

Getting Your Kid a Job

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Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein.

What Happens Next is a podcast which covers economics, finance, politics, and the arts. I give the speaker just six minutes to make their opening argument.

Today's topic is getting your kid a job.

We have two speakers. Lauren Rivera is a management professor at Northwestern's Kellogg School and the author of *Pedigree: How Elite Students get Elite Jobs*. And our second speaker will be Beth Hendler-Grunt who is the author of *The Next Great Step: The Parents' Guide to Launching our New Grad into a Career*.

I have a junior and senior in college right now and getting that first job is a big topic in the Bernstein family household right now, so I thought it was a worthy topic for today's podcast.

Buckle up.

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Ok, let us start with Lauren's opening six-minute remarks.

Lauren Rivera:

Most Americans believe that hard work, not blue blood, is the key to success. Textbooks, newspapers and novels are filled with Horatio Alger stories in which an individual rises to the top through personal drive and perseverance. Whether these narratives focus on Warren Buffet, or homeless to Harvard, the underlying message is the same. Economic and social positions are achieved not inherited from one's parents.

Despite this myth of a classless society, economic inequality is now greater in the United States than in many other Western industrialized nations. And our rates of social mobility are actually lower. The top and bottom rungs of the American economic ladder are especially sticky. Children born to families in the top or bottom fifths of the income distribution tend to stay on those same

rungs as adults. Children from families at the top of the economic ladder monopolize access to prestigious universities and high paying jobs.

This raises an obvious but pressing question in an era of merit-based admissions in universities and equal opportunity regulations and employment.

How does this happen? In my book, *Pedigree*, I investigate this question through studying hiring processes for some of the nation's highest paying entry level jobs: positions in top tier investment banks, management consulting firms, and law firms. My analysis draws from interviews with employers of all three firm types, observation of their recruiting events, and in-depth ethnography of one firm's recruiting department.

I argue that at each stage of the hiring process, these employers use an array of an evaluative criteria that are highly correlated with parental income and education. These seemingly economic-neutral decisions result in a hiring process that filters students based on their parents' social class. The title of my book, *Pedigree*, refers to the term that employers in elite firms used as a shorthand for a job candidate's record of accomplishments—significant personal achievements like getting admitted to an elite university. Being a varsity athlete at an Ivy League college or having a special early internship at a financial firm were interpreted as evidence of the applicant's intelligence, orientation to success, and work ethic. Employers considered pedigree a quality based purely on individual effort and ability. Yet the original meaning of the term is synonymous not with effort but rather inheritance. It literally means ancestral line. And in that sense, pedigree evokes the book's main argument that what seems to be on the surface based on individual merit is subtly yet powerfully shaped by applicants' class backgrounds.

I want to focus on three factors that keep class diversity in these firms low. These are on-campus recruitment, the use of extracurriculars and resume screening and cultural fit. The first is on-campus recruiting. Every year these employers hire thousands of new graduates, and they do so almost exclusively from formal on-campus recruiting programs at designated universities. Firms set lists of schools where they would, and by omission would not, hire based on university prestige. Crucially, a firm sets school-based quotas, allotting a particular number of interview and offer slots to each campus on their list with the most elite schools monopolizing the lion share of slots. So, before applications or qualifications are ever looked at, the game is rigged towards students at super elite schools.

Now, you might be thinking, what's wrong with this? Kids from elite college are the best and the brightest, right? Well, it turns out what we know from research is that when it comes to superlatives, children from super elite universities are the wealthiest.

Parental income and education are some of the strongest predictors of admission to an enrollment in super elite colleges, law schools, and business schools. So, by recruiting new hires exclusively at elite colleges, employers are inadvertently but firmly closing their doors to high performing students from more modest means.

What do you think matters most on a resume? You might say, grades, a relevant internship, or taking coursework related to the job. But the answer is not that, and it's surprising. It's extracurriculars.

They favored activities that were time and resource intensive because they believe these activities indicated stronger evidence of drive and an orientation towards achievement and success. They also devalued paid work and caregiving as extracurricular pursuits. Now again, you might be thinking, what does this have to do with social class? It turns out that parental social class is one of the strongest predictors of participation in structured extracurricular activities. This is because extracurriculars are expensive. They often require equipment, participation fees, and travel. Someone has to know that investing so intensively in leisure activities has an economic payoff, which is taken for granted among white, upper-class families, but is foreign to most working-class families who put stronger emphasis on schoolwork and preparation for the labor market.

So, in screening resumes by extracurricular activities, employers take a candidate pipeline already heavily skewed towards higher class students and make a strong secondary screen based off applicant's social class signals.

Finally, class mattered in the interview room itself. One of the most important qualities employers sought in new hires was this nebulous quality of cultural fit. Over half the people I spoke to said fit was the most important quality they looked for in job interviews, but crucially, they defined fit in a very specific way. It was social similarity to existing employees, notably themselves. Fit was assessed subjectively. Many people relied on gut feelings of chemistry. Some even likened to its assessment to ascertaining, whether or not, a date goes well.

The biggest sources of chemistry and spark were discovering common hometowns, hobbies, and biographies that had a strong class component, bonding over rowing college crew, getting certified in scuba, sipping single malt scotches in the Highlands, or dining at Michelin-starred restaurants. A love of teamwork or a passion for pleasing clients was not a good fit.

While ostensibly based on merit, the specific way that firms defined and evaluated merit systematically tilted the playing field for elite jobs towards the most affluent students, which can help explain why even in the 21st century, the most elite students get the most elite jobs. Parents

levels of income and education help determine who works on Wall Street, who works on Main Street, and who reaches the top of the nation's economic ladder.

Larry Bernstein:

What is your view of the Supreme Court case to be decided this term regarding Harvard's use of affirmative action that discriminates against Asian Americans?

Lauren Rivera:

I wouldn't agree with the characterization of the current Supreme Court case, but what I will say is that there were a variety of biases at play that disadvantaged anyone who was not white and who was not higher class. They favored sports that are stereotypically white like lacrosse, squash, crew. That was a very heavily racialized preference in terms of what activities counts. Asian and Asian-American students face additional stereotypes that really played out in the interview room. It was very clear that Asian and Asian-American candidates who walked in the room were stereotyped as not being as fun as a comparable white candidate. That bar for what constituted cultural fit was higher.

Larry Bernstein:

I graduated with a bachelor's degree from the Wharton Business School in 1987, and I managed Wharton's undergraduate recruiting for Salmon Brothers corporate finance program for a few years after graduating. My responsibility was to go through the Penn resumes and then do the first round of on-campus interviews. I would get a box of hundreds of resumes to sort through. Here was my process: I chose candidates based on GPA, work experience, and coursework. I didn't focus much on extracurriculars. Back then, most applicants didn't have many relevant internships. What do you think has changed in the recruitment process from the 80s to now?

Lauren Rivera:

You were doing this by yourself, a hundred resumes at a time, that hasn't changed much. A lot of these resumes are still screened by hand. They're outsourced to people who are in their first years after undergraduate for banking, consulting after their MBA, couple years after law school in terms of law firms. One question I had for you is how were your grades as an undergraduate?

Larry Bernstein:

I graduated with all As, except for an A minus in a Freshman English seminar. I'm still angry about that.

Lauren Rivera:

That was one of the key patterns I found in my book, is that how people evaluated a resume, or an interview was contingent upon their own characteristics. I call this a looking glass mirror that we define merit in our own image. So, people who did well, like you, focused on academic

achievement. Whereas people who felt that their grades weren't stellar would emphasize more things.

I was a management consultant when I graduated Yale in the 2000s. One of the things that's changed is these jobs have become more desirable. You have a lot more applicants applying, and we know that whenever there are lots more people applying for fewer spots, we can kind of make more finetuned distinctions. That's part of what's happening with extracurriculars.

Larry Bernstein:

Your fieldwork focused on hiring in investment banking, management consulting, and law. Advancement in these industries depends on successful client interaction with the corporate elite. It makes sense that firms would focus on cultural fit if that was an important criterion for success.

In the past 25 years, my focus has changed to quantitative finance. This work does not require cultural fit. As a result, when I interview individuals for these finance jobs, I look for strong academic achievement in math, computer science, and engineering. I don't focus on extracurriculars. Why do you think there is a market failure in hiring?

Lauren Rivera:

Cultural fit worldwide across industries is one of the most common ways that individuals select new hires. And this has to do with the tools we use. Unstructured interviews worldwide are the most common tools managers use in hiring. Whenever we have unstructured interviews, it becomes, who do I like, have chemistry with? Do I enjoy this conversation?

If you need someone who's a PhD in computer science, of course it's going to be heavily weighed on that as opposed to just entirely cultural fit.

Banking, law, consulting, they're very client heavy. There is a case to be made that part of being a successful worker in these roles is you do need to be able to interact with clients. How do we measure that in a job interview? We usually measure it through these open-ended interviews. Again, what we get from interviews is, are you similar to me? Similar to me doesn't mean I can relate to people who are different from me. Lots of clients are more diverse than these firms. My old firm had an innovative way of judging client skills. Instead of just doing a fit interview or having a conversation about your strengths and weaknesses, they presented candidates with a video of a consultant interacting with a client. You had to talk through what was going well, what wasn't going well, and what you do differently. That's a type of interview that focuses on our attention on social skill as opposed to social similarity. Because you can be socially skilled and have very different extracurricular interest than your interviewer.

Larry Bernstein:

We did a book club with Laura Hamilton for her book entitled, *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. The book is written by two PhD sociology students at Indiana University at Bloomington who work as dorm RAs and who do a longitudinal study of incoming freshman girls who live on their halls. My favorite comparison in the book are two freshman roommates. One is a farm girl from rural Indiana and the other is a Jewish girl from Highland Park, Illinois. On the first day of school, the farm girl walks into her room without her parents, throws her duffle bag on her bed and walks out. At the same time, the Jewish girl from Highland Park's mother unpacks her daughter's clothes and hangs them up while her dad is shopping at Home Depot for supplemental lighting.

Ultimately, the farmer girl ends up transferring to IU's Valparaiso campus to be near her high school boyfriend who did not attend college. The Jewish father assists his daughter to get an internship at ESPN that later turns into full-time employment. The Jewish girl later gets engaged to a banker that she meets in Chicago's Lincoln Park.

How does parental involvement in college, mate selection, and job seeking change the career and life calculus?

Lauren Rivera:

I think that it is a question that is fundamentally just tied to social class. It's parents from higher class backgrounds have the economic resources, the social resources, and the cultural know-how to keep their kids on task. And the time, you're not working two shift jobs where you barely have a second to sleep, let alone think about ways to help navigate your child's economic or social destinations.

Annette Lareau, who's a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, has a wonderful book called *Unequal Childhoods*, and she documents class-based differences in parenting practices. The one she attributes to higher-class families is called concerted cultivation. Starting at very young ages, parents adopt this approach that children are like little house plants that need to be pruned and attended to so they can succeed.

In my book when I was following students, one of the things that was so clear was that students from affluent backgrounds are preparing their resumes from their first year, they're getting involved in extracurricular activities, they're thinking about productive ways to spend their summers. It's not always a job. It could be you're going to go to France and learn a foreign language.

I come from working class. I relate to that farm girl. Elite colleges are starting to put into to place resources to help students, but it's not the same as having a parent call you every day and make sure everything's going well.

Anthony Jack has a great book called *The Privileged Poor*. He looks at the experiences of working-class students and affluent students at a very elite university. Knowing the rules of the game is a big deal, and you can learn the rules of the game. So, working class students who, like me, went to an elite prep school, learn the rules of the game and they can manage, but for a lot of others it's culture clash and it's cultural overwhelm.

Larry Bernstein:

I have a friend and former colleague Bruce Tuckman who got his PhD in finance at MIT. He used to tell me that no matter how many times he was promoted, he would always report to a football player. After he became a finance professor at NYU, sure enough the next dean of the business school, was a former football player. It was true in both industry and academia.

Do you think that teamwork from sports helps develop management skills?

Lauren Rivera:

I'm so glad you asked because I hear this question all the time, and there's data to examine this. Bowen and Schulman did an analysis of the collage and beyond data that looks at graduates of highly ranked universities. What they find is that sports do not have a monopoly on leadership capabilities, in fact, experience working in any type of intensive team, whether it's speech and debate, whether it's the computer club, whether it's sports, we all see the same effect. The benefit has nothing to do with sports.

If you ask former athletes, they will tell you a million times over why sports are uniquely breeding grounds for managerial leadership skills. It happens to be that most of the people in high positions have had sports experience. Part of that has to do with if we're selecting on cultural similarity.

I was interviewing someone at an investment bank as part of this research. And I said, "Hey, what's the biggest predictor of promotion to MD?" And they said, "playing lacrosse." We know from math and from statistics that that doesn't necessarily mean that lacrosse is what is causing the promotion. If you're selecting among lacrosse players, it's going to look like lacrosse is what's driving success.

Larry Bernstein:

A buddy of mine used to be a senior partner at Goldman Sachs, he told me that elite kids from elite schools lacked the grit that kids from non-Ivy league schools possessed.

Lauren Rivera:

Goldman Sachs, in fact, about a year and a half after my book came out, eliminated on campus recruiting first round at Ivy League colleges because an MD who did not go to an elite college said, “why are we hiring all these Ivy League folks? Why are we giving them complimentary first round interviews?” They did an internal analysis and found out that Ivy League grads did not do any better on the job than non-Ivy League grads.

There have been similar studies in law firms that educational prestige isn't predicting performance. There's some research in the law world to suggest that students from the highest-class backgrounds and those from the most elite law schools are huge flight risks about a year into the job. They're thinking, “I've been told from the time I was little, I'm the best and the brightest. I'm going to do great things.”

Doing doc review where you highlight the same word for 2000 pages is not glamorous and they want to leave. This isn't necessarily working for firms, but it's the way they've always done it. People who are in charge are wedded to this process because that's what produced them. A lot of firms are worried that if they depart from this educational prestige-based model that they might alienate clients. Although do clients really need a list of 95% of your students went to Ivy League colleges?

Doing more screening on the actual skills that we need for someone to succeed in the first several years as opposed to just assuming you have skills because you went to Harvard would be a great start.

You mentioned the idea of grit being important, the idea of stamina. We know that those traits are higher among working class students than among upper class students. So why are we using a screen that's screening those kids out? If I were queen for a day, I would replace the educational prestige with test the skills that we need on the job. It's challenging for firms because you'd have to figure out what those skills are?

Larry Bernstein:

You received a PhD in sociology. How did that training prepare you for researching employment hiring?

Lauren Rivera:

The study of sociology is really the study of society. What happens in recruiting in these firms is not just individuals exerting their personal preferences. It's part of a systematic pattern. And sociology is great at looking at the consequences of patterns, given what we know about social inequality and all the great literature you're talking about written by sociologists like Annette

Lareau or Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton, you have read more sociology than many people in my department, <laugh>, which is wonderful.

The second method is that sociology, you get trained a lot of different methods. My book was a multi-method study. I did ethnography where you basically live inside of a firm. How do you do that? Well, it has interviews. It's an art. You know from your podcast; interviewing is hard to get people to open up.

I do field experiments. One of the things that happened after my book came out is people said, "we see that people have advantages here in terms of social class, but maybe the highest-class kids really are the best." And so, we did a field experiment. You take fake resumes, you vary one thing of interest, you send them to real employers, and you see who's invited to interview. It's considered to be the gold standard for measuring discrimination. What we found is that law firms were discriminating in favor of upper-class men. The only thing that varied on those resumes was extracurricular activities and the name.

High class activities like lacrosse and squash and crew or if they were bowling. It really mattered. So, we could isolate that this is not due to qualifications because we held the qualifications constant. Being a sociologist, we can observe, we can talk, but we can also test and look at the consequences in a very quantitative way.

Larry Bernstein:

You suggest a non-class-based solution to hiring would use a skill-based exam. But if we did that, parents would help their kids teach for that test. We know that elite kids win the SAT testing game. I suspect this other test would be no different. As recruitment evolves, elite parents will find ways to help their children get a leg up.

Lauren Rivera:

The reproduction of privilege is like a whack-a-mole, right? We know from sociological research that elites will always find a way of rigging the system in their favor. Even if we change hiring to make it more equitable, will there be ways to game children's success so that they're successful in the labor market? Yes. We talked a lot today about educational prestige and extracurriculars. These are cultural signals of success. We didn't talk about social networks. There are students from non-elite schools who work in these firms.

How do they get there? Either they went to a school where there's a partner or an MD who went to that school or they get there because of personal connections. So, what do we do about it? The system we have right now where we're not even concerned about who's going to be successful on the job, I think we can do better than that.

As a parent, what do you do? You're stuck on this status treadmill. I feel this myself. I study elite reproduction and the ills of it in education and employment. I struggle with this every day about choices of what to do with my children.

In our society, there is this big fear of falling. Part of why the competition is so intense is it's a winner take all society. The gains of winning are high, and the potential losses of losing are perceived to be very consequential.

Larry Bernstein:

In your book, you decided to investigate investment banking, management consulting and law as the top jobs. These industries certainly were in the upper echelon when I graduated from college 35 years ago. Now, I am not so sure. We had Chris Varelas on this podcast What Happens Next awhile back. Chris worked with me at Salomon Brothers and later managed Citi's investment bank. And what he said on the podcast was that when we started in investment banking back then we got to be in the room where it happened at a very young age. This is no longer true. And the skills you learn training at investment banks are now available elsewhere.

I advised my kids to focus on skill development in their early career and not the firm or the industry that matters. It is the person who you will apprentice with that is critical. How do you think about skill development and firm or industry selection?

Lauren Rivera:

One thing that you said that resonated is that working for Facebook, Google, those were seen as the end all be all. And they are not, there are so many other jobs out there. Not entering one of these firms does not necessarily equal your careers going to tank. Too many of students look at these jobs as the only way to springboard their careers.

It's about figuring out what do you want to do? And having a realistic view of what work in these firms is. A lot of it is just playing with Excel, or for law, it is doc review, it's not glamorous work. While learning how to do a PowerPoint well, like you'd learn in consulting, is an important skill, is that really a skill you want to spend two to three years?

Larry Bernstein:

How did you apply these lessons about mentoring in your academic career?

Lauren Rivera:

In academia, your success is tied very strongly to the mentorship you receive. Finding someone who's interested in what you want to do, that there are opportunities to work directly and be mentored is important. The status of the program matters a lot because when we hire, we do similar things as investment banks do. We don't look at extracurricular activities.

But we look at university prestige. And so going to a PhD program that is not within the top 10, your chances of becoming a tenure track faculty member are so much harder. Is it possible? Yes. But you have to publish your ass off, whereas you don't have to as much coming from an elite place.

Larry Bernstein:

How important is cultural capital to intergenerational success?

Lauren Rivera:

A big argument in sociology inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu is called cultural capital because you can cash it in for access to other stuff like educational opportunities, job opportunities later. And it's transmitted from generation to generation. It's not a genetic thing, but it's how the stories your grandparents tell you, how your parents treat you, what they subtly ask for or don't. I don't necessarily think it's a skill per se. It is a way of being that might be valuable. You also have a bunch of social networks and people who are like you, are they stationed in government? In education? Those things matter as well.

Larry Bernstein:

I like to end each episode on a note of optimism. Lauren, what are you optimistic about?

Lauren Rivera:

In the Supreme Court situation that we have now, I am optimistic that this will be an opportunity to challenge legacy and athletic admissions at Ivy League universities, which are one of the biggest privilege reproduction machines we have in this country. It's a possibility.

I'd say the second thing that I am optimistic about is that firms are starting to think of ways to replace fit interviews with something more substantial, and meaty. I'm optimistic that firms, unlike when I started this research, seem to be hungry for a solution. Although the solutions I've seen thus far leave much wanting.

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Beth Hendler-Grunt:

Young adults are graduating from college unprepared for the job market. 2 million students graduate from college in the US each year. 87% of them think they're ready for work and only 50% of hiring managers agree.

Two thirds of millennials and Gen Zers who moved back home during the pandemic still live there. There is a big disconnect between employer expectations for hiring and the skill set that

recent graduates thought they had. Parents are frustrated because there's been a huge investment. They want to help but either don't know how or their kid just does not want to take their advice.

I'd like to share the perspectives of this problem from three angles:

The parent, the new grad or student and the employer. From a parent perspective, I'm one of them. I have a recent class of 2021 grad, and I have a son who's a college sophomore. I'm with you. You thought that the college would take it from here that they'd not only provide a great education, but also a job when your child finished. We thought our kids would go to career services, companies would seek them out, but the truth is only four and 10 students use this service.

We thought universities would teach our kids life skills like networking, but it's not part of the curriculum.

Introductions or connections don't always pan out. They apply online and realize it's a black hole. They don't hear back. Or if they do, they don't progress in the interview process.

I should apply to more jobs. Or if I fix my resume and have the right keywords, everything will be fine. Or they start to question, what should I do with my life? They feel pressure of what their friends are doing. They really question everything. Like, do I have the skills that an employer wants? The other big issue is mental health. Over 40% of young adults have reported feeling anxiety. They're scared, they're afraid, they're stuck, and they're just not sure how to move forward in getting the job they want.

Employers need people.

10 million open jobs right now and there's 8 million job seekers. Employers are struggling to find the right talent with the right skills, and they don't want to babysit. They want someone who can come in and say, "I'm focused on helping you accomplish your goals and help the company achieve its targets." They want to see internships; they want to see real world experiences. New grads come in smart but are not that capable.

We're losing the bigger picture of what are the actual skills that an employer need. Employers need people who can communicate, work in a team, take initiative and be curious.

Larry Bernstein:

Kids have always been nervous about moving from the school world to the adult world. Why is there so more fear and anxiety now?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

They're very fragile. When the rejection does come, they're not prepared. It's very jarring. I see young adults who go to Ivy League schools, have amazing grades, and this is the first time in their entire life that someone has told them you're not the right fit. They don't hear back, and they don't have the coping mechanism.

Larry Bernstein:

Big firms have accelerated the hiring process earlier. Top investment banks and private equity managers like Goldman Sachs and Blackstone are hiring rising college sophomores for internships. Other kids who haven't applied or didn't get those jobs are stunned. They think that they must be falling behind. What was I thinking not taking economics?

Tell us about this new phenomenon of hiring sophomore interns that lead to full-time job opportunities after graduation.

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

The process has started earlier, a hundred percent. And I've spoken with these recruiters, they want sophomores.

The employer, they want to lock-in their top candidates as early as possible and have an internship class that they're extending full-time offers.

Students need to pay attention to that career fair in August of sophomore year.

Larry Bernstein:

You said there is an assumption that parents have expectations that career services will take care of it. Why are kids not using this college-led assistance?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

There are multiple reasons why young adults don't use career services. First is that the general feel for most college students is I have plenty of time. Let me just go to school. I just spent all these years trying to get into college. So let me try to just settle in and manage my life, my classes, my friendships, and I'll deal with that later. I tell them, you got to start thinking about it as a freshman.

It is intimidating for many students. They're afraid that someone's going to say to them, "what would you like to do for your life? Or what jobs do you want to apply to?" And they're uncomfortable not having clarity about that. And I don't know if career services is equipped to give them that direction.

I've seen in career services that sometimes the people themselves have not been in the workforce recently. So, they're not always giving the most current advice. Unfortunately, many universities don't put the money into career services like they do into football, <laugh> or other buildings.

Larry Bernstein:

I want to tell my own personal story as to how I got my summer internship during college. I was a freshman at Wharton and John Gutfreund the CEO of Salomon Brothers was on the cover of Business Week that called him the King of Wall Street.

I asked my dad for help getting an internship at Salomon Brothers, but he said that he was a cardiologist and didn't know anyone that worked there. No problem, I said, do you know the head of a commercial bank in Chicago because they must do business with them. So, I met the CEO of American National Bank for lunch and asked him for a letter of recommendation for the Salomon job. Then I asked my dad's friend Lester Crown one of the leading industrialists for help with a letter of recommendation. And then finally Mark Field from Salomon invited me in for an interview, where I had to sell myself aggressively for a position that did not exist.

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

I love the story <laugh>, you show persistence. I think parental networks are always helpful. But here's the problem. When you finally go meet somebody is where a lot of kids blow it. Parents need to make sure our kids are prepared for these conversations because there's too much of the reputation and money on the line for somebody to take someone's young adult if they don't feel like they really can help the company. These conversations don't go anywhere because our young adults don't know what to say. They didn't even do the research.

Tell me, "Why do you want to work there? What about this company is interesting to you? What are the skills that you've learned in college or in the classroom that can add value to what they're trying to accomplish?" And that's what makes them more compelling.

How do you learn how to reach out to somebody that you've never met you have no connection with? What do you say to them via LinkedIn, which is a great tool, or someone who's a fellow-alumni? How do you have a conversation that really adds value?

Larry Bernstein:

I agreed with one of my buddies to do mock interviews with his son if he did mock interviews with mine. We both worked at Salomon and later at hedge funds and know what firms want. But it's challenging to do these mock interviews with your own child.

A few weeks ago, I did a mock interview with my friend's son, and he panicked when I asked him a question that was outside his area of expertise. My advice to him afterwards was to behave like a politician. Don't answer the question asked, answer the question you wish they'd asked.

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

I think it's great to have somebody that is not mom or dad do the interview. It's fantastic to have somebody that's not emotionally connected doing that mock interview and giving real feedback.

I also teach how can you maintain control and not feel like the interview is happening to you where you're just waiting or wondering what the next question will be. I'm very much in the mindset of having a plan. We can predict the questions, "Why do you want to work here? Why should we hire you? What makes you unique? What skills do you have?" We can predict this. You've practiced saying answers out loud. This should not be the first time. Even if you wrote notes down.

Absolutely maintaining the control in the conversation and what you want them to know about. So even at the end when they say, "Is there anything else you want to tell us?" Absolutely. These are my three core skills I think would really add value to your company. And as a result, I could help impact these metrics. Makes them think, wow, this person understands our problems and they're all about helping us to be successful. That's what I find tends to help candidates stand out.

Larry Bernstein:

I know you're supposed to ask a bunch of questions, but I worry that afterwards the interviewer will have insufficient material on his evaluation form if the conversation does not focus on the candidate and his qualifications.

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

We have a unique structure for this so that even informational interviews don't go off the rails. That there's like a clear plan. This methodology that I teach, it's called the three A's The first A: What action do I want the person to take? I want them to go speak to HR and tell them that they need to interview me.

I want them to speak to the hiring manager and say, you need to give this individual another interview. Something that's actionable, not just, I'll review your resume.

The second A is well if they're going to do something, what do I have to have them believe about me? It's usually about what are the skills that I have? I'm a great writer, I know how to research, I'm great at sales, I can do accounting, I'm analytical. Whatever that is, you have to make sure that that is explained during the conversation.

The last A of the conversation where you need to have three to five great questions you can't find on Google such as, how do you measure success? Tell me what is the criteria that you look for when hiring an intern or new candidate? Tell me what are your goals for the company this year, this quarter? Things that are really specific to the person or at that moment in time. I just noticed online that you posted about this merger. How's it impacting the company? What's unique about this structure is that when you are in the meeting, you flip it.

So, when you first come into an informational interview you say, I have some questions for you that I'd like to make sure we address. A lot of times people will say, "Great, why don't you ask them first?" So, you ask your questions first, which to me is like getting the answers to the test. Then when they're really impressed by what you're saying based on what I've shared with you, would you consider recommending me to the person in HR for another interview? The action and this simple structure keep them on task. The interviewer is impressed because there's a plan and there's an outcome that yields a legitimate next step versus hoping or crossing your fingers that someone's going to get back to you.

Larry Bernstein:

50 years ago, Stanford Sociology Professor Mark Granovetter wrote one of the most cited articles in 20th century social science entitled the Strength of Weak Ties. And the insight was that to expand your network to find a job, you want to use your network of acquaintances instead of your close friends and family. And the reason is that you already know the same people as those close to you, but you likely don't know your weak acquaintances.

This is most applicable for the second job search. Your cardiologist father can use his network to get the job at Salomon Brothers, but when you want to jump to the next bank, you may have an acquaintance who works there or knows someone who heard that there is a job opening.

How should you use acquaintances in a job search?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

I think acquaintances are a great way to expand your network. Most young adults don't realize is that in general people are very interested in helping someone who just graduated college to find the first job. What they forget is that we were all in that same place and we know the discomfort and the difficulty and the challenge. One of the things that I recommend is reach out to fellow alumni because they tend to be the friendliest and the most sympathetic. So, you automatically have something in common that you can both relate to, but you don't need to know each other. Pick someone who's five to seven years out, they don't have to be the CEO or the vice president.

Pick someone who's probably in an entry level job, the same type of job that you're looking for and ask them, how did you get there? What did you do to make that happen? What advice would

you give to me? Usually, they'll tell you kind of the real story of what's happening at the company, whether it's good or not so good. Saying, "I'm a recent grad, I'm looking to learn, I'm looking to understand," people are very receptive versus if you come in and say, "I'm a recent grad and I really, really need a job and can you hire me?" That does not go over well. That's way too desperate and it's like getting married on the first date. But if you show interest, if you do a little bit of research about the person or the company and say, "I'd like to spend a few minutes to understand how you got to where you are and any advice you could share with me," people really respond to that.

I think it's just not a typical skill that's being taught to pick up the phone and call someone. It shows a lot of initiative and tenacity.

Larry Bernstein:

What do you tell the young adult who just took his first job and finds it's unfulfilling?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

So that's a lot of phone calls that we receive, "I got a job, but I really hate it and I don't feel fulfilled, and I just felt the pressure to do it. I want to go in a different direction. But I'm not sure what that direction is." So, in essence you are starting over.

Here's what we'd suggest. What are your three core skills? And once you figure that out, we figure out what's the story behind it.

Whether it's, I'm a great communicator, I'm analytical, I know how to research, let's make sure you have an example that proves to someone who's never met you that you know how to do those skills. Then we say, okay, what kinds of industries need those skills? What kinds of companies, let's make some lists, let's identify people who have the job that you want? Not even the hiring manager. Then you need to go after people through networking conversations. I didn't say go to the job board and go apply online because 80% of jobs are found by referral. They're not found online. And this targeted networking is what will get you into your next role.

Larry Bernstein:

There is enormous pressure on the internship after the college junior year because after the summer, many candidates get full-time job offers. But this is also a time for the young adult to explore new industries and develop skills. What do you recommend?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

It's important to have an internship between junior and senior year of college. It doesn't have to be the internship for a Fortune 50 company that's a 10-week rotation program. It's important to

have good work experience. It could be with a small company. The more you can have those experiences, the more it'll help you get clarity on what you want, whether you like it or not.

But it also shows the skills that you can bring to any employer for the final job. Is there a greater likelihood of getting an offer from an internship for full-time? Absolutely. It tends to be like a multi-week interview, but it doesn't always have to be. Sometimes you realize it wasn't what I wanted. And maybe it helps to know what you don't want because it's a lot easier and a lot riskier as a 20 something to realize, hey, I didn't like that.

We have to break the idea of what's a traditional internship. You need to do something for a company that's adding value, that's learning a skill that you haven't learned in school. And the more you can get that throughout the school year, during the summer, it doesn't matter. And by the way, there's nothing wrong with a part-time job too where you need to make money because delivering pizza and scoop and ice cream, there's some skills that you learn from that too.

Whether it's customer service or problem resolution. You got to get out of the classroom doing part-time jobs, internships, all of that. But don't get so hung up on what an internship has to look like, and does it have to be for this big company and has to be 10 weeks? It's a lot of different things.

Larry Bernstein:

I'm old school and I believe in the thank you note. I think it's valuable. Do you recommend a thank you note and what should that thank you note say?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

I strongly believe in the thank you note, and I believe the thank you note can make or break your chances of getting to the next round. I have spoken with many employers who are interviewing and hiring, and they say, I had an incredible candidate, and we had a great conversation. I think they'd be a great fit. And they never sent me a thank you note, and I'm not going to extend them to the next round. It's not that hard. People invested time.

You stand out because there's so many people who don't write a thank you note. It's the simplest thing. It could be as simple as, "Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I enjoyed learning about X and Y.

I look forward to following up with you soon. I will contact you next week." I mean, simple. This is not hard. An email instantly within 24 hours, not like a week later. I mean, of course I'm always like, still send it. If you're that late but quick within 24 hours, it's not that difficult. It doesn't need to be this complicated thing. I mean, I'd love for a little recap. If there's something that you learned or something that you were excited about the company, of course all that's even

better. But if you didn't have the time and you sent a quick one and then you sent a follow up three or four days later saying, I've thought about it and I wanted to reflect on our conversation and here's some other ideas, but you have to send a thank you note. It's just like, I <laugh>. I can't tell you how many people who don't. And it drives me crazy.

Larry Bernstein:

I end each podcast on a note of optimism. What are you optimistic about related to finding employment for your college graduate?

Beth Hendler-Grunt:

I am optimistic that our young adults have so much potential and that there are real opportunities for them. And what I'm optimistic about is that when I see someone who comes in as scared, intimidated, stuck, and think that they're not worthy or don't have the right skills, I know that there can be a transformation to where they feel confident of adding value and getting the job that they deserve. And I feel that we teach that. I know that we offer that through our process. I am optimistic that we have really great talent in our young adults. We just need to give them the chance to express it. And we need to give them some guidance on how to do it, but they absolutely can make that transition. And I see it every single day.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks to Lauren and Beth for joining us today.

If you missed last week's show on the red-hot art market, check it out. Our first speaker was Wendy Cromwell who is an art consultant who helps collectors buy major art works. Wendy attended the Miami Art Basel Fair and she explained what she learned at the Fair and what that means for the state-of-the-art market.

Our second speaker was Claudia Gould who is the Director of the Jewish Museum in New York. Claudia told us about her new exhibit at the Jewish Museum entitled New York: 1962-1964 which is showing until January 8. This show is fabulous, and I encourage all of you to see this provocative and interesting exhibit.

Next week on the podcast, I will be joined by my friend Scott Turow who is the author of One L and Presumed Innocent, and Scott will discuss his new book entitled Suspect.

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I would like to thank our audience for your continued engagement with these important issues,
good-bye.