

If all your jobs thus far have been just that –*jobs*– to help you pay the bills, how do you know what you want in a *career*? Your career is something you haven't launched yet. Exactly how do you do that? You have to start somewhere so perhaps you'd go online or open the want ads. You'd be likely to read this "Opening in.. (anything). *Experience required.*" Isn't that the way it always goes? You have to *have* experience in order to get a job that will *give* you experience. So how do you launch a career? This problem is one many college graduates face. Sure, they have experience. It's just not the right kind. They've bagged fries, mowed yards, bussed tables, and chauffeured pizzas to help pay for college expenses. If that's not the kind of experience the posted opening is looking for, how do you get the right kind? Try a job on for size.



Location: Lile Hall, Suite 122

Phone: 870-245-5381

Email: academicsuccesscenter@obu.edu

Website:
www.obu.edu/success

How to Launch a Career



Why should you try out different fields of work?

These experiences help you in two ways.

First, they allow you to test a potential career field. The actual day-to-day work

may be exactly what you expected, or not. They show you whether or not that particular career field is one you'd really be interested in. I had no idea this field was so

cut-throat, hectic, dull...exciting, stimulating,



*invigorating...*A thumbs-down can be just as informative as a thumbs-up. At least you can eliminate one option from your list. Second, internships, co-ops, and service-learning opportunities give you experience to list on your résumé. That's invaluable! Sometimes internships are offered through your academic major department, or through a central office on campus, or sometimes you can pursue one

on your own through the Internet or personal connections. If you want to major in journalism, for example, you might try contacting your local newspaper, a business magazine that focuses on your city, or some other published outlet to find out if they're willing to sponsor you. If you receive pay, it may be a modest amount. You're in learning mode, and you don't have experience, after all. If you land the internship through your school, you may receive course credit instead of pay.

What do you did to do be successful in finding a career?

The key to successful "trial" experiences such as internships is the relationship between you and your sponsor in the host organization. If you're not being given enough to do, or not allowed to test your competence in a particular area, speak up. The answer may be put in terms of "company policy", your're "not quite ready for prime time" skills, or your supervisor's unwillingness to experiment in high-stakes areas. Nevertheless, the two of you must communicate about these kinds of important issues. No one can read your mind!

As you work your way toward launching your career, keep up with the latest information. Read up on interviewing, résumé writing, cover letters, networking, hot career fields, and the latest employment trends. As you continue studying in your college courses, apply what you're learning—in your major and in your general education courses—to your future career. You'll be the winner!

Remember: You don't have to have it all figured out right now. Many students become discouraged and give up on college when, if they'd been patient and paid close attention to their preferences and abilities, they would have found their way.

If "You are here" and "You want to get here" (generally), realize that there are many routes. You can go around the lake or over the mountains. You can go directly there or wander around a bit until you find it. You can even change routes somewhere along the way. The wise thing is to start moving and keep going. Before you know it, you will have reached your original goal or a new and better one.

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