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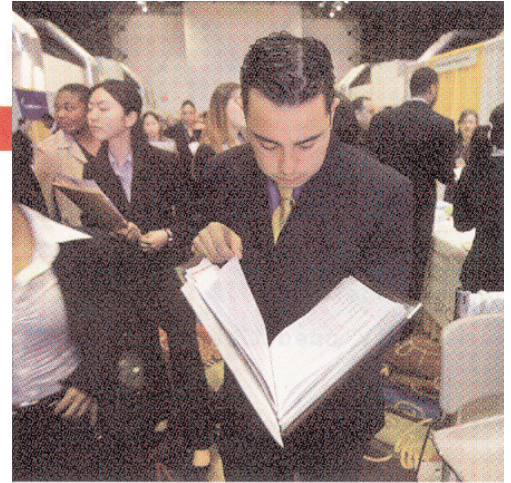
Periscope

GRADS

Helping Get That First Job

As marketing executives, D.A. Hayden and Michael Wilder routinely interviewed new college graduates - and they often came away appalled. "I wanted to tell them, 'If you'd only done this (differently), I would have invited you back'," Hayden says. Now she can give that blunt feedback - and charge for it. In September, she cofounded a Boston-based firm, Hayden-Wilder, which offers customized packages of one-on-one counseling, homework assignments, videotaped interview critiques and networking referrals. The average charge: \$3,000. Clients like Caroline Dabney, a 2005 graduate of Hamilton College, say it's worth it. "They gave me a lot more confidence," says Dabney.

Career coaches have been around for decades, but most focus on middle-aged folks who've been downsized or are changing careers. College students traditionally have relied on free counseling at campus career centers. But now a generation of affluent kids whose parents paid for SAT prep courses and pricey college-search consultants are graduating, and



NEED AN EDGE? A New York job fair

career coaches see an emerging market. Readyminds.com, which launched in 2001, has 60 counselors who provide online job coaching for \$99 and up. Although college-based counselors say they provide similar services, the private coaches say there's a demand for white-glove treatment. That's true even as the job market has strengthened: employers say they'll hire 14.5 percent more grads next spring than they did this past year, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers. "Whether it's good times or bad times, there are liberal-arts graduates out there who really don't know what they want to do," says Frank Faggiano, who launched his Boston-based consulting service three years ago. His prices start at \$6,000. But with a degree from some private colleges topping \$160,000, he deems it a small price to pay to get grads out of the house and into the work force.

-DANIEL MCGINN