

# TampaBay-Job-Links offers new college grads job-hunting skills, strategy



*Sheila Solomon Rudd, TBJL Executive Director (left), and Michael Lebovitz, an August 2014 University of Kansas graduate (right), talk about the self-marketing materials that helped Michael land a job in Tampa that he enjoys.*

After college students pick up their diploma, many soon find out there is one skill they didn't learn in class: how to find a job.

Tampa Bay-Job-Links is offering job-search coaching and career planning to aid these graduates in finding a job.

The job market for new graduates is improved over last year, according to the Job Outlook Survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Companies in the survey indicated they plan to hire 9.6 percent more graduates in 2015. However, finding employment continues to be competitive and a college degree no longer guarantees easy entry into good-paying jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that nearly twice as many college graduates are working for minimum wage compared to 10 years ago.

Sitting at home and searching Internet job boards won't be enough to land employment, said Sheila Solomon Rudd, executive director of TampaBay-Job-Links, a non-profit organization created in 2010 in response to high unemployment from the Great Recession.

In today's job market, finding work requires a sophisticated skill set and strategy. The basics include knowing how to customize résumés; software programs used by human resource departments eliminate resumes without the right key words. Among other crucial skills are networking, using social media platforms like LinkedIn and honing in on potential employers.

“Ideally, students would learn how to do this while in college but universities and colleges don’t really prepare them for how to enter the work world. That’s really a course in itself,” said Rudd.

TampaBay-Job-Links provides individualized job search support to job seekers from recent college graduates to displaced workers who can’t retire. A career strategist is paired with clients for one-on-one support and in weekly workshops clients are guided through topics like what interviewers are really looking for. They also are introduced to tools that help them develop a career identity and self-guided marketing plan.

Michael Lebovitz, a 2014 graduate of the University of Kansas who moved to Pinellas County with his fiancée last year, said what he learned not only helped him find a job but also will be an asset throughout his career. He holds a degree in linguistics with a concentration in Jewish languages, and was working as a part-time tutor when he heard a presentation about TampaBay-Job-Links at the Jewish Leadership Training Institute.

“They taught me how to reach out to people. Just something like a business card – what’s the polite way to offer a business card,” said Lebovitz.

TampaBay-Job-Links career strategist Bob Barry encouraged Lebovitz to compose a “personal work philosophy” which includes personal values and work ethics. Lebovitz was employed throughout college and drew from his experiences to articulate his work values that included “I never fly blind” and “I’m thankful to customers and co-workers; they are the ones making my success.”

Adding the values statement to his resume helped Lebovitz land a new job at a Tampa company. “They looked at what I’d written as my values and said, ‘These are a lot of the things our company holds to high standards.’ ”

“A challenge for new college graduates can be feeling impatient,” said Robyn Winters, a career strategist at TampaBay Job-Links. “They should be prepared that it could take more than a few months.”

They may also have some unrealistic expectations about entry-level jobs, according to a recent survey by Accenture Strategy, both in terms of how long it takes to find a job and what the pay will be.

For more information, contact TampaBay-Job-Links at [job-tbjl.org](http://job-tbjl.org) or call (813) 344-0200 or visit the website at [www.tbjl.org](http://www.tbjl.org).

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