

# African-Americans advised to work hard for success

Associated Press

OXFORD, Ohio (AP) — Ask Bill Madison how blacks can succeed in business, and he has an almost distractingly simple answer: Work hard.

Madison was a role model for blacks even before that term entered mainstream language. After graduating from college in 1961 he soldiered on into the corporate world, even though opportunities for blacks were extremely limited then. He eventually became an executive with Kroger Co., then after he retired he came to the Miami University campus, where he is a management instructor.

He has practical advice for blacks

trying to make it in a white world. For starters, he says, put in long hours. "You can talk about talent and competence, but fundamentally students need to learn to work hard."

Blacks should understand that many business decisions are made in social settings, so those who won't socialize with whites are putting themselves at a disadvantage, he says. Learn to recognize key social obligations. "And you need to be at your very best."

He has some blunt words for men: "The African-American male still has to understand that certain behaviors that he may regard as cool, manly or assertive are perceived by others as arrogance, and

in some cases, as physically threatening."

Making adjustments to get ahead doesn't mean selling out, he says. Blacks can display their culture in many ways — from office furnishings to an appropriate "fade" haircut.

"You maintain your heritage in your home, church and with your friends, and when you can identify people who are open to understanding more about African-American culture, you discuss it and explain."

Black students have far wider options now, and Madison counsels them to look seriously at the technological, marketing, advertising and financial fields.

"In my generation, black students were traditionally steered into personnel. That was where the first open doors were, but today there are more choices."

And to white students, he points to projections that indicate that by 2020, the minorities of today will be a majority in the schools.

"The first thing I suggest is that if the predictions are true, what does that do to you as an individual? It means that your life will be different from what it was like for your father or mother," he says.

White students shouldn't feel threatened by this demographic change but rather look at it as an opportunity to enrich their experience, he says.

## Tips for savvy job hunters

### ▲ The right approach, the right resumé

#### • Do Your Homework

Employers want to know if you know their language, especially when you're describing functional qualifications you believe a company is looking for. If your resume specifies a career goal it should indeed be specific about your target position and include any longer-range objective you have within the company. Meaningless generalizations about "a challenging position with room for growth" or wanting to help an employer "achieve corporate goals" is a tip-off that you haven't done your homework.

#### • Be Honest!

An inflated or greatly exaggerated claim of your responsibilities is bound to come back to haunt you in an interview, so do not exaggerate your duties or level of responsibility. Employers realize that most recent graduates will not have vast job experience. Your resume should accurately express your level of experience, employment maturity, and career direction in a confident, controlled style.

#### • Emphasize Your Skills — Not Your Ego

Emphasize duties that reveal the underlying story of your values, skills, leadership, etc. — even if they were those of a minimal-level job. Avoid self-inflating and meaningless terms like "excellent" and "successfully" or "widely acclaimed." Instead, use facts and figures to quantify your achievements, such as number of people supervised, production levels reached, dollars and cents saved. You should also avoid using the first person pronoun. Try to use a "voice" that gives the reader a feeling that your credentials are quietly — but very convincingly — speaking for themselves.

#### • Choose References Carefully

Unless you have a reference who is very well known in the field you want to enter, it is not customary to list references on your resume. Simply stating that references are available on request is usually sufficient. But you must have them ready. Type them up separately and keep them handy to present to a prospective supervisor or personnel department if requested

during an interview. It is important to choose references who know your background adequately and whose level of credibility is likely to improve your chances of getting a job. Keep in mind that it's better to have a credible, if not world famous, reference speak highly of you than to have some celebrity you barely know give you lukewarm support.

#### • Get Help with Your Resumé

When you are satisfied with your first version, show it to helpful associates, such as your placement counselor, or friends and relatives you may have in the field. Compare it with other resumes. Get as much feedback as you can and rewrite if necessary. You might also consider choosing an alternate format and comparing the two styles to see which you think is most effective.

#### • Make a Sleek Presentation

Before you produce your resume, proofread it thoroughly for errors. Then proof it again. Typographical mistakes and misspellings on your resume (or cover letter) can negate your job-hunting efforts in a hurry. Make sure your layout is centered and graphically pleasing. If you are typing it yourself use a good typewriter and a fresh ribbon for uniform darkness and quality reproduction. A word processed resume lets you customize and reproduce very easily. Use only good 8 1/2" x 11", bond paper for all reproductions. Simple offset printing of a hundred or so resumes provides good quality and should cost less than \$15. Trying to attract attention with odd-sized or colored stock is an obvious ploy unless you are applying in art- or design-related fields where your modifications may be considered an indication of appropriate talents for the job.

#### • Show Your Style

A well-written cover letter can make a job applicant stand out in a number of important ways. At the very least, a cover letter is a simple courtesy that demonstrates you care about the job and that you have sufficient interest to inquire about it in a businesslike manner. A naked resume, no matter how packed with credentials, does

not have the same effect. And with a little bit of effort, the customized cover letter is a powerful attention getter.

A good cover letter, always directed to the right person, should include why you are writing that person, what your request is, why your experience might help the person or company, and how you plan to follow up. You might take the opportunity to quantify a unique job qualification with an example of your sophistication or writing

ability. Cover letters also let you highlight important skills that may appear in another format on your resume, and they certainly allow you to tailor pitch to a specific job or functional area.

As with a resume, always use good quality bond paper and printing equipment. Customized cover letters are naturally easier to produce on word processing systems if they are available.

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