



OPINION: 20 JOB TIPS FOR 20-SOMETHINGS IN THE 2020S - INSIDE SOURCES

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A favorite editor asked me for a quote on what soon-to-be job applicants and their parents should keep in mind while preparing for tomorrow's employment markets. I've given job-market advice to students and colleagues for decades, so here are 20 ideas I've often shared. Some have served me well. Others would have served me well if I had realized them earlier.

1. Jobs that can be done in Cheyenne, Des Moines and Sarasota have potent advantages over those that can be done only in New York, Chicago and San Francisco.
2. For now, college degrees are important, but high tuition and opportunity costs, combined with often less-than-stellar returns, are reviving the notion that the workplace is often a better educational venue than a university.
3. Maybe Ivy League graduates making photocopies for congressmen shouldn't look down on plumbers who own beach homes.
4. For a generation, American educators have looked down their noses at vocational and technical education, and the United States will face critical shortages of people who can build and fix things.
5. Mastery of a foreign language gives you a boost over other job applicants. When dining with your host, it also helps you avoid the tête de veau and maguro no medama.
6. Become good at two things. There are plenty of finance and music majors, but not so many emerge from college with substantial knowledge of finance AND music. Sometimes, that helps.
7. Professors, counselors and other experts will often discourage you from exploring careers where you would do well and encouraging you to enter careers where you would not. Seek a second opinion. And a third.
8. Keep your eyes on technology. Several times in your career, high-tech innovations will make your job obsolete. If you can clamber onto the beach before the wave hits you, bully for you.
9. Always be thinking about how to reinvent yourself.
10. People passionately seeking a career have a natural advantage over those grudgingly seeking a job.
11. It is often the case that once an organization becomes large enough to require a human resources department, individual creativity begins to die.

12. Save money early and invest it carefully. The ability to walk away from a bad job is a power far greater than anything found in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.



13. Sometimes, the only way to avoid working for a jackass is to work for yourself. And even then, it may be iffy.

14. If your mom, uncle or neighbor can pull strings to get you a job, let them pull. People care about how you got your job for around a month. After that, they care about how you do the job.

15. Political campaigns and congressional offices are chock full of volunteers. Think twice about making a profession of something that other people are willing to do for free.

16. Your job is important. But if it's the most important thing in your life, you might want to rethink priorities.

17. Someone once tried to persuade my father to buy a garbage-hauling business. He didn't do it because the very idea seemed gross. That said, he told me, it would have been a really lucrative business. Think about doing a job no one really wants to do.

18. Make sure you consider the process as well as the product. While you may gaze with pride upon the gleaming skyscraper that you helped design, the fact remains that your job on the project might have involved nothing more than finding locations for the toilets and other plumbing fixtures on all 72 stories of the building.

19. I knew a place where one of the most coveted perquisites was a plastic card allowing you to park beneath the building. Employees had to wait 17 years to get such a card; many could tell you exactly how many years and months they had to go before getting their card. If such a perk is high on your list of desires, then my other words of advice may mystify you.

20. I've always told my students that the most important quality to develop in confronting the world is skepticism. So be sure to question everything I've told you here.