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Where the Jobs Are

Working Aggies Share Their Wisdom

By Megan Orton

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 Nashed, 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 ExxonMobil.

"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, Mirmam 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. "Mirmam does business with some companies that have six metropolitan 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 also that he has been shown a lot toward setting up his own business. He also did a lot of research and learning to restructure help launch Mirmam 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 personalable 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, 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. "I believe 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."
It's a Jungle Out There

Hunting jobs when they're hiding in other prospective bushes

By Shannan E. Johnson

Have you ever rolled out of bed early, put on your Sunday's best, made several copies of your resume that you revised more than a million times, and arrived at a career fair that wasn't up to par? This happens to eager job seekers far too often. The average student depends on his or her college or university to help them network with the right companies at the right time — usually the career fair. These students put all their effort into trying to make themselves look the best candidate for the job, but when they show up, they can hear their heels clicking on the newly waxed floors because of the lack of hustle and bustle from the would-be competitors. The usual solution is to go back to class and work the phone, practically logging from booth to booth. The only table in the entire exhibit hall is occupied by a plight-faced teenager from the fast-food chain, who is looking for an assistant manager. What a waste of time!

For those students who are willing to go above and beyond, here are some alternative paths to finding a career:

Crashing Career Fairs

Small fellow Aggies are thinking, But when it comes to a career, Aggies have to broaden their minds past "Goodbye to Texas University," and instead say "hello." The Texas A&M chapter of the American Advertising Federation (AAF) plans trips annually to the UT Communications Career Fair. The vice president of programs visits the UT Communications School Web site and calls its career center for information on where and how the career fair will take place, what colleges will be present for what positions they will be hiring. Then university-organized trips are planned and the Aggies road trip down Highway 21.

"We are disadvantaged by not having the actual advertising degree (which can be obtained from UT and many other larger state schools), and ads do not normally actively pursue employees from A&M," said Melissa Castles, current vice president of programs for AAF. "Going to events (tours, companies, speakers) helps us form contacts and learn from the best in the business."

Never underestimate the career fairs of neighboring schools. Aggies might hate rival teams when it comes to football, but after the big game graduating seniors still need jobs. So, when you've been misled into thinking career fairs at A&M are the only place for resources, travel, travel, travel.

The Hidden Job Market

According to the Career Center, 80 percent of all jobs are found through networking — contacts and referrals. Texas A&M Career Center's Pat Alexander advises: "Inform everyone in your network of your on-going job search and be sure to provide them with specific details about your job objective, qualifications and skills."

Call and set up a tour at various companies in interest. Besides crashing career fairs, AAF also sets up tours on advertising and design agencies in close proximity to Texas A&M. "HAF (Houston Advertising Federation) has proved to be a good connection for our group as they host the competitions we attend every fall. From there we are able to meet with representatives from 15 to 20 agencies in one day," Scales said. "Each person then brings back their information and we share it, and grow our network."

Many companies are happy to let students tour the company, ask questions, or shadow an executive for a day. One never knows, there might be an Aggie working at the company. "Remember, you must ask for help and people will be willing to do so," Alexander said. Leanne South, director of College Relations in the College of Liberal Arts, suggests students try volunteering at non-profit organizations in their area. Non-profit organizations such as March of Dimes, Twin Cities Missions and the American Heart Society always need extra help in their public relations, event planning and accounting departments.

"It is a great opportunity to develop people skills and social consciousness of life," South said. "Later when students are in need of jobs, they will remember your work."

What is the motto of this article, boys and girls? Don't give up if the jobs aren't pouring in for you like they seem to be for everyone around you. It will take some work on your behalf.

"You must be diligent and have a well-organized plan of action. This helps you to stay focused and helps you to not give up," Alexander said. The Career Center teaches students to start early, giving themselves six months to a year to find what they want. Just remember, don't settle for the empty exhibition hall — do something about it.

How to find professional societies at Texas A&M

Looking for a professional or academic organization to join? Go to Texas A&M's Student Activities page: http://studentactivities.tamu.edu/stuactweb/search. All of the academic societies are listed by schools. Check on your respective college and find the group that best suits your interests. Good luck!
Experiential Education
Internships outside your field open worlds of opportunity

“College is a time for testing the water. Experience doesn’t just come from sitting behind a desk. I can choose the adventurous over the practical and still reap the benefits of an internship.”

—Bhavana Titas, Baylor University junior

"Learning goes beyond the academic scope to practical skills of being an employee within an organization, or what the industry refers to as 'soft skills," Boeraea said. "These include oral and written communication, presentation skills, interpersonal communications, the ability to work in teams, cultural awareness and the ability to work with diverse populations, flexibility, initiative and leadership." Voyager has even spoken to student organizations, challenging others to step out of their comfort zones and accept opportunities that provide these skills even though the work environment may be a little less traditional. "I have always perceived internships as being cut and dry, but colleges is a time for testing the water," said Bhavana Titas, a Baylor University junior who joined Voyager speak at a Campus Crusade for Christ event. "Experience doesn’t just come from sitting behind a desk. I can choose the adventurous over the practical and still reap the benefits of an internship." While Boeraea, who has worked in career services since 1989, advocates any opportunity that allows students to gain work-related experience, she said international experiences provide their own benefits. "With the emphasis on the global economy and diversity in the workforce, international experiences that demonstrate intercultural awareness such as international internships or study abroad are becoming more valued by employers," Boeraea said. Brad Collet, the associate director of experiential education at A&M, also stressed the importance of internships, both traditional and nontraditional. "Our recruiting employers tell us that the most important is one of the most important things they look for in their time for evaluating a potential candidate," Collet said. "What better way to find out what it’s like to work in a specific industry than actually experience it firsthand." Collet also stressed that students can learn pertinent skills even if their internship experiences venture outside of the scope of their major. "In fact, students may have an opportunity to learn more even more because they can often times be given even more experiences. (Nontraditional internships) may not be as structured as a traditional internship, but they can offer at least as many benefits," Collet said. So, internships with investment bankers in a prestigious firm may be the route for some. Others may prefer thrashing around a set of the Hoober video conference. But Bhavana Voyager choose to leave her impression on the company. In the spring of 2003, 13 children found homes with the first 10 New Hope foster families, and 10 more families were preparing to open their homes to orphaned children. Sure leaving school for a semester had its costs, but accepting a challenge and causing change. Now that it is truly priceless.
By Ashley E. Ingels

Careers Search

Writing a great resume can be an opportunity to present yourself as one in a million. The following will provide a map for confining all the wonders of your hiring potential to a page or two. Preparing a resume may be easier than you think since the subject matter is one you are most familiar with — yourself.

Create Your Resume

Pursue the top employers in your field by researching who they are. Dr. Douglas Perrot, Jr., professor of journalism at Texas A&M, advises job hunters to “research the company so you will know what the company does and what it wants its employees to do and be able to do.” As you are gearing your resume to the specific needs and needs of different employers, it is fitting to have different versions of your resume to submit to different employers.

If you were going fishing at Lake Somerville this weekend, you would not just throw out any old grub worm on your line (even if it were big and lusty). Rather, you would throw out the bait that you know that rainbow trout can not resist. It’s the same with your resume. Tailor your resume to the enterprise you are pursuing. If your resume is packed with stellar accomplishments, but lacks explicit information of what you can offer that employer, it will be like the grub worm-packed with juicy stuff, but not targeting at the appetite.

The time invested in researching the enterprise is also the time invested in the interview. Interviewers typically ask if you have questions for them. Knowing a lot about the enterprise makes it easy to ask questions. Doing so shows you took the time to get to know them as they are getting to know you.

Present Your Accomplishments

With an idea of what your potential employer wants, consider the accomplishments to include in your resume.

List your accomplishments, activities and internships in your own words. Transform them to phrases that seem likely to appeal to the employer.

“Your need for your job experience in terms that employers are looking for,” said Dr. Lynn Mitchell, who teaches public relations at A&M.

Penslope Trunk, writer for the “Braden Careerist” of Bankrate.com, gives examples of how to transform past activities to successful accomplishments. She said, “Don’t say ‘Managed two people and created a tracking system for marketing.’ Say: ‘Managed a team that built a tracking system to decrease marketing costs 10 percent... Think of it as the difference between writing, ‘I went to my classes and took tests’ vs. ‘I have 3.5 GPA.’”

Emphasize Classwork

Everyone who goes through college has experience and has learned how to work. Mitchell said to mention skills you learned in class or group projects, such as web page design, developing brochures or special event planning. Inventory the tools you learned in class and the tools you used in group projects.

Christian Kelly, an industrial engineering student who graduated in May, has been offered a job with FujiFilm Computer Systems. Kelly said, “I didn’t have any work experience, so I had to focus on my strengths with other things, like community service. I worked at a day camp in Denton as the director.”

The Resume Packet

If you want to add the leadership qualities they wanted, I let my peers. They’re looking for someone to be in a managerial position soon,” include tidbits about your life that you may not see as important or relevant to a resume, but that employers might consider solid nuggets.

The Resume Packet

Include other documents along with your resume, such as a cover letter and to give the reader other things to reference after looking at the resume.

Include:

1 Cover Letter

Find the name of the person hiring by calling the office and asking for their name, title and location. Address your letter to a person by name and title. Tell the contact what you can do for the enterprise, what your talents are, what you have done and can do. Mention career objectives. "Do not begin the cover letter with the first person singular ‘I.’ To begin with yourself, ‘puts too much focus on elaborating on yourself and to give the reader other things to reference after looking at the resume.’" For each enterprise, you could begin with a reason for wanting to work at that enterprise or the (enterprise’s) reputation.

2 Resume

3 List of References

Include 3 to 5. Many times the employer will contact the references before considering the applicant.

4 Samples of your work

If relevant to your field, include no more than 6.
Knock Their Socks Off!

Answering the 10 toughest questions interviewers pose

By Jeremy Osborne

During a job interview, the old adage holds true: You never get a second chance to make a first impression. An interview is your one opportunity to make a positive, lasting impact on a prospective employer. How you present yourself and answer certain questions can be the difference between "You're hired," and "Thank you for coming.

Despite the high stakes of this process, there are simple steps you can take to make an interview less stressful and more successful.

First, always arrive early for an interview. Studies show that the first five minutes of an interview are the most important. If you are late, you miss this crucial time.

"If you're early, you're on time. If you're on time, you're late. And, if you're late, never mind," said Samantha Wilson, Career Center assistant director.

In order to be early, find the location where you are interviewing in the days before the interview. Have everything prepared, and allow plenty of time to reach your destination. Once you have arrived, your demeanor is especially important.

"Haldane's Answers to Tough Interview Questions" advises being enthusiastic and exuding confidence. Greet the receptionist with a smile, announce your arrival and wait patiently.

"When greeted by the interviewer, introduce yourself and give a firm handshake. Follow him or her to the interview room, and wait for the interviewer to ask you to sit down.

DURING THE INTERVIEW, the Career Center's site suggests you sit up straight, maintain eye contact, and remain positive and confident.

In addition to friendly and confident behavior, your appearance must be professional.

Dale Pratch, Texas A&M Career Center assistant director, said men should wear single-breasted, navy blue or charcoal suit with white, long-sleeved Oxford shirt and solid ties. Women should wear single-breasted, dark-colored pantsuit or skirted suits with skirt length just above the knees.

Men and women should wear minimal cologne or perfume, and they should limit jewelry and accessories. Interviewers should wear only one ring per hand.

Avoid trends and distracting clothing, Wilson said.

"You want interviewers to remember you, not your clothes," she said.

Your grooming is also important.

"Your hair should be styled and your nails should be manicured. Make sure your clothes are pressed," Pratch said.

"This makes your appearance impeccable.

Before the questioning begins, interviewers often break the ice with small talk. This is an opportunity for them to test your ability to engage in conversation as well as your knowledge of current events.

"They will ask you, "Watch the news, read The Wall Street Journal and be up on current events."

But don't step on anyone's toes.

Stay out of conversations on politics and religion," said Dr. Wayne Terrell, associate director of the Texas A&M Career Center.

Once you and the interviewer are comfortable, the interview questions begin.

"Haldane's said tough questions will often focus on career goals, motivations, experiences, strengths and weaknesses," Terrell said.

And you should anticipate certain questions and practice responses.

Interviewers ask questions for two reasons, Terrell said.

"They may ask a question to get info to supplement what they already know about you," Terrell said.

"A second thing they're looking for is style — how you go about organizing your thoughts and articulating them.

Question 1

Tell me about yourself.

Interviewers usually begin with this request to put the interviewee at ease, but this can be a difficult question to answer. "They [interviewers] don't want you spending 30 minutes going back to your birth date chronologically mapping out every event that happened in your life," Terrell said.

Instead, you should focus on the information that is relevant and pertinent to the job. "Haldane's suggests emphasizing a pattern of interests, skills and accomplishments. Focus your response around a common theme.

"As a rule of thumb, no answer should be longer than two minutes," Terrell said.

Question 2

Why should we hire you?

"Haldane's suggests preparing a one- to two-minute summary of why you are the perfect candidate. Highlight your skills, compatibility with both the position available and the company. Emphatically point out how much you feel the company is a great place to work and allow the interviewer to know how much you want the job.

Question 3

What is your greatest weakness?

Employers will almost always ask prospective employees to list one or two of their greatest weaknesses. Terrell said there are two ways to respond to this question.

"At the very worst, you want to give a response that's kind of neutral," he said.

"They don't really see that as a negative or positive. Another way would be to take something pertinent to that particular job you list as a negative, but they might see it as a positive.

Terrell used the example of an accountant interviewing for auditors. He said listing overconfidence in detail would be considered an asset to these companies.

Listing weaknesses we all have, such as time management, can be endearing to interviewers, Terrell said.

"Haldane's suggests not mentioning weaknesses that might directly affect job performance. Rather, list a weakness upon which you have improved."

Question 4

What is your greatest strength?

This is an opportunity to accentuate some of the points on your resume.

Terrell said you can prepare for this question by taking your resume and writing a 15-minute speech about yourself.

Then, memorize the key selling points you want to present in the interview.

"Haldane's suggests you give examples of how this strength has affected your effectiveness on the job. You can cite specific skills and statistics.

Question 5

Describe a situation in which you faced a problem. How did you solve it?

This question will often be asked during a behavioral interview, one in which a profile of desired behavior is determined, with questions designed to measure your compatibility with the company's profile.

"It is believed the greatest predictor of future performance is past performance. In the absence of that observation, questions are designed to measure your ability."

Terrell said.

A Career Center brochure details the "STAR" acronym. It is a formula for answering this type of question. It said to describe the situation in which you were involved, describe the task to be performed, what was your approach to the problem and what were the results of your actions.

Question 6

What are your salary requirements?

You should not discuss salary unless the interviewer directly asks you about it.

Then, you should attempt to make them offer a number.

"You don't discuss salary or benefits until they've made you an offer," Terrell said.

See Questions on page 7
The $50K Question
What you ask can land you your dream job

By Jonathan Todd

The most nerve-recking part of job searching is meet-
ing 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 respon-
sible for. Your interviewer will want to know 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 employ-
ee 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 pos-
tion where you have the opportunity to move up the cor-
porate ladder. Asking if there is a defined path for advancement for new hires is a good way to ask this ques-
tion. 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 and if they're always looking for team players," Turner says, "and it is becoming more un-
common for a person to work by themselves in a cookie-cutter
day." Also, supervisors may work closely with 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 serv-
ence 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 busi-
ness 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. Reser-
cizing your job and potential employer will help you ask relevant and meaningful questions about the com-
pany, its mission, and its operations. This proactive measure also impresses recruiters.

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

Questions

Continued from page 5

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 Assocaition of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is a good source of salary infor-
ation. The Texas A&M Career Center also publishes salary surveys. These resources report salary averages of dif-
ferent occupations, taking into consider-
ation salary extremes and regional differ-
ences.

Question 7
Do you work well as part of a team?

Teammate, diversity, empowerment - these popular buzzwords hit like a thunderstorm, Terrell said. Employers are especially inter-
ested in how you react in a diverse atmos-
phere. Interviewers will want to know how you work with different people. Two questions that will help your review team of people of different races, religious beliefs, political beliefs and beliefs about what things should be, and you have to work with them 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.

Riefert, "Halfadey" suggests you explain why you want the new job. For example, you can ask the interviewer what you're looking for.

Question 9
Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

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 based on what you want to do and who are focused on specific professional goals.

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

You should have goals that are consis-
tent with the objective of your resume.

Question 10
Do you have any questions for me?

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

"Looking at a brochure on the compa-
y in the lobby while waiting for the inter-
view is a good way to come up with some ques-
tions," Terrell said.
You’ve made it this far...

Making the most of your on-site interview

By Amanda Fazzino

Preliminary interviews, phone calls and e-mails have all led up to this — the company visit. Only the most qualified candidates make it this far, usually the last step before an offer is extended (or not).

Candidates are no longer wooed by big-budgeted recruiting departments as companies no longer identify top picks easily.

"The technology industry is different today than three or four years ago," Hewlett-Packard business operations and planning analyst Peggy Cruse said. "It used to be that there were two jobs for every candidate."

Instead, companies rely on phone interviews, recruit from schools close to their locations, and visit campuses for interviews more often. Many companies, Hewlett-Packard included, have reduced the number of schools targeted for recruiting by a third or more.

While companies are more selective about the candidates they invite for company visits, candidates can still expect travel and overnight expenses to be covered. It’s not uncommon to be taken to lunch, but don’t expect a five-star dinner.

"We hire a lot of remote candidates, but they have to come to Houston for interviewing," Universal Computer Systems (UCS) recruiting supervisor Kristina Lee said. "We pay for everything — the plane, hotel, food. We don’t want you to pay for anything." UCS has company apartments and dining facilities on site that candidates use on visits, reducing recruiting costs.

"Every expense from the flight to the hotel and meals were covered," said Blake Cameron, a senior finance major of his office visits. "I had no out-of-pocket expenses going on the interviews unless I wanted a Coke at 2 a.m. in the hotel. Money I spent on gas, parking at the airport — everything was covered."

Cameron enjoyed social evenings before interviews at Ernst & Young and Ryan & Company, giving him an opportunity to assess the corporate cultures.

"It was just real laid back," Cameron said. "It gave you a chance to ask them questions about the company. Everyone was more than willing to answer questions, and they buy you drinks at the bar."

Observing employee interaction is an advantage interviewers have when on the company’s turf.

"The dress and attitudes that recruiters and departments carry tell if people are laid back or uptight," Lee said. "The way you’re treated during recruiting is the way they will treat you when you work there."

To save time and money, some companies have cut back on individual interviews, inviting candidates to office visits in groups, observing their interaction and comparing them, side-by-side, against each other.

"It’s very hard if you’re not a competitor," Cruse said. "That’s going to come across and you’ll be going to get shut out."

For Cameron, the group visit made the entire process easier, since all candidates were on an equal playing field.

"It really would have felt more competitive if there was only one position, but the company didn’t see it that way," he said. "They said they would hire qualified candidates that could fill their needs."

Candidates that have made it as far as a company visit are expected to know the company and department, and to ask thoughtful questions.

"You should prepare the same way for off- or on-site interviews," Lee said. "There’s not much you can do differently to prepare because you’ve probably never been inside."

"Company campus tours and personal contacts are one way to learn about the company, but the fastest and most comprehensive way to learn about a company is by browsing its Web site."

"I don’t know what we did without it," Cruse said. "By going to the ‘about us’ or ‘company history’ sites, you can find out what the company does, how large it is, who it was started by, HP, for example, started in a garage in the 1930’s."

Candidates should also be familiar with the company’s products, services and where it stands in the marketplace.

"Knowing the mission, CEO and background information is somewhat important," Cruse said.

Unlike interviews at the Career Center, which can be limited to 30 minutes, company visits include multiple interviews with no time limits. If the company hasn’t properly coordinated interviewers, candidates may grow frustrated by repetitive questions.

"We’re looking for consistency in answers," Lee said. "Those who answer inconsistently put a question in the recruiters’ minds as to whether they’re telling the truth or not."

But if you get the same questions again and again, "answer it like it’s the first time, with the same enthusiasm," Cruse said.

"Making it through a day or two of intensive interviews is an unfamiliar place is a success in its own right, but sealing this deal means landing the job."

Before leaving the office, thank those who interviewed and host ed you. "After you leave, always send a thank you letter to your recruiter," Lee said.

"Want to make a bigger impression with a phone call? It’s OK if you do, and OK if you don’t."

"Be persistent," Lee said, "but anything beyond one phone call would be too persistent."