

Foreword

I wish Peter Vogt had been my career counselor in college.

Back then, we started looking for work just around graduation time, which was about a year late. If any of us had visited the career center at school, we were given a list of books to read and an offer to chat with the one beleaguered career coach on campus. My friends and I also believed we knew “truths” about the job search:

“Your first job will determine the rest of your career.”

“Don’t use your personal connections to find work—that’s cheating.”

“If you just get the résumé perfect, you’ll get the job.”

“If you love what you’re doing, you won’t worry about the money.”

“If you don’t know your life’s calling at age 22, you probably won’t ever find it.”

“If you’re not premed or prelaw, you’re pre-bum.”

In retrospect, it is amazing to me that we believed these myths, which even then were far from the reality of work. But perhaps we can be forgiven because 1) the unemployment rate then hovered around a brutal 14 percent, and 2) career advice from parents and teachers generally reinforced the myths.

I, for one, spent a hot summer in a folding chair on the roof of a tenement building in Manhattan, reading *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, searching newspaper job ads, and blindly sending résumés off to possible employers.

In those days, career counselors were just beginning to suggest that instead of accepting a dreary, one-way vision of work, students should broadly study jobs, industries, styles of working, and the financial implications of their choices. Counselors also caught on to the notion that students who knew more about their own talents, interests, personalities, values, and temperaments might more easily move toward careers in which they would be happy and successful. They suggested this wildly original idea: students entering the workforce should continue to be *students* of the two most important factors defining success, the job market and themselves.

What a notion! Students could continue to use the skills they had earned with 16 to 20 years of effort (and pots of money) to help decide the next phase of their lives! They could research the job market, discover what they were good at doing, discover what they *liked* to do, and thus make appropriate career decisions. Just like researching a topic, testing hypotheses, doing fieldwork, studying history, etc., in order to come up with a well-reasoned conclusion in a term paper.

OK, that notion seems obvious enough today. But even now, the experiences of countless students tell me it is hard to act on these simple ideas. The fact is we do not yet educate ourselves enough at the college level about careers. There are no semester-long courses on networking, or job research, or interviewing skills. Professors can tell you a lot about their fields of study, but blessed few can tell you how to prepare for the day-to-day work of sales management, or health care administration, or technology management. How many professors can describe the best career progression for an airline pilot, a nursing supervisor, or a Web interface designer?

This is not just a rap on colleges. Career centers have become very good indeed. More teachers come to the classroom today with real-world experience. In fact, students themselves are a big

part of the problem. When was the last time you saw a college career center crowded with students asking questions and making full use of the resources? When was the last time students circulated a petition demanding their college spend more money on career training, or that academic guidelines require every student to take two semesters of career management?

Now, fortunately, we have Peter Vogt, with his feet planted both in college career counseling and the real world. I have relied on his advice to college students for the past seven years, as he wrote his regular articles for Monster.com and MonsterTRAK. I have called on Peter to supply trenchant quotes for the *Monster Careers* series of books (written with Monster's founder Jeff Taylor). Peter knows your world, in which students start the job search from square one, and he knows mine, the new world of work in private industry, government, and not-for-profit organizations.

With *Career Wisdom for College Students*, Peter has finally brought all his insight and know-how into a progressive, A-to-Z guide for students just starting to make sense of the job hunt. Reading it, I am reminded that he is especially skilled at paring down the broad topics (like career testing or exploring different professions) to focus on the areas where students are most likely to stumble. You, as a person just starting out, do not have to become an expert in all matters of job search. You do not, for example, have to spend much time learning about midcareer changes! Yet most guides try to cover the whole range of possibility. Peter has focused on your situation alone.

As you will see, Peter grounds his advice in the experience of students he has known in a decade of counseling. This is also relevant, because they have entered the job market in a time unlike any in the past century. Work is becoming both more specialized and more interdependent. Globalization and the Internet have radically changed not only how business is

done, but also how careers are built. At the same time, there are ancient truths that have been drowned in a rising tide of claims and chatter. Trust, honesty, and reputation still matter. Common sense, reliability, and judgment are more valuable than ever. Insight, self-knowledge, and critical questioning of one's beliefs are not only important to finding the right career, but they are hugely important in today's workplace, where the never-ending flood of information all too often substitutes for wisdom. Peter Vogt understands this, and the advice he gives in *Career Wisdom for College Students* is enlivened by the true stories of students he has guided through the exciting and scary early steps of learning to find work.

You need to be honest with yourself to take full advantage of this book. If you are not willing to do the homework that makes a real career possible, or if you do not want to discard your false assumptions, or if you would rather trust your luck, I suggest you try methods that don't work for a while, then return to Peter's book. As I learned on that hot rooftop decades ago, failure is a great motivator—to do things the right way.

If you have read this far, however, I will bet you have the energy to put into a real job search. It is one of life's true adventures, and Peter Vogt is a great guide along the way.

Hey, Peter, if you ever find a time machine, would you mind traveling back in time to work as a career counselor at my college, say, about 20 years ago? And if you don't have the time for a visit, will you at least send a copy of your book back to that rooftop in Manhattan?

—Doug Hardy,
Career expert and former editor in chief, Monster.com