

From Good to Great...



By: Athena S. Jackson, Director
Career Development Center
Florida Memorial University

Minority communities and diversity in the workplace are expanding rapidly. Because of this expansion, the national marketplace has experienced a change where more diverse cultures are impacting the dynamics of mainstream corporate America and the global economy. More specifically, African Americans represent an influential demographic that drives trends across the country. What does that mean for the minority student? It means that you have to be better than good, you have to be great.

Our future leaders need to master the keys of leadership greatness. Developing the leader within requires you to look deep inside and work from the inside out. Often times, we can not see our faults or deficiencies; therefore you should seek assistance from your Career Center or another counseling entity on campus. Let us examine some key competencies in this self development;

Know your stuff – When you are in class, it is one thing to read and “remember” what you read for a test, but you to need learn what is taught and be able to digest and use it.

Declare your vision – Ask yourself “Where do I want to be in 5 years”? What do I want to achieve in my life, short term and long term? Listen to your inner voice to discover your passion.

Work hard – Work hard at achieving your academic, professional, and social goals carefully utilizing strong time management skills to achieve them.

Choose your friends & associates wisely – Choose friends that are positive and have similar goals as you.

Expect Positive Results – Always think positively and optimistically. Work to turn disadvantages into advantages. Be careful not to let naysayers and obstacles negate your drive to succeed.

Networking – We can’t say it enough. Networking is one the most powerful keys to achieving power and access to greatness and the corporate elite. Take every opportunity to network both on campus and at community events. Carving your way into lucrative niches may open doors of opportunity.

Communication Skills - You must be articulate, and be able to communicate with a universal language that reaches across all cultures, management levels and socio-economic backgrounds.

Image – Every student and graduate should start looking at their reputation as a business professional even before they reach that mark. They need to build a persona and an identity in a totally new environment. More & more employers are going to Facebook and MySpace to ascertain the information that is normally not divulged either on your resume or in the interview. A survey by CareerBuilder found 63% of hiring managers have admitted to not hiring someone based on the information they found online. The answer.....Clean up your page and present the kind of image you would like to project.

Team Player – You have to learn to be a good team player before you become a great team leader. A successful leader knows how to effectively manage people and utilizes his or her management style to effectively get the job done maximizing productivity and maintaining a positive workforce.

Appearance Matters.....you must look good. Once you have mastered the keys to leadership greatness, you have to carefully market the outside. Recognizing and acknowledging the corporate culture and what is expected is the first step in marketing yourself. Professionally package yourself to blend in with the office culture to increase your comfort level and chances for success.

You should heighten your individualism by accentuating who you are. Expose yourself to events in your community that are often free such as art exhibits & cultural events. Learn and experience other cultures. Read not only the local newspapers, but the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and other national periodicals. By understanding the issues of access, diversity & equality, it will help you to better communicate effectively, to reason deductively, and to be able to synthesize & exercise judgment in conversing about global issues. By mastering these attributes, you will be able to clearly articulate who you are and what you have to offer.

The bottom line is producing what employers want. Employers want people who are hard working, task oriented and team players. They want people who show initiative, motivation and have a strong work ethic. You should come in self-confident with leadership skills. They want people who think outside of the box.

I challenge you to draft the blueprint for your success. Don't be complacent and docile when receiving your education or embarking upon your career. Remember, failure is not an option. You have to be better than good, you have to be great.