Ernst & Young, LLP, the US member firm of the global EY organization, is looking to recruit about 7,200 "campus recruits" for both internships and full-time positions in fiscal 2014, which means the firm isn't just back to pre-recession hiring levels, it's exceeding those.

And the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#) (NACE), of which Black is president of the board, reported last fall that employers expect to hire approximately 7.8 percent more new college grads from the class of 2014 for their U.S. operations than they did from the class of 2013, he says.

Even if you haven't begun your job search, there are a number of ways you can prepare for entry into the job market, says Black. An internship opportunity is always a great way to gain on-the-job experience and work with potential future employers, he says, and an internship may well turn into an offer for full-time employment.

"We convert 90 percent of our interns to full-time hires," Black says. "We see internships exploding across our industry and more and more companies are using these types of programs with college students," he says.

## How to Prepare: Tap Social Media

Even if you haven't participated in an internship program, making sure your social media presence is up-to-date, polished and professional is also crucial during a job search, says Gillis.

"LinkedIn is a huge advantage, especially for college graduates or potential graduates," Gillis says. "If you're establishing a presence there, it shows a level of professionalism and tech savvy that's enticing for employers," he says.

Gillis adds that new college graduates without much relevant work experience aren't necessarily at a great disadvantage when looking for jobs if they know how to highlight their strengths and their knowledge. New college grads are often far more aware of and skilled with cutting edge technologies and best practices than even more seasoned, experienced job-seekers, and that can an advantage, too, he says.

"You must present yourself as a candidate who is on the cutting edge of technology and skills, because you've been using them very recently," Gillis says.

One of Gillis' clients, in fact, was a new graduate with a landscape architecture degree in the middle of the 2008 housing slump, and felt his job prospects were grim. But by emphasizing his newly minted education and his familiarity with cutting-edge design tools, he landed a job quickly, Gillis says.

"The firm was run and staffed by older, less tech-savvy employees, and [was] impressed by his knowledge and experience with some of the latest and greatest design and tech-based tools," Gillis said. "He was able to show them how he could improve their practice and generate revenue using these, and so even during a housing slump, he got the job," he says.

EY's Black advises potential graduates to get involved with available career resources and to continually make contact with on-campus recruiting efforts and events, because networking is such an important part of landing a job, he says.

"Don't underestimate the importance of being connected to career resources on campus, and get involved in the events and offerings from companies at your school," Black says.

"The campus recruiting folks are very involved with and invested in what's happening on campus, and so you should attend events, meet and network with company representatives and make sure your name and your resume is out there," Black says.

If graduates make themselves and their interest known, they become recognizable, and more than just a name on a page. And that could give them an edge when it comes to interviewing and, eventually, hiring, Black says.

HB Agency's O'Toole adds that graduates shouldn't be deterred by their lack of real-world job experience, since most recruiters and hiring managers are fully aware that entry-level candidates won't have the same skills and experience as a seasoned, older professional.

"It's unscientific, but the majority of hiring managers I've spoken to over the course of my career have an understanding that these candidates are coming in with minimal experience after four years of college," O'Toole says. "At this level, it's more about proving that they can be professional, mature, and will fit into the corporate culture and be willing to learn new skills on the job," he says.

So, Class of 2014 - don't wait. Start your job search as soon as possible, O'Toole says, "because you might get the job before others who wait until later."

And Class of 2015, it's never too soon to start.

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