



# From Here to Career: Job Search for New Grads

By Stephanie Nijhuis

As graduation looms large in front of you, it is easy to wonder: what's next and how do I get started? Students are bombarded with news headlines telling them that their job prospects look grim and this, combined with being relatively inexperienced at job search, means the stress can pile up. Despite this, it is reassuring to note that within three years of acquiring their degree, the employment rate of university graduates in Canada is 91%. So how are these graduates finding jobs? *What's Next?* set out to learn what strategies helped some of our recent graduates successfully bridge the gap From Here to Career.

## Success Strategy #1

### Know What You Offer... and What You're Looking For

**Cassandra de Bartok** (MA'10 Sociology) began her full-time job search during her master's program. She was able to find work in the area she was interested in as a research assistant for the South African Research Centre (SARC). She stayed in that role throughout her graduate degree, however she had dreams of working for a non-profit in a bigger city (such as Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa or New York).

After her graduation, she stayed on in a full-time position at SARC while sending her resume out to other jobs in bigger cities.

Although she was able to interview for a number of positions, many of the jobs were being offered to internal candidates. "I knew that I had to change my game plan if I was going to land my dream job and set up an appointment with a Career Counsellor at Career Services," she explained. In addition to helping her strategize about how to find opportunities, Cassandra had an unexpected bonus from the appointment.

"The Career Counsellor led me through an exercise which ended up changing the course of my career (and my life)! She helped me to identify the skill set that I had acquired during my time at Queen's and asked me to articulate what I wanted out of a job (i.e., what would make me happy)."

During her appointment, Cassandra was able to reflect on the types of work and volunteer experiences she had done in the past. "I realized that I was happiest when I was volunteering and working with Student Affairs during my undergrad in Halifax" she said. "I thought my first job after graduation was leading me down a career path but little did I know that it was actually preparing me for my dream job in an entirely different field."

After her appointment, Cassandra's job search took a much more focused turn and she was able to use the relationships and skills she'd already built while at Queen's to find an opportunity here, at the university. "It seemed to me that everyone's path was leading away from Queen's, but I realized that my dream job was right here in Student Affairs."



Cassandra de Bartok, MA'10

## SUCCESS STRATEGY #2

### Use Both Networking AND Advertised Job Postings to Maximize Your Job Opportunities

**Allison Chong** (M.A.Sc '15 Mechanical Engineering) was somewhat surprised to find her current job through an online posting. She credits her success to having a very strong cover letter and resume, and exceptional interview skills. "I had been hearing so much about how getting hired is all about networking and connections," says Allison, "But, in this instance, I got lucky!"

"I didn't have any contacts at the company and just applied through a job search website."

In reality, Allison had done more than "just apply and get lucky". When she began her job search before finishing her program, she had initially started at the Engineering and Technology fair in January. From there she was able

to meet companies and do research into the types of jobs and employers she wanted to work for. When she graduated, she used some of the connections that she had made as a starting point.

"I kept my eye on their job postings and signed up on their job posting email alert list," she said. "I also followed up with a few contacts who either had a job opening at the company that they were working for or who had offered to pass along my resume for consideration for future openings".

When her connections didn't initially seem to pan out, Allison turned to a career counsellor at Career Services. "We discussed my current job search direction and I was provided with guidance into other approaches and resources – some of which I used (reading a job search book, refining the message I was sending in my application)" she explained. "I would feel reenergized after speaking with the career counsellor – I would definitely recommend connecting with Career Services if students ever feel down about their job search!"

Another lesson Allison learned as a new grad: balance is key—in life and job search! "I would say that balancing job search time between online posting and making connections would be immensely better than putting all your job search eggs into one basket."



Allison Chong, M.A.Sc '15

*continued*

## SUCCESS STRATEGY #3

### Harness the Power of LinkedIn

**Angela Su** (BAH'16 *Film & Media Studies*) has a job title with the “cool” factor: She’s a freelance Associate Producer at Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE). But that cool job title didn’t come without some serious initiative on Angela’s part.

She began looking for a job in January of her final year at Queen’s. During her final semester, Angela said she was actively “sending out resumes and reaching out to industry professionals through LinkedIn (see page 18 to learn about the **Queen’s Connects Career Network for Students and Alumni** group in LinkedIn)”. This wasn’t the first time she found a position through LinkedIn. During her undergrad, she used the professional networking tool to contact various industry professionals, which led her to a summer internship. During that internship, Angela had been able to build on her degree and extra-curricular skills and her hard work made it easier to network for a full time position.

Angela says that in addition to using LinkedIn, the most important part of her graduating job search was “to stay persistent and keep networking in the field I wanted to pursue”.

All that persistence paid off. Angela was hired as a Freelance Associate Producer at MLSE just in time for graduation.



Angela Su, BAH'16

*Have you got questions about how to get “From Here to Career” after graduation? For a customized strategy that considers your geographic and interest goals, come to drop-in career advising or book a 1-1 appointment through the Career Services website:*

**[careers.queensu.ca](http://careers.queensu.ca)**

*Stephanie Nijhuis is a 4th year Religious Studies major and the project lead for this magazine*



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