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## **The Weight of a College Degree Today ©**

By

**Ron Hequet**

It is true that having a college degree no longer carries as much weight for those seeking entry-level jobs. And today, that includes many positions above entry-level.

Here are 5 factors that should be considered by job hunters who either are without a degree or a degree that doesn't carry the weight it once did. Each is worth 2 points and if you are totally prepared and confident in all areas, give yourself a score of 10, as that is what it will take to beat the competition.

**1. Appearance:** The law of ‘you only get to make a first impression once’ is still true. This is certainly part of your research but dress for the job + 1. Look like you work there at the job you are applying for but a touch better. How? First, don't assume, but observe. If you are not able to actually visit inside a company, watch employees arriving and leaving. Ask; call HR or the appropriate department. Most will be more than willing to give you the information, but confirm it with observation. Business casual is not jeans, unless you're a cowboy. Ladies, the natural look is not sufficient. Hair (no clips, please), make-up and tasteful jewelry need attention. Guys, the unshaven, rough stock, non-ironed look is for Saturday night. Everyone should look fresh, like you recently had a good night's

sleep, a shower, clean nails, have seen a stylist recently, own clothes that fit and are less than a year old, and shoes that aren't used for hiking. No, brief cases, back packs, cell phones, pens with a plastic cap or a rubber watch ban. Appearance alone won't get you hired, but it can prevent you from getting the job.

**2. Research:** Know the company and know the position you are applying for. An applicant who is able to conversationally express their knowledge of the industry, the company, its history and ‘needs’ as it applies to the position being applied for will have the edge. Applicants who simply respond to a job posting because of a need for income are not what employers are looking for. Employers want new hires that ‘fit’. Fit in this case means, someone who has the desire to do the work, based upon an understanding and acceptance of the type of work performed by the company and the contribution that the applicant will make if hired. If the purpose of your research is phony, hope that you are not found out. Sincere research, demonstrates desire and a resourcefulness that is rare.

**3. Experience:** Although it can be helpful in certain examples, having done the job before may only reveal an applicant with

limitations, so don't bank on 'I've been there done that'. Interviewers hear from people everyday who say they can do the job. Skills, know-how and work ethic are what employers want; none of which is proven because you 'say so'. Assuming you have accomplished #2, practice your delivery on how your previous experiences and current skills will shorten your training or learning curve. Clarify how you bring value day one. If you don't have or can't explain how what you know, what you have done, what you can and will do, benefits the employer, you have a problem.

- 4. Presentation:** Resume; there are certain careers where a presentation folder with a CD / DVD containing examples of work, etc. is called for. If that is the case, spare no time or expense in getting it right. Like #1, it won't get you hired but it can prevent you from getting the job. Where this presentation material is not apropos, make your resume one page on expensive paper. Most resumes are too long and immaterial to the company or the job. Job postings list performance criteria. Your resume must be composed with relevancy for that specific job interview. Any information that is not relevant to that specific company and job should not be on the resume. Practice, practice, practice being interviewed. I once advised a candidate to go on job interviews for jobs they knew they did not want just to gain experience. We then reviewed what took place at the interview and rehearsed prepared body language and responses. Ask prepared in advance questions that reveal your knowledge of the industry, company and the job. Get someone without bias to rehearse with you and make a video recording for review. Practice your hand shake, eye contact, your smile and avoid using words and phrases such as 'you know', 'like', 'totally' and 'cool'.

- 5. Procedure:** Biggest challenge here is the 'gate keepers'. A company of any size typically assigns the hiring to an individual or an HR department. You may not have an option to at least initiate the application process with those people. However, if you allow your fate to be decided by that or an on-line process, don't be surprised if someone else gets the job. So, during this initial hiring process ask questions, i.e. who will I be reporting to, who is responsible for my department, who makes the final hiring decision? Etc. If it's an on-line process, you must discover a way around it. After the first encounter and / or now armed with knowing who will decide or influence the decision, hand write a note card that day (no email or other techno-contact) addressed to that individual(s) containing only a few words mentioning one applicable skill-set and willingness to earn the job, along with your contact information. After you are certain your note arrived, make a phone call to that same person(s) as a follow-up. If it goes to voice mail, leave a very short prepared message and your call back land-line phone number. Never use a cell phone for phone interviews (there is too great a chance for the conversation to break up or worse, drop the call). If you are fortunate to actually talk to that person, ask for the job and when you can personally meet them for a '5 minute' conversation. Arrive before work hours, waiting on them.

Do anything atypical of job applicants that draw positive attention to you; obviously avoiding the contrived, weird or illegal. Do not take the advice of friends or family on how to get a job, and don't necessarily count on anyone getting you 'in'. Getting a job, and maybe the right job, is work, i.e. preparation. How many years, months, weeks, days and hours are spent by any athlete for a single event?

**For more information and real world examples, contact...**

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