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## Hire Boston

### Degree of Ignorance: College grads need better prep

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With upwards of 60,000 to 80,000 area college graduates looking for work each year, it might seem Boston companies have their pick when it comes to entry-level job seekers.

Not so, says **Donna Ann "D.A." Hayden** and **Michael Wilder**, who recently started **Hayden-Wilder LLC**, a Boston firm that preps graduates for entry-level jobs.

Hayden-Wilder polled human resources executives, who admitted 85 percent of job applicants for that level were poorly prepared for their job search. The onus should not be placed on companies to fix applicants or coach them, said Hayden. The job of college grads is to be more prepared.

The finding is striking, since it sets up a lose-lose scenario for both the job applicant and the company.

The No. 1 faux pas among college grads is lack of preparation, according to Hayden-Wilder's research. Candidates don't know about the company with which they're interviewing, let alone the industry in which they're applying to work.

The other issue is entitlement. "A lot of graduates come in and (think they're going to) start off at elevated levels and are dismayed to find the work they're going to be doing is less than romantic," said Wilder. "It's basic work."

The other stumbling block is a lack of focus or direction for many graduates, who assume that talking about themselves will get their prospective employer interested.

"There's a lot of assumption the potential employer is going to connect the dots," said Hayden. "It's not their job."

Ultimately, grads also assume that sending around résumés is tantamount to pounding the pavement, after which they wait for a call. "It doesn't happen," said Wilder.

What Hayden and Wilder have set out to do is train grads with basic knowhow, networking skills, and confidence they'll need to navigate the job market. For \$3,000, a client receives eight 90-minute, one-on-one sessions in how to learn to prepare and conduct oneself on an interview, and on top of that each client has three hours



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or homework after each session. "It's a lot like a school course," said Hayden.

Feedback is imperative to the candidates' growth, said Hayden and Wilder, and something companies could offer more of when they conduct job fairs.

Parental support is also important, and one of Hayden-Wilder's biggest challenges. Hayden said that with 56 percent of students moving back home after graduation, parents can be a catalyst for getting the grads motivated to hone their jobsearch skills.

Wilder said that after 12 hours of intense work and training, there can be a marked difference in the way a job candidate handles him or herself. "We didn't expect to see that dramatic shift within that time period," he said.

The duo, which met while working at **Arnold Worldwide Partners**, said their contract with companies helps connect clients to job openings and may get them interviews, but it won't guarantee they get a job.

"We can't get them jobs, but we can help them get an interview," said Hayden. "In many cases the hardest step is looking for a job."

Wilder said most industries accept and need college grads for entry-level jobs; among the top employers for that level are those in communications, health care and insurance.