

What I Learned About Finding a Professional Position from My Dog's Groomer

I own a stunningly handsome Shetland Sheepdog named Gabriel. This is not just my opinion. It is an objective fact. Complete strangers (and a lot of them) stop me on the street any time I take Gabriel for a walk around my home in Silicon Valley to tell me how striking he is. Therefore, I had mixed emotions when Gabriel's long time groomer, Juan, announced that he was leaving the large, national pet retailer located near my home to open his own grooming salon – on the other side of town. I was thrilled that he was realizing his dreams, and disheartened by the longer drive.

For a while I continued to get Gabriel groomed at the large, national pet retailer. Although I liked Juan's work, his new grooming salon was not conveniently located near my home, and the location kept me from following him to his new business. However, after a few so-so grooming sessions, and an excellent review from a coworker who used Juan's new salon, I decided that Gabriel and I needed to make an appointment with Juan. What occurred was not only an excellent grooming session for Gabriel, but a lesson for me on how to apply the principles of thinking like a business owner to the job search strategy.

Be Excellent at the Substance of Your Work

There is no question that Juan is an excellent groomer. Just in case I had any doubts, Juan took pictures of Gabriel before and after his grooming session. The evidence was captured in digital format. Even at the end of Gabriel's grooming cycle people were saying things like, "He must have just been groomed." The quality of Juan's work is the foundation for building his book of business and retaining clients.

Likewise, job seekers need to demonstrate their ability to meet the needs of employers which includes demonstrated initiative and problem solving skills, attention to detail, the ability to articulate thought, and a clear and concise writing style. This is the foundation to be considered for employment opportunities. Job seekers should actively seek opportunities to enhance their job related skills by taking advantage of offerings through LDS Employment Centers, BYU online courses and Pathways, and learning more about the substance of their desired field from other BYU Management Society members.

A job seeker's work product is on review in all stages of the application process including all email communication, cover letters, resumes, interviews, and, of course, writing samples or pre-hire projects. All of these communications need to be carefully crafted to be error free, demonstrate the ability to exercise good judgement, display substantive analysis, and cogently communicate thought.

Brand Yourself for Your Market Niche

Juan's salon was not the grooming environment I was used to. Juan wants to have a high end dog grooming business. It is clear from the moment you enter his salon that he is branding himself to be that. His business rivals any high end hair salon in its appearance, look, feel and

smell. When I went to pay, I noticed that he had installed a more technologically advanced point of payment system. He told me that he had to pay a slightly higher merchant fee to use the system, but that he was willing to do so since it's all part of his branding and strategy to provide his customers with a high end, technologically advanced experience.

Similarly, job seekers have to consider whether or not they are communicating a brand which is conducive to the job market they are trying to enter. In other words, do they "look the part" on their cover letters, resumes, and in job interviews. For instance, Silicon Valley companies are seeking high energy candidates with a demonstrable interest in working with a diverse workforce developing emerging or disruptive technologies. Additionally, they need candidates who have an interest and skills in the job for which they are being hired. In other words, the person applying for a human resources position needs to package their experience to demonstrate an interest and experience in talent acquisition and sourcing, compensation and benefits programs, and employment policies and procedures. Job seekers should be aware of the brand they are communicating and either work towards developing their desired brand, or articulating their desired brand throughout all application processes including cover letters, resumes and interviews.

Develop Your Professional Relationships

Juan, Gabriel and I have longstanding relationships. I explained to Juan that the distance from his new salon to my house had deterred me from following him initially. He knew from the years that I had used his services, that my office was located near his salon. Juan showed me a small exercise pen which he had set up near his reception desk in his salon. He told me he could put Gabriel in the pen, and that I could drop Gabriel off at his salon on my way to work and pick him up on the way home from work as long I got there during his normal business hours. That small effort was one more experience that developed our relationship and solidified my patronage as a customer.

Often, I hear concerns from job seekers who are hesitant about networking. Their objections come spilling out in sentences such as, "I just feel *so* slimy asking for something, and giving nothing in return." Sentiments such as these demonstrate a lack of understanding about networking. Done properly, networking will present as many opportunities to give as it does to receive over time. Networking is not about asking for things (e.g., contacts, referrals, and a job). It's about building longer lasting relationships. Over time, people in relationships have the opportunity to both give and receive. Initially, a job seeker may be more on the receiving end, but over time, and with professional growth, they will have the opportunity to return the favor.

Thanks to Juan, Gabriel looks and smells great once again! More importantly for me, a visit to Juan's salon reinforced key strategies about how to advance a job search. If you are a BYU Management Society member who needs assistance developing a strategy to identify your brand, developing a networking strategy, or reviewing your application materials, please consult with your chapter leaders. Many chapters have strong relationships with LDS Employment Centers, can help job seekers to build their network and can identify potential mentors for current and future professional development. The BYU Management Society is here to help you own your career.