

# Education

Your window to the world of learning



**STEPPING STONE** Summer projects help students understand the practical aspects of theoretical knowledge. DH PHOTO/ PRASHANTH HG

## Fast-track your career

**RIGHT CHOICE** V Pradeep Kumar lists some strategies that help students land a suitable job through campus recruitment

This happened last year during a career development programme in a leading institute. As we completed introductions and ice-breaking, a student asked, “Sir, we are guaranteed placement through the college campus recruitment. So what’s there to prepare?”

Most students prefer to take this route, depending entirely on the institution without realising the importance of having the first job right. Although institutions do offer placements, it’s not always aligned to your dream career in the industry of your choice. For instance, as a computer science engineer, you may desire to join the Artificial Intelligence industry, which is currently a sunrise industry, but the visiting companies may not be from that sector. Similarly, management graduates also face challenges of not getting into their preferred industry, with job profiles not matching individual skill sets.

With jobs getting fewer due to increased automation, and selection getting more competitive, planning and managing your placement becomes important. Therefore plan well to secure multiple job offers and be in an enviable position to make the right career choice.

### Suitable industry

Engineers, Management and other graduates have ample choice of careers in various sectors. For instance, a Civil Engineering graduate can join sectors like infrastructure, property development, project management or even become an entrepreneur. Further opportunities include higher studies and/or research. Therefore, if you are planning for campus placement, you must first identify a potential industry which has current and future prospects, as appropriate for your interests, passion and skills.

India’s diversified economy has a range of companies identified as small and

medium enterprises [SMEs], start-ups, small-caps, mid-caps and large-caps. For a youngster just out of college, each of these can offer lucrative careers. Typically, in an SME or a start-up, you may get larger exposure to operations in a short period of time whereas, in a larger set-up, career growth is limited in the short term, although you get better exposure to systems and policies. Both have unique advantages and it is up to you to decide your preferences. Therefore, students looking for campus placement must first decide the preferred sector and a list of top companies within the sector.

### How to handle placement?

Apart from an aptitude test, the selection process will usually have a group discussion (GD) and personal interview (PI).

Group Discussion is a commonly used technique to shortlist candidates for campus placements by assessing overall personality, which is a combination of listening and speaking skills, presentation skills, grooming, ability to take initiative and leadership skills. Remember, the art of communication is saying the right things (content), at the right time, in a right way (body language, tone and tenor) and is the route to success in a GD.

In campus recruitment, I have observed that all students typically use the same format of the CV, which makes it not only monotonous for the recruiter but also tedious to shortlist the right candidates for the next round of PI. Therefore, even while using a prescribed format, break the monotony and highlight aspects of your personality that are distinct to yourself. For example, indicate how your passion is linked to your education and choice of career. Also, highlight your extra-curricular activities as it usually leads to an interaction helping you to project your personality effectively.

Personality is your unique identity and

**“Networking effectively can help you build strategic relationships.”**

from my experience of campus recruitments, candidates’ inability to articulate their thoughts is the main reason for failure in interviews.

The first impression is formed at the moment you come face-to-face with interviewers. They make a quick assessment of your physical appearance and body language which can reveal your suitability or otherwise. Therefore, as you enter the interview room, greet interviewers appropriately with a genuine smile. Learn and practice a quick, comprehensive introduction of yourself. Articulate your thoughts clearly with self-confidence.

### How to approach directly?

Although all reputed institutes have a placement cell, it’s wiser to make individual efforts to be in a stronger position around the campus recruitment time. Make a calculated and well-planned effort to get the right summer projects, which are your first exposure to the corporate world and help you understand the practical aspects of theoretical knowledge.

Send a comprehensive proposal for a summer project to your list of targeted companies, assuring your capability to take up a project on a relevant subject as per the company’s guidelines. If you

actively follow up, it’s possible to get projects, as companies are usually receptive to the idea. If you indeed make a good project, you can also expect a job offer by the company or by other companies in the same industry, around the time you complete your course. Thus, summer projects can be used as a stepping stone to build a rewarding career.

### Network effectively

Use the power of social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc., to look for potential employers in the sector of your choice and network with them effectively, using a subtle approach. Seek their advice to understand the challenges in the industry and prepare accordingly. Another group to connect is your alumni who would have a natural inclination to help for summer projects and also for employment.

Networking effectively can help you build strategic relationships, which in turn, helps build your career.

### Job selection

All your efforts should lead to having multiple job offers placing you in an enviable position. You are now ready to critically evaluate all offers available from a long-term perspective including monetary and non-monetary aspects. However, never make the mistake of accepting an offer with the highest package without evaluating other critical aspects.

Before you decide to take up an offer, deliberate on the options with your parents, teachers or mentors and take a decision that is in the best interest of your long-term career.

Considering the bigger picture of a rewarding career, plan meticulously and manage your placements to become the architect of your life.

*(The author is a career and management consultant)*