



## **A Mentor Makes the Difference When Looking for a First Job**

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What a difference a mentor makes. Just a few months ago, Ranae Marquez would have started her search for a job in retailing by walking into stores and picking up applications.

Instead, this soon-to-be graduate of Pace University attended a networking event, where she met a merchandise manager in the fashion industry, a woman who guided her in the following ways:

Defining her goal - her "dream title," she says.

Targeting and researching ideal companies.

Setting up an informational interview to learn more about the industry and opportunities at Federated Department Stores, owner of Macy's and Bloomingdale's.

Preparing for a six-hour follow-up interview for a buyer's training slot.

And when on the day she picked up her cap and gown Marquez also got her job offer in the mail, the first person she called was her mentor, Caryn M. Wasserman,, to discuss the terms.

Indeed, having a seasoned professional guide is one of the most effective methods for finding a job. Without one, "I wouldn't have shot for what I really wanted," says Marquez, who serves as president of the Pace student group Women in Corporate America, which has forged relationships with three women's networking organizations in the city. Of the 10 members who are graduating seniors, six have gotten positions in other areas such as banking and television production, says Barry Miller, the group's adviser.

Besides seeking out mentors at such professional associations, graduates can also consider the following job search approaches:

Think small. A survey of 376 employers shows that those with 300 or fewer employees are planning to increase student hiring 4 percent to 14 percent this year, according to the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University.

Think broad. Can't find a job with employers in your field? Look for work with their customers or suppliers, says Roger Herman, a consultant and futurist in Greensboro, N.C. This keeps you in touch and positions you well with target employers. Also read the help-wanted ads from beginning to end and "circle everything that sounds like it might be an interest and fit," says Patricia McManus, director of career services at St. John's University.

Think commitment. Finding a job is a full-time job, and, once you graduate, plan on spending 30-35 hours a week on your search, says Tony Lee, editor of CollegeJournal.com, a career and job site. And keep at it. Despite the rejections, "it takes only one acceptance."

Think support groups. Band together and meet weekly with fellow job-hunters to share ideas and encouragement. Such groups are being set up at Queens College and elsewhere.

And remember that most university career centers stay open during the summer to serve graduates just like you.

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