



Straight As or Experience?

Many people will tell you that without a college education, your life is going nowhere, and this motivates—or you might say pressures—a lot of students to strive for a straight A high school grade point average in hopes of getting into a good college. In support of this point of view, an oft-cited statistic is that according to CareerBuilder.com, 27 % of employers are now requiring that job candidates have college degrees, stating that they get “a better return on investment” from their college educated employees. If you spend your college-age years living in a van with a goat and following a touring band around the country then it may very well be true that you will be of little interest to potential employers. But if you spend those years doing internships, working your way up in a company, serving in the military, or managing your own start-up, then you may actually end up with an advantage over your college-educated peers.

College will not teach you how to be successful. Success comes to people with leadership skills, people skills, maturity, passion and drive. It follows people who have learned to negotiate and to apply themselves. In short, success has practically nothing to do with education. Successful people learn by doing. And successful people aren't necessarily the ones that are naturally gifted or talented; but they are always that ones that never gave up. And according to a recent article in *Time* magazine, many of today's CEOs and managers aren't looking for degrees, they're looking for experience. They want to hire smart people who already know something. They want to see a portfolio, results of previous projects or successes, endorsements or references. They are also looking for certain personality traits. They want people who are approachable, responsible, punctual, and who have integrity, people who can communicate well, and whose appearance and personal brand mesh with the company's environment. In which case, a part-time job or an internship may go much farther for you in landing the job you want than a college degree will.

In short, you may stand to gain more by concentrating on becoming a well-rounded person than by focusing on getting straight As in high school in hopes of securing a scholarship. Certainly you should study – but you should also join clubs, travel, and volunteer as you seek your own special place in the world. Meeting a variety of people will enlarge your world, and help you to see it through another's eyes. If you pursue your own interests, have a diversity of experiences, and never stop learning, you will always be a desirable job candidate.

DIRECTIONS: Read the essay. Determine the author's point of view or purpose and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.