

How to get job experience

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Candidates take an aptitude test for Public Service jobs at the Mandela National Stadium in Kampala recently. FILE PHOTO

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By Dorcus Murungi

We are in an era where most companies will not take you on if you do not have job experience. Each time there is a job opening, employers are asking for a certain level of experience. This has kept many fresh graduates puzzled and wondering where they can get experience from. Here is how to get that job experience:

Volunteer

According to Connie Musisi, the head of careers at Uganda Christian University Mukono, many fresh graduates are always eager to get paying jobs and do not want to volunteer. However, volunteer opportunities lead to paid jobs. She explains that volunteering opportunities are easily available as compared to paid jobs.

“Don’t under look volunteering, though you may not get any monetary benefits, you will get that experience that most hiring companies are always looking out for and you will also get an opportunity to get exposed,” she says, adding that one should get a volunteer opportunity in line with their field.

Internship

Musisi says fresh graduates who did not do internship at university should consider getting internship opportunities even after graduation. She says although internships do not always come with monetary rewards, they provide the hands-on job experience that employers like to see. She also says internships can help fresh graduates get a real feel of their profession.

“Treat an internship as a real job and be a best performer, you might be surprised by how much you get out of it,” she advises.

Learn by observing

According to Lucy Asiimwe, a human resource manager at Ministry of Public Service, a person can learn by observation. She says it is important for people who want to get job experience to always take keen interest in what those who are doing the same job in line with their interests are doing.

“Make friends with people in your career, always pay them a visit at their places of work and observe what they are doing, you can also offer to help them do this work without any pay, trust me you may not be making money but this will help you learn,” she says.

Make use of the internet

Asiimwe adds that we are in an era of internet where most things can be learnt online. She says a person can interest themselves in a simple course online that is in line with their job. “There are practical lessons online via you-tube, use this chance to enrich your knowledge, it can be a good ground to prepare you for a job,” she adds.

Take on any job that comes your way

Scovia Kamwebaze, a customer relations officer at Fenix international, says a person can take on any job that is not necessarily in line with their profession but just for the sake of getting exposed to a work environment. She says when she had just completed university, she got a job of being an office attendant, which she took on despite the little pay she had been offered. This helped her interact with people from different walks of life and learn how to behave while at work.

She says when she finally got a job in line with her profession, she knew simple basics like how to behave at work, dealing with fellow workmates and time keeping, which she found useful when she finally got a job in line with her profession. “Don’t undermine the simple jobs you get, however little they might be, it will lay a good starting ground that will shape your career path,” she says.

Freelancing

Joviah Nyakwera, a secondary teacher, says although majority of people would not feel comfortable with freelancing because of less payment, it is important for you to prove that you can do the work even before you get hired. He says although you may have to do your first freelance job for free or low pay, it is a good way to get experience and positive reference.

“Most times, that job which starts out as a freelance gig can turn into a full time position. Employers not only want to see the skills you have, but also how dependable you are as an employee and this is possible if you freelance,” she notes.

Getting the job

Networking

Joviah Nyakwera, a secondary teacher, says networking is a great way to make professional connections that could lead to a first job. She advises students to join professional organisations based on their career objectives. “Each interaction you have with people in your career field could foster a new relationship that can get you a job you want,” she says.

Scovia Kamwebaze, a customer relations personnel at Fenix International, says nowadays, networking is one of the best ways to attract employers.

Online professional platforms

Joining online platforms will also come in handy. “These days there is LinkedIn, a platform that you can use to meet potential employers,” she says.

Get certification

Grace Namubiru, a lawyer, advises graduates who do courses that require certification to get certified before embarking on a job search. She says courses like Law, Accounting and Engineering require certification, which when done can help one easily find a job. “Earning certifications that are relevant to your field might be your ticket to landing a job. Certification shows that you are serious about your field and competent enough to do the job,” she notes. Namubiru says the process of certification helps you to interact with professionals who will help you improve your skills as well as offer you broader knowledge in your career. “These professionals can mentor you through giving you the necessary skills and this will help you get exposed,” she explains.