

## The Current State of Career Launch for Today's College Graduates

Several fundamental factors have been at work in the past two decades to cause both **structural** and **socio-economic** changes in the way college graduates identify “right” livelihood and launch their careers.

- **Volume of college graduates** – While Baby Boomer children were often the first to attend college in their family’s history, it is now considered a ‘given’ that high school graduates of suburban America will continue on to college. With 1.5 million people graduating from college each year into a relatively stable, low-growth economy, it’s small wonder on why it’s becoming increasingly difficult to identify entry level work for each college graduate. Add the 2.1 million underemployed college graduates from previous years, and the challenge becomes overwhelming.
- **Advancements in technology**– America is now widely considered to possess an emerging knowledge-based economy, as increasing numbers of manufacturing and lower level positions migrate to lower cost providers overseas. At first glance, this economic shift would seem to have limited impact on the employment outlook for college graduates, as they are surely seeking knowledge-based work. In actuality, domestic college graduates are competing with entry level knowledge workers overseas who are performing basic “knowledge” work in fields like accounting, software design, sales operations, logistics, and call center work for American firms.
- **Relative affluence as a de-motivator** – Baby Boomer parents were just as confused as today’s graduates when it comes to identifying a career path. It’s not uncommon to hear a fifty-something Baby Boomer lament, “I still don’t know what I want to be when I grow up.” So, just how did Baby Boomers get going? For most, they went to work after graduation by jumping on any opportunity to get out and earn some money. Motivated by a desire to pay for and maintain a car on the road, earn “date” money and “get a place of my own,” most were compelled to find work – any work, as their parents often weren’t in a financial position to provide ongoing support. Entry level jobs, training programs, and a robust economy set most Baby Boomers on a meandering, non-linear path

towards “right” livelihood. In sharp contrast, the relative affluence of today’s Baby Boomer parents often provides Millennial Generation graduates with everything they need – a car, and insurance payments to keep it on the road, health insurance (we’ve even recently legislated an extension of years for this support!), cell phone payments, spending money, vacations, and so on. So, what’s the rush to leave?

- **Misguided reliance on college placement offices and college professors to provide career direction** – Most college graduates have only the vaguest of ideas on what they might like to do for a living. In Patty’s professional experience, students need a great deal of individualized career guidance and exploration to identify a target job function, industry and geography, and college placement offices simply aren’t staffed to provide the necessary amount of attention. The average US college/university has 9,377 students for each career consultant, and spends on average only \$85.00 per student per year on career management support (February 2011 NACE report). While college career counselors most often have a wealth of useful information and advice to share, they simply don’t have the man-hours necessary to solve this labor-intensive riddle with each student.
- **Well-intentioned but misunderstood advice from parents, educators and social media to “Follow Your Dreams!”** Of course each person should follow his passion; however experience in the field demonstrates that this is an impossible question to ask most high school and recent college graduates who are hard pressed to even name more than a dozen professions, much less identify an ideal future career path when making plans for just next month feels like an eternity to most. The result of this advice is almost a crippling level of indecision on the part of today’s graduates, as they fear that they have to live with a “wrong” choice forever.

### What’s happening in your house?

The adage that “looking for work is a full time job” remains more apt than ever. Expending energy looking in the wrong direction, or wasting time with on-line applications sent to a dark hole is unproductive, mystifying and disheartening. It’s understandable why graduates feel discouraged and sometimes end up back where they started – at home and in a part-time job. Today it is reported

that up to 85% of college graduates move back with their anxious parents until they land a decent paying job – something that can take six months to several years to find. The annual cost of supporting a jobless graduate at home or in their own living space ranges from 25,000 – \$40,000, not counting the opportunity cost of the graduates own delayed “real job” income. In many cases, the graduate ultimately “settles” for whatever turns up (“this is just a job “for now”). Recent Department of Labor statistics state that 37% of current college degree holders of all ages hold jobs for which a college degree is unnecessary. Drove of graduates are therefore under-employed.

Of course it’s easy to simply blame the sluggish economy for all ills, and wait for the rebound. In reality, the search for the right job remains challenging in strong and weak economies alike for the evergreen structural and socio-economic reasons already highlighted herein. What Baby Boomers and their Traditionalist parents experienced as the “normal” way of career choice has changed irreversibly. We can lament the unfairness of the job market but it is indeed the “New Normal.” Happily there is a proven way to meet and overcome this substantial challenge and turn it into a significant advantage.

## **The Solution**

Patty Phillips offers a holistic solution: beginning-to-end support through highly personalized one-on-one coaching over a four month period of time, with a goal of establishing a clear career launch (or re-launch) goal and executing a targeted job search to achieve that goal. More often than not, the biggest barrier to success lies within the early stages of the process – helping the graduate figure out exactly what he would like to do; what activities energize him and tap into his unique ability to add value to an employer. This is where Patty shines – working with graduates to identify relevant choices and ultimately narrow them down to the winning idea. Once a career launch decision is made, a tailored job search strategy is designed and executed together by Patty and the graduate, from development of attention-grabbing marketing materials through the trying process of networking, interviewing, negotiating and landing a position of choice.

## Major Delivery Milestones include:

- Battery of skill and interest assessments, designed to triangulate on true preferences;
- In-depth interpretation and discussion of assessment results with the client, where functional preferences, strengths, weaknesses and work motivators are identified and challenged. This session lays the groundwork for identifying potential functions and industries of choice for the graduate.
- Exploration and research of relevant career paths;
- Identification of ideal job function, specific industry and preferred geography;
- Development of job search marketing materials, including résumé, networking profile, and LinkedIn profile;
- Development of a job search strategy, including instruction and ongoing coaching on all relevant job search methodologies, including research, networking, informational interviewing and leveraging technology for maximum effectiveness;
- Intense practice and feedback with mock phone and video-taped face-to-face interviews;
- Access to relevant members of Patty's personal network who can speak to the graduate about his/her function and/or industry of choice;
- Coaching on all aspects of professional behavior, from appropriate manners and attire for the client's career of choice to managing an informational interview with an important networking contact;

*> think first*

- Negotiating the best offer; and
- Coaching on the importance of proactive, engaged behavior and relationship-building after accepting the new position.

### **Getting Started**

**Call Patty Phillips at (585) 472-5057 or email her at [patty@clarityracm.com](mailto:patty@clarityracm.com) to schedule an exploratory meeting that ideally includes the graduate and one or more parents/guardians.**