

KICK-START YOUR CAREER

*Find out why ambition, drive and qualifications are not enough
and what else **you** need...*

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STARTING OUT IN THE EXCITING WORLD OF WORK

Back in your parents' day, it was OK to simply have a university degree. It pretty much granted you access to any (relatively) high-paying job you fancied. From there, you could work your way up to higher and higher paid positions and then maybe branch off to start your own business. Sounds pretty simple, right?

Compare that to today's economic and social climate. Around 48% of young people are in higher education, compared to 12% in 1979 (around the time your parents might have been at uni). ➔



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Having a degree, while incredibly important and rewarding, is no longer sufficient to differentiate you from all the other bright sparks trying to enter the job market.

And it's not only the rising number of graduates that has made jumping on the career ladder that much harder for extremely capable students like you. Ripple effects of the 2008 recession and operations being outsourced globally to developing markets mean that higher numbers of skilled graduates are competing for fewer jobs.

It's not just graduate jobs that are becoming more competitive: jobs that don't even require a university qualification (bank clerks, police officers, restaurant and shop managers) are now being filled by graduates. As if the prospect of end-of-year exams wasn't anxiety-inducing enough!

THERE'S PLENTY AN INTELLIGENT AND DRIVEN INDIVIDUAL CAN DO TO ENSURE THAT THEY GET — AND STAY — AHEAD OF THE GRADUATE CROWD.

As doom and gloom as this all sounds, there's plenty an intelligent and driven individual can do to ensure that they get — and stay — ahead of the graduate crowd. Your university degree is a superb foundation on which to grow the skills and attributes potential employers are looking for in dream candidates. But to do all this you need to actively decide to take control of your career and your future. Without that drive and determination, your

work-worthy talents and skills will remain unseen.

Over the course of this guide, we're going to tell you exactly what you need to know and do to kick-start your career success. We'll cover what employers look for in their perfect candidates and the skills you can start honing today to propel you ahead of your peers in the race for the job you truly deserve. ●



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PLANNING FOR THE CAREER YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

We've already mentioned how back in the 70s and 80s, graduates had it much easier than you do. A university degree was a passport to a well-paid job, and there'd be much less planning and scheming required to secure an interview – let alone a position at a decent company. Because of this, there was far less pressure on graduates to create a Grand Career Plan that would see them through the first decade of their working life.

This isn't a strategy that a graduate with as much potential as you should adopt. Going with the →



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flow might be a great mindset to adopt when you're on summer holiday in Cornwall or Spain, but it won't do much to launch you into the trailblazing career you're cut out for. Just as important as completing coursework and achieving good exam marks is planning your career – where you'd like to be and what you want to achieve.

Perhaps you have a passion for politics and would love to be an MP one day so that you can improve the state of education. Or maybe you're interested in global economics and would love to work and live abroad. Once you've brainstormed your ideal career, it'll be easier to formulate the individual steps you need to take to get there.

This is where research really becomes important. If you want to get into banking or economics, you're going to need to understand the industry, the



COMPANY WEBSITES, INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC FORUMS, LINKEDIN PROFILES AND TRADE JOURNALS ARE A BRILLIANT PLACE TO START THE RESEARCH THAT WILL SHAPE YOUR PLANNING.

companies and key players within the sector. Company websites, industry-specific forums, LinkedIn profiles and trade journals are a brilliant place to start the research that will shape your planning. Think of anyone you know who either works, or has worked (or knows someone who works!) in your industry of interest. Invite them out for a coffee and ask them questions about the sector. You'll learn heaps, and begin building a network that'll work in your favour down the line. ●



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HAVE YOU GOT WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR?

Filling a position isn't a simple case of hiring the most intelligent or qualified individual. If it were, a company could automate its entire recruitment process and base job suitability entirely on a CV.

In reality, it's a lot more complex than that. In fact, 80% of employers believe that young people are ill prepared for the world of work. Yes, intelligence and qualifications are part of the get-me-a-job puzzle, but those aren't the only desirable qualities businesses look for when hiring.



In the next few sections we're going to talk about some of the skills and attributes you need in order to get ahead in your career – ones you don't necessarily learn at uni. These skills have been identified by a wide variety of high-level managers and business leaders from across the world. →



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#1 HOW SELF AWARE ARE YOU?

Self awareness is an important characteristic that employers look for when they're interviewing candidates for a job. But what does self awareness actually mean? Self awareness isn't just about being aware of what you're doing, but understanding where your strengths and weaknesses lie. You might think that the main aim of a job interview is to convince the interviewer that you're flawless and have no faults, but that really isn't the case.

No matter how awesome you are, you'll have your faults – and there's nothing wrong with that. The ticket to a shining career is being aware of both your strengths and weaknesses. If you know what your strengths are, you can play to them; and if you can identify your weaknesses, you can begin working on improving them. Without self awareness, you won't be able to do either and your career will stagnate.

SELF AWARENESS ISN'T JUST ABOUT BEING AWARE OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING, BUT UNDERSTANDING WHERE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES LIE.

Let's take a look at an example. Jenny is an exceptional medical student. She passes all her modules with flying colours and is particularly good at lab practicals. Her strengths are her analytical skills.

However, the attention to detail that comes with her analytical mind can lead to her getting bogged down by the details instead of seeing the bigger picture – which is important for someone wanting to pursue a career as a doctor. But through self awareness, Jenny can notice when she's getting distracted by the details so that she can

make a concerted effort to step back and see the wood for the trees.

So how do you become more self aware? Take half an hour and write down a list of both your strengths and weaknesses. Then, as you go through your week, try to identify instances and examples of each. The more you do this, the more you'll get to know yourself and the better you'll be able to convey this to someone interviewing you. "What are your strengths and weakness?" is a common interview question – so make sure you're prepared! →



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#2 BRANDING YOURSELF LIKE A PRO

Self awareness will give you the ability to know yourself. Once you know yourself, you can convey who you really are and sell yourself to a potential employer. Personal branding reinforces this. The idea of selling yourself might make you uncomfortable. “Won’t an employer think I’m arrogant or big-headed if I sell myself?” For some, the confidence to do this is in-built; for others, it requires a bit of practice.

Think about some of your favourite brands. Maybe they’re sports brands such as Nike, Adidas or Vans. They could be fashion brands like All Saints, Jack Wills or Abercrombie and Fitch, or tech brands – Apple or Spotify. Brands can also be people. Think Justin Bieber, Rihanna and the Kardashians.

Your personal brand communicates your personality, who you are and →



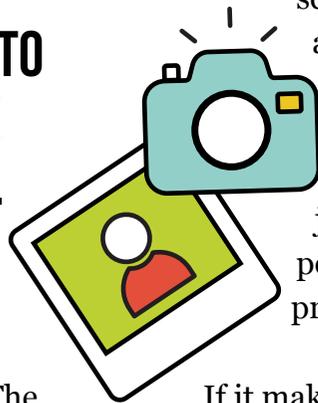
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YOUR PERSONAL BRAND COMMUNICATES YOUR PERSONALITY, WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOUR SELLING POINTS ARE. THE STRONGER YOUR PERSONAL BRAND, THE EASIER IT IS FOR SOMEONE HIRING YOU TO DECIDE HOW SUITABLE YOU'LL BE FOR A ROLE.



what your selling points are. The stronger your personal brand, the easier it is for someone hiring you to decide how suitable you'll be for a role. Without a strong personal brand, you

won't stand out from the crowd and risk being forgotten among all the other applicants, regardless of how great you are.

Your personal brand starts online, but also extends to how you behave in real life. Everything you post on social media can be seen by someone interviewing you. And you can bet anything that they quickly scanned your Instagram account before you walked in. Is there anything on there that might jeopardise your chances of getting the job? How do you want to be perceived through your online presence?

If it makes it easier, draw up a list of social media dos and don'ts for yourself so that you never catch yourself drunkenly posting embarrassing selfies at 2am (again).

Even better, create two Facebook or Instagram accounts – one for your private life (under a fake name if you have to) and one for your professional life. Remember that it's not just about what you don't post online; what you do post and who you interact with are equally important.

LinkedIn is a great way to start networking with people in your chosen industry. Read and share relevant articles and comment on posts that others have shared. You'll learn a lot doing this, too. If the company you're applying to has an active Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account, make sure you also interact with these. Just make sure you're constantly updating and curating whichever platforms you choose to communicate your personal brand. Nothing says "can't be bothered" more than a Twitter account that hasn't been used since 2015. →



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#3 TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK: THE SKILLS EMPLOYERS WANT IN A GRADUATE

At the beginning of this section we stressed that technical knowledge and a relevant qualification are not all it takes to secure your dream job. Your future boss will also be judging your suitability for a job based on your 'non-academic' skills. These skills – referred to as 'soft skills' by employers – combined with your degree and personality will shape you into a successful individual. Different employers might look for a different mix of these soft skills depending on the nature of the job at hand.

In some jobs, an employer would rather hire a graduate with a 2:1 over someone with a First if they have the right skills and attributes. This is because it's easier to train someone in the technical aspects of a position than train them to acquire communication, organisational and team working capabilities →



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IN SOME JOBS, AN EMPLOYER WOULD RATHER HIRE A GRADUATE WITH A 2:1 OVER SOMEONE WITH A FIRST IF THEY HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES.

– among other things. [LinkedIn](#) even conducted research into the most in-demand ‘soft skills’ and found that employers look for good communicators, highly organised people, team players, punctuality, critical and creative thinkers, sociable people with good interpersonal skills, adaptability and friendliness. You might think that these skills are less significant than sheer brainpower



or relevant training, but businesses – unlike at uni – are built around teamwork and teams, not individuals who are exceptional in their field. For a business to achieve its goals, it needs employees who can work together.

Once you start working, you’ll realise just how much of your life is spent

at work. If an employer doesn’t hire a team that gels (i.e. have complementary skills and attributes), it’ll be a nightmare for everyone! The good news is that even if you’re not a born team player or social butterfly, you can still train yourself to become better in these areas. All you need to do is start practising early and get the right guidance. ➔



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#4 SO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOOD AT SOLVING PROBLEMS?

We hate to break it to you, but the working world is full of problems. In fact, businesses are created because of problems: they make their money selling solutions to these pain points. No surprise then that your future boss will want to see that you can solve problems – and solve them under pressure. Unlike your carefully planned university assignments, the problems at work will seem to crop up out of nowhere.

So how do employers find out whether you're any good at rectifying a sticky situation? During the application process this can take the form of psychometric tests. You might also be asked to give an example of when, where and how you've solved a problem in the past (either on paper or face-to-face during an interview). You could also be asked to solve a problem as a group during an assessment day. →



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Problem solving requires you to bring together reasoning, logic and creativity – not to mention a healthy dose of keeping calm and carrying on. Employers don't want employees who need someone to hold their hand, so you need to be able to adapt and think on your feet – whether you're working on your own or in a team.

This problem solving nous is something that you'll cultivate over time, but you can start practising today. The **IDEAL** framework is a good place to start:

- I** - Identify the problem
- D** - Define and understand the problem
- E** - Explore possible solutions
- A** - Act on a chosen strategy
- L** - Look back, evaluate and tweak your strategy if needed

PROBLEM SOLVING REQUIRES YOU TO BRING TOGETHER REASONING, LOGIC AND CREATIVITY – NOT TO MENTION A HEALTHY DOSE OF KEEPING CALM AND CARRYING ON



Next time you're presented with a problem – this could be a miniscule problem like not being able to find your favourite brand of cereal at Tesco, or a larger one like being behind on coursework – use the IDEAL framework to find a solution.

It can also be helpful to find examples of when you successfully solved a problem in the past. This doesn't have

to be in a job situation. It could be the time your car broke down, when you had to fix a friend's computer, or handle a difficult landlord – even your time on the chess team in sixth form is evidence of problem solving capabilities.

Having these examples in the front of your mind will boost your problem-solving confidence for your next interview. ➔



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#5 HOW GOOD IS YOUR POKER FACE?

We're not referring to your best Lady Gaga rendition or your ability to play cards, but your attitude when it comes to retrieving and handling sensitive information. No matter how large or small the company that gives you your first graduate job, there will be times when confidentiality is vital. Even working in a cafe or bar requires you to exercise discretion.

Sensitive information can relate to client and employee contact information, or details about products or processes within the business. Any company that hires you will want to be assured that they can trust you, otherwise their business is at risk. Hand in hand with discretion comes loyalty – another highly sought-after quality in an employee. No company wants to employ someone who will simply jump ship three months down the line.



This is a slightly more tricky characteristic to demonstrate tangibly, so be prepared to give examples of times when you demonstrated discretion – perhaps you were the

treasurer of a society at school or uni, or worked as a secretary for a doctor's practice. Also be aware of what you post on social media, as this is a reflection of your ability to be discrete. ●



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TIME TO BRUSH UP ON THOSE INTERVIEW SKILLS

Now we come to one of the most difficult parts of getting your career off to a flying start: the interview. Your CV, combined with your personal online brand, is your foot in the door. The interview lets you open that door and walk through it. It might sound superficial, but that short amount of time spent in a room with your future boss plays a huge role in whether you get the job or not.

The catch-22 is that interview situations are highly pressurised – very often what we say and how we behave aren't true →



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potential because we're under stress. This is why practice and preparation are so important. The more you practise and prepare, the more relaxed and the more YOU you'll be.

Let's talk about how you can practise for an interview. Go online and look for practice interview questions. Enlist the help of a tutor, friend or family member to carry out a mock interview. Get them to be the interviewer and you be the interviewee. Set the room up to look like an office setting and even dress the part. Make sure you've done your research about the role, company and industry – LinkedIn is a great place to suss out company info. You want to appear as if you know the company as well as an employee.

When it comes to the day of the actual interview, make sure you've had a good night's sleep the night before and that you've eaten – and don't drink too

GO ONLINE AND LOOK FOR PRACTICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. ENLIST THE HELP OF A TUTOR, FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER TO CARRY OUT A MOCK INTERVIEW.

much coffee! If you're a smoker, try and avoid the ciggies until after the interview. Personal hygiene is another important thing to consider, but also go easy on the perfume or cologne.

During the interview it's important to appear natural and professional, so try to relax as much as you can before. A great way to do this is to arrive in the area an hour or so before and chill out in a nearby cafe. This is especially useful if you're city-based and will be arriving by public transport, or if you've had a long distance drive. Aim

to arrive at your actual interview location ten minutes early.

It's also great to prepare questions to ask your interviewer. It shows you're interested and enthusiastic about the prospect of working with them. And it goes without saying that you should never bad mouth other businesses or previous jobs or experiences – phrase everything in as positive light as possible. But most of all try and enjoy it – even if you don't get the job, you'll learn a lot by doing the interview. ●



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ARE YOU READY TO EXCEED YOUR POTENTIAL?

We've covered a lot in this guide. Well done for getting this far! Know that all the dedication and hard work you're investing in your future now will pay off many times over in your career – wherever it takes you.

If you feel overwhelmed by how much you think you need to do before you don that power suit and get your first graduate salary – fret not. Employability skills are all learnable, whether you're naturally confident, good at problem solving or need to refine your communication skills. You've got the talent and drive, and the opportunity to access a team of business leaders and employment coaches who are ready to support and guide you. →



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At Curriculo Solutions, we know how tough it is to enter the world of work after university – we’ve all been there and learned the hard way. That’s why we created our Industry Engagement programme (IEP) to arm budding stars like you with everything you need to take your career by storm.

But before you start worrying about whether this programme will eat into your free time, get in the way of coursework or give you even more debt, let us tell you a bit about how it works. The course is spread over 5 modules, which can be completed entirely online (over a few weeks if you have the time), in a classroom situation, or a blend of both. It takes up to 56 hours to complete the course.

Curriculo Solutions works in partnership with large global organisations.

LEARN HOW TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS MENTIONED IN THIS GUIDE SO THAT YOU’RE IN A POSITION TO MAKE FANTASTIC DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR LONG-TERM CAREER.

Our IEP is recognised by the [Institute of Leadership and Management](#).

Throughout the modules, you’ll learn how to develop the skills mentioned in this guide so that you’re in a position to make fantastic decisions about your long-term career.

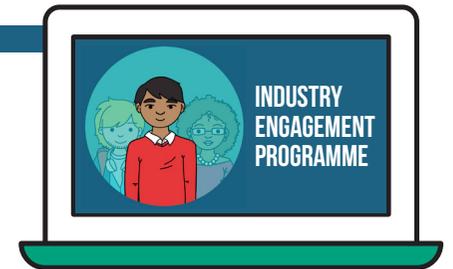
Contents of the IEP include:

- Understanding yourself and your strengths
- Aligning personal ambitions with the needs of your employer
- Building your personal brand
- Interview skills
- How to develop a career plan

In short, everything you need to make yourself stand out and be irresistible to the hiring team at that engineering firm you’ve got your eye on. ●

So what are you waiting for? Take charge and invest in a career that your future self will thank you for. Get in touch with us to see how we can help you shine. Visit: curriculosolutions.com

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