

## Graduation 2010 – Lessons Learnt

Category	Family Series	Date	June 2010
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As a 2010 college/university graduate you should be proud of your accomplishment and commended for your hard work and achievement—congratulations. Unfortunately, the reality is not as uplifting. You are graduating at, perhaps, the worst possible time to enter the workforce. The U.S. and much of the world is still experiencing a global recession that appears to have bottomed-out, but has yet to show signs of strong growth with strong job creation. This 'jobless recovery', according to many economists, may well linger for a time to come.

So, what is a recent graduate to do? My approach to addressing this critical question and in rendering sound advice was somewhat of a challenge, but nonetheless, interesting. Times like these present opportunities—for young adults who are willing to learn life lessons early in life. It is important to realize, first and foremost, that the current economic climate is a situation that you don't and can't control. Therefore, do not dwell on things that you cannot change; instead, *focus on things that you can control* and that are beneficial to you—this is the first lesson.

If you are unable to find employment, *consider furthering your education*. Look into part-time graduate (continuing education) courses offered at local institutions. Also, consider certification programs in fields that support your area of professional interest. You can never be over educated.

Next, *consider volunteering to work with a reputable non-profit organization* in your area. Non-profits are always looking for volunteers. Find out what programs your local non-profit organizations are supporting and what opportunities they may have to utilize the services of a recent graduate—on a voluntary basis. This is a good way to build your resume while acquiring some potentially valuable work experience.

Talk to your friends and recent graduates, if you already have not. Find out how many of them have parents who own *reputable family businesses*. Consider the following bold move: tell your friend you'd like to *volunteer your time to work with his/her parent's business for some time*. Propose one or more skills that you have and that they can use to support the business. Be sure to establish a timeframe (three to four months at a time) for your commitment and extend/renew it at the end of each period. Let them know that you will be looking for permanent work at the same time, thus preparing them for occasional time off to attend a job interview. You will build your resume, acquire potentially valuable work experience, and develop a good support network. And, if a paid position somehow becomes available within the family business, guess who they will consider hiring first!

Lastly, *consider attending professional networking events*. Many organizations, associations, and professional groups hold networking events that are open to the public, or at the very least open to member invitees. Find a legitimate and proper way to attend as many of these events as you can and begin expanding your professional network. The larger your network, the more likely you are to find employment.

In summary, the main themes of the lessons outlined in this article are: focus (on the controllable), education, volunteerism, and networking. These themes are not new, but they are topics that many new graduates normally pay little attention—and thus undervalue. Also, each of these topics deals with issues of respect, including self-respect. In my new book, [\*The Top Ten Laws of Respect in the Workplace – A Professional Guide\*](#), I cover many issues that touch on several of these topics in a powerful way.

## Lessons Learnt

Lesson 1: Focus on things that you can control.

Lesson 2: Consider furthering your education.

Lesson 3: Consider volunteering to work with a reputable non-profit organization.

Lesson 4: Consider volunteering to work with a friend's parent's (reputable) family business.

Lesson 5: Consider attending professional networking events.

**So**, stay focused and remain optimistic. Channel your time and energy toward activities and plans that you are able to control and that serve to enhance your employment prospects with each passing day. Good luck.

## About the Author



Niyi Taiwo is the founder of EKTIMIS and the lead editor for the EKTIMIS eLibrary articles. He is a speaker and the author of several books, including the EKTIMIS Top Ten Laws series. He is a continuous improvement expert with over 21 years of industry experience – operational, management and consulting. He has been studying the topic of respect since 2004. He holds an undergraduate degree from WPI and a master's degree from RPI. He is an organizational improvement and diversity consultant, a certified Lean Expert and an ASQ-certified Six Sigma Black Belt.