

I applied to Career Quest because I wanted to jumpstart my job search as I enter my last year of undergraduate studies. I set a goal for myself during the summer that this year I would be more proactive when it came to networking and seeking career advice. So, when I saw the email for Career Quest, it seemed like the perfect opportunity.

I was not disappointed at all. We visited companies like Bustle, Facebook, and Spotify and were able to tour the facilities and talk to employees. One thing that surprised me on the trip was how genuine and willing to help everyone was. They encouraged us to reach out and even though they did give us a lot of information about their companies and what it's like to work there, they also just gave us really good life advice, and I really appreciated that.

There were three main takeaways that I got from the trip, and I thought I'd share them below.

1. Authenticity is Always Appreciated

Like I said earlier, we were met with genuine and honest people throughout the trip and I think that really reflects the type of people who are getting hired at these companies. At Bustle, they told us that most of the time, the best way to get noticed is through informationals. Grabbing a coffee for 15 minutes can be all it takes, and the key is to come prepared and to be receptive. They emphasized that you don't need to ask for a job directly (if anything, it's considered a major faux pas), but to just come with questions and with the willingness to make a connection. I think that's a great approach and Mayte Espinal at eMarketer put it even better: "It's my job to know where you fit in the company, it's your job to know you." If you know yourself, then others will recognize that confidence and they'll keep you in mind when an opportunity might arise.

2. Recognize and Highlight Your Transferable Skills

Building off of knowing yourself and staying true to that, the biggest thing to identify is your transferable skills. As an English major, I wasn't entirely sure where I would fit into these companies, especially when it came to jobs that had to do with research and data analysis. But, one thing that was emphasized at almost every company we visited was that it didn't really matter what your major was or how informed you were of an industry, as long as you could identify your transferable skills, the rest could be learned later on. Strong communication and interpersonal skills, a desire to be challenged, and a curiosity for knowledge were all things that employers wanted to see in future employees. It was a major relief for me, and it changed my perspective on how I should be presenting myself in job interviews. Rather than trying to fit into what I think employers want to see, if I highlight the skills I already have and stop worrying about the ones I don't, it'll result in a much more confident approach.

3. Networking is Essential

Especially in a city like New York, where it's easy to get lost in the crowd, it's important to nurture and maintain the connections you have and to not be afraid to reach out and make new ones. It's all about who you know. During the networking event where we got to meet with GW alumni living in the city, almost everyone I talked to had gotten hired for their current position

because of someone they knew. This trip was especially beneficial to me, in that it helped facilitate relationships with people in an industry that I didn't have any previous connections with. None of my family or friends have ever been remotely interested in media and communications, so I really needed a push in the right direction. I was also able to connect with my peers in the cohort, something else that I hadn't considered beforehand, and I'm really grateful that everyone I met on the trip was super nice and open.

Was it Worth It?

The trip was totally exhausting (I'm not a morning person and waking up at 7am everyday was rough) but totally worth it. I came back feeling energized and optimistic for the future. I learned a lot and made a lot of new connections, which is what I was hoping to get out of the experience. I was able to get a better visual of what it's like to work at these companies and learned what it really means to work in the industry. I'm really glad I pushed myself to apply to the program and am so glad I got the opportunity to go.