Whether you have a stable career right now or not, think back to the time when you were fresh out of university and about to enter the real world. I bet the major question was, and still is, this: who would give me a job when I don’t have any valuable experience? How do I get any experience without a job? For those in this predicament right now, I’d like to share with you what it would take to land your first real job and love it too. The most important thing to remember is to enjoy the job hunt! I know it sounds like a difficult thing to do but if you don’t feel joy in the process, your new job will take a while to find you.

**Soak in these powerful steps and infuse them into your job hunt:**

1. **Believe It’s Already Yours.** Most people have a mindset that says “I need to find a job” and go about their job hunt as if they are in a war battlefield. The truth is that the world is hugely abundant and there’s enough for everyone. I absolutely disagree with the idea that someone can steal an opportunity from you. So I urge you to say to yourself, “My job needs to find me.” I am in no way suggesting sitting back and letting it fall from the sky. The idea is training your mind to have unbreakable self-belief that makes you demand what you want. It is absolutely necessary to believe that your job is already there waiting to be claimed only by you. But for this principle to truly work, you must know where you see yourself in the future. Your first job is a step towards that vision of success. And when your first job finds you, your mind will love it because you claimed it as your ‘worth right’.

2. **Create and Focus on Your Own Uniqueness.** Be yourself because everybody else is taken! Recruiters look at CVs and meet potential candidates every single day. Put yourself in their shoes and think of how many people they meet and don’t bother remembering. You need to work on creating your own uniqueness so that people are sure to remember who you are. How do you want to be remembered and known? When I first started out trying to land my first client, I diverted attention to my personality and values, and specifically with my excellent knowledge about the industry. I thoroughly engaged people in conversations on trends about my field that caught their attention. I invested in a website expressing my personal philosophy and work ideas to get people interested in who I am. I’ve never had to do cold calls as a result. What you focus on will expand, and people will effortlessly remember you for it forever.

3. **Turn The Table on Tough Questions.** This takes skill and a feisty gut, but if you master this practice you can have anyone in your back-pocket. So the next time you get asked a tough question on an interview, turn the spotlight back on the person sitting at the other end of the table. For instance, when you are asked about your lack of experience, say something that goes like this: “I believe the trend in the industry is shifting toward young leaders like me who are eager to learn and grow. But young leaders today are most of all willing to be molded in the unique business culture of the organization and contribute to it significantly as a result. I for one would love to be a part of an organization that places a high value on career fulfillment. Would you say that your company has this as a core value?” or “How many young people of brilliance would you say have entered and made their careers here in your company?” or toward the end of the conversation, with the brightest smile you can manage, “Just out of curiosity, madam how did you get your first real job?” The key is to ask questions that will potentially lead to a whole other conversation and hence another window to express what you are about.

4. **Use Who You Know. Know What To Say.** Landing your job through someone you know is a great shortcut. No introduction is needed on the benefits of personalized networking and we all know that it is not enough to register your CV on websites. Meet people at seminars, events and through your friends and family. But it is also not enough just to meet people. There is a reason I insist on knowing where you want to be in the future. Armed with that vision, your networking strategy will get streamlined and targeted to those who are sure to assist in your goal. If you know your higher goal, you will love your first job even though will not be what you see yourself doing eventually. It is easier to take a step forward when you know which path you’d like to take. Know what you’d like to do in your career long-term, and work on meeting the people who’ll get you there. Again, meeting them and getting introduced is not enough. You need to consistently apply these steps, empower yourself with specific knowledge about the industry you want to break through, and get into deep conversations that leave an impact within your network. You will build your reputation and credibility early, and most importantly develop trust where people in your network think of you first if an opportunity arises.

5. **Let Your CV Be What It Should Be.** Here is some advice on what should and should not go into your CV. Hopefully you will have started some work at a young age like I did as a computer lab assistant and a peer teacher in college. Then came my internships. Even with such relatively little experience such as this, your CV can be impressive by setting a positive tone.

   a. You must have an ‘Objective’ that lets someone know where you’re headed in your career. Do not follow the back and say ‘Looking for an entry-level job in a reputable company’. Get your objective to be about your long-term career and purpose.

   b. For every piece of work, in addition to the job description, I suggest you have bullet points of your major learnings on the job. For example at my internship at Young & Rubicam, New York, I put down that this is where my technical expertise in MS PowerPoint and Excel got sophisticated. Emphasize the skills you acquired in each of your jobs. If you’ve worked in a coffee shop, you can write a point on how your people interaction skills were significantly developed.

   c. I also notice that a lot of young job seekers put down scores and school grades. Don’t. Leave something to the recruiter’s imagination so that they can call you up and ask you themselves (if they really want to know how much you scored on that Accounting exam a year ago.) Focus on skills and competencies you’ve acquired through whatever work you’ve done, instead of school grades.

Last but certainly not the least; do not get discouraged with rejection. Ask for feedback and learn about what it was about you that missed the mark. Every rejection is a new beginning and a chance to apply what you’ve learned in your past for success that is bound to happen for you once you’ve figured out your career’s purpose. And when you accept a job, be grateful for it all the way as it is taking you to a higher place. So let that job find you and enjoy the ride!

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**Was your first job memorable?**

What was your first job? Was it meaningful? Miserable? Did it teach you lessons you still use? How old were you when you first started to work?

Tell us about your very first gig, write to ruqya@spmsdubai.com.

Y&T will print the best three entries in the upcoming issue together with Mubeena’s assessment of the letters.
How to land your first job... and love it