

Where the Jobs Are

Working Aggies Share Their Wisdom

By Megan Orton
CAREER SEARCH

Where are the jobs? How do I find them? How can Texas A&M and the Aggie Network help me?

Many Aggies find themselves reaching a endless series of dead ends in the weakening job market, only to ponder a series of questions similar to these.

"Ninety-nine percent of Aggies find employment through networking or job search Web sites," said Paul Pausky, assistant director of placement at the Texas A&M Career Center.

But what happens when you've exhausted all of those possibilities?

Three students were willing to share their stories: how they got the career of their dreams, how they utilized their A&M backgrounds, and what you can do to follow in their footsteps.

The Industrial Distributor

Natalie Despaux, an industrial distribution graduate of the Class of 2004, used the Career Center to land her job as a procurement service adviser for Exxon-Mobil.

"The best advice I can give anyone is register through the Career Center your freshman year," she said.

The Career Center can then make available a list of jobs that apply to the student and he or she can sign up for interview times for the jobs that interest them, she said. Based on your resume, career center advisers decide whether you qualify for a particular interview, and the process begins there.

"The key thing is that even if you are not selected for an interview, you can still go to the company's presentation the night before the interviews begin," she explained. "There is a chance that if they have an extra opening, they will let you interview if you express interest in the company and the position."

Despaux set up her interview through the Career Center, landed a three-month internship with Exxon-Mobil, and a job offer followed. She stressed the importance her internship had in getting the job of her dreams.

"The internship and interviewing process allowed me to learn a lot about myself, and what I like and I don't like," she said.

Understanding this helped Despaux find the job that best suited her needs and the needs of the company. As a procurement service adviser, she handles different agreements between contractors and other divisions of Exxon-Mobil, mainly services and materials.

"I have the personality and the technical skills needed for the job, but I also have the determination to take on its challenges," she said. "Our work is different every day."

Despaux said the job has offered her the opportunity to interface with many different clients, including international companies. "As a global corporation, we have different laws and regulations we have to abide by to succeed," she said.

Despaux was hired by an Aggie, and said that although everyone in the workplace has been helpful, anyone with an Aggie ring is always more than willing to share experiences with her. Working with another Aggie gives you that "connection," she said.

The Entrepreneur

Steven Prince, a marketing graduate in the Class of 2003, met up with high school buddy Justin Rana six months ago and decided to start a business.

"I spent four-and-a-half months looking for jobs, was unsuccessful, and then decided to start my own business," Prince said. "My friend had some talent and was going in the right direction, so I applied my time and interest to his efforts."

And here they are.

The company, Miriam Media, is a small ad agency located in Denton, Texas, and currently employs only Prince and Rana themselves. They have been successful in working with Web sites, graphics, and ads for businesses in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

"We pretty much pitch to the businesses," Prince said.

He said Miriam does business with some companies that have six metroplex locations, but also with some like the mom-and-pop store around the corner. "It's a pretty wide spectrum."

Prince said he has been able to apply a lot that he learned in college, but he has since been shown a lot toward setting up his own business. He also did a lot of individual research and learning to successfully help launch Miriam Media.

Prince hopes to encourage other Aggies to strive for success in the advertising field.

"I think advertising is a weak area at A&M, and I hope one day I can buy my own building and make the ideas of advertising truly clear to Aggies," Prince said.

The Engineer

"Intern, intern, intern," said Sam Rodgers, Class of 2002. Rodgers was

hired by Halliburton Energy Services almost seven months before graduation. A petroleum engineering graduate from Katy, Rodgers had two internships with Halliburton while in school.

"My department was really good about bringing the interviews to us," Rodgers explained. "We didn't have to go through the Career Center, and that afforded us a little better opportunity." Rodgers said engineering students are simply told when and where the information sessions are, either by professors during classes or by company members during "lunch deals" in the petroleum engineering building. Then a list was made available to sign up for interviews.

"I tried to be outgoing, attentive and personable when I was put in a business/interview environment," Rodgers said. "I also never stopped asking questions. I felt like the better I knew my job, then the better I could present myself later." Rodgers said he felt that he showed dedication to his work and tried to emphasize those qualities when he interviewed. Once he accepted the internship, Rodgers said he attributed his success to hard work.

"I can't stress enough how important experience is," Rodgers said. He said that in the petroleum engineering department at A&M, internships weren't just encouraged, but required. "I think that is a big edge we have over other schools."

Rodgers also said that the Aggie connection is alive and well in the petroleum engineering field. "In the oil field Aggies are well thought of and all around you," Rodgers said. "When I meet other Aggies in the industry, it is almost as if there is an immediate connection — an understanding. I look out for him or her and vice versa."

Halliburton has offered Rodgers exactly what he was seeking. He said once he got his offer, he knew a career at Halliburton was what he wanted to pursue, and he didn't feel the need to look elsewhere. The career path flexibility, the daily challenges and the people he works with are all advantages of working with Halliburton. "And of course, the pay!" he joked. Opportunities included, for him, "hopefully seeing the world" and "feeling a part of something."



The \$50K Question

What you ask can land you your dream job

By Jonathan Todd
CAREER SEARCH

The most nerve-racking part of job searching is meeting a potential employer for the first time during an interview. It feels as though they are studying your every move, watching for a flaw.

The fact is that the interview is a chance for both of you to learn as much as possible about each other. Dr. Leigh Turner, executive director of the University's Career Center, calls the interview a two-way street.

"You need to know if you'll be a regular fit with the company," Turner says, "and asking good questions will show that you are interested and well prepared."

Your potential employer may ask questions to get to know you, but you can and should ask questions to get to know your potential employer as well. Demonstrating an interest in the company you're interviewing with can earn you brownie points with recruiters, as well. Here's how to use the interview process to your advantage.

Step 1: The Interview

Get a description of daily assignments you'll be responsible for. Your interviewer will see that you want to know more about the position and you will get a better feel of what a typical day on the job is like. Ask what an employee can do to excel in the position you are applying for, Turner says. By asking this, the interviewer can let you know what they expect of you.

Find out if the company provides leadership growth through added responsibilities or promotion. Find a position where you have the opportunity to move up the corporate ladder. Asking if there is a defined path for advancement for new hires is a good way to ask this question, Turner says, and also ask if the company supports graduate education.

Ask about the company's work environment. It's good to know if you'll be working with a team or individually. Just ask your interviewer to describe the team you'll be working with. "Recruiters are always looking for team players," Turner says, "and it is becoming more uncommon for a person to work by himself in a cubicle all

day." Also, supervisors may work closely with their workers or use a hands-off approach.

Ask about the company's organizational culture. A company's values are reflected in how they treat their employees and their cus-

tomers,

Turner says. For instance, ask if you'll have contact with senior officers. This is a polite way of getting a feel for office politics.

Also, notice whether your interviewer meets you personally in the waiting room or if an assistant or secretary escorts you to where you'll be interviewed.

You can safely predict if the office is social or if people keep to themselves.

A simple way is asking if there are any social activities like community service events or office intramurals, Turner says. Also, knowing a company's culture will make your transition into a new environment less awkward.

At the end of your interview, make sure you get a business card from everyone you've met. This will expand your network and give you correct spellings of names and official titles for writing those vital letters of thanks, acceptance or decline.

Step 2: The Office Visit

For the best preparation, ask for an itinerary. You will need to know what to expect going into your visit.

Researching your job and potential employer will help you ask relevant and meaningful questions about the company, its mission, and day-to-day operations. This proactive measure also impresses recruiters.

A helpful tip: Prepare well-researched questions because recruiters tend to hear the same questions from different recruits. "Do your homework and ask killer questions, Turner says, "let them know that you are sincere."



If it looks like you're going to land the job, it is appropriate to talk about the community and cost of living in the company's area. Ask about the housing market, Turner says, and ask if the company community is easy to adjust to. Not only

is this important information to you, it shows employers that you are thinking ahead.

In the unlikely event that your recruiter answered all of your questions without you having to ask any, always keep a backup question in your hip pocket, Turner says. Ask your recruiters why they enjoy

working for the company you are visiting or why they chose to work for the company. Again, it shows your interest and people always like to share their experiences.

At the end of your visit, ask yourself: Is there anything that I still want to know? Have all my questions been answered? And don't forget to ask for business cards.

Don't leave your interview without knowing the next step.

Ask who you will be interviewing with next, Turner says.

Step 3: Salary Negotiation

Wait until the end of your office visit to discuss your salary. By the end of the visit, you should have a clear picture of what your job will be like.

Let your recruiter bring up the salary subject and never be the first to mention it, Turner said. If you are unprepared to discuss it, go ahead and ask what the range is for the position.

You should expect to receive questions about your career goals. It is important to have goals and be able to articulate them. Also, your goals should be realistic.

According to "Haldane's," "Employers are looking for people who know what they want to do and who are focused on specific professional goals."

You should state goals that are consistent with the objective of your resume.

Question 10

Do you have any questions for me?

Asking detailed, informed questions shows a prospective employer you have done research. A company's Web site is a good source of information.

"Looking at a brochure on the company in the lobby while waiting for the interview is a good way to come up with some questions," Terrell said.

Questions

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If forced, you should mention ranges rather than a single number, Terrell said. This prevents you from losing possible income or not being offered the job.

"You don't want to cost yourself any money, but you don't say a number that's too high," Terrell said.

Go to interviews prepared. Review salaries for the specific company and the entire industry. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is a good source of salary information. The Texas A&M Career Center also publishes salary surveys. These resources report salary averages of different occupations, taking into consideration salary extremes and regional differences.

Question 7

Do you work well as part of a team?

Teamwork, diversity, empowerment — these are popular buzzwords in hiring, Terrell said. Employers are especially interested in how you react in a diverse atmosphere. Interviewers will want to know how often you move outside your comfort zone and how well you react to others.

You must evidence your ability. Citing clubs to which you belonged and student activities in which you participated shows you worked with different people.

"You're assigned to a work team of people of different races, religious beliefs, political beliefs and beliefs about how things should be, and you have to work with them as a team to produce a product, make money and solve problems," Terrell said.

Question 8

What did you like the most or the least about your previous job?

This question requires diplomacy. You generally do not want to make negative statements about your former or current job or boss. It can demonstrate a negative attitude or resentment.

Rather, "Haldane's" suggests you explain why you want the new job. For example, you can tell the interviewer you want more responsibilities. It does not reflect negatively on your previous job, and it shows initiative and desire on your part.

Question 9

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?