

Q&A

A conversation with

VICTORIA PILATE

Author of

Dorm Rooms to Boardrooms



Crandell & Rose
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Q: How did you get the idea for *Dorm Rooms to Boardrooms*? The book started as a class project in graduate school. I was interviewing people and asking them about their “life trajectories.” It was fascinating work. I continued with the project after the class ended and expanded to include an email survey. There were just under 200 responses to the survey and then I did further interviews and data collection.

Q: In the book you mention email addresses as some ways students can discredit themselves. What are some ways students fall down in the interview process? Students can fail in the interview stages in several ways. One, they don't know how to handle the unexpected question or unexpected situation. Many times, especially with female students, they are unable to talk about themselves with openness and frankness. Then there are the few, but growing number of students, usually male, who overdo it to the point of arrogance. I see that when I talk to students at seminars.

Q: What advice do you have for readers about writing resumes? For resumes of students that I've seen, they are too terse with job descriptions. Fast food jobs can be very valuable job experiences to qualify for some permanent jobs, but students fail to describe them adequately or interestingly on resumes. Among the skills that employers want to see in new hires, customer service, training experience, and team work are consistently among the top skills and experiences. These are mainstays of fast food jobs or many work study jobs, but students don't bring out those skills and experiences in resumes or interviews.

Q: Do you have any basic advice for any student starting a new job? Start looking early; intern or use volunteer work as jobs on resumes. Talk to others, not only to get hints on job openings, but also to get a flavor for what to expect on interviews or in the office. And also, ask for some job search hints; there are many back doors to getting an interview. Also, there's a culture shock on both interviews and once on the job. Talking to others about interviews and office experiences helps to prepare oneself for the real thing.

Q: How is your book different from other career books? I cover many of the same issues as some career books. I knew I needed to cover the basics of the job hunt and finding an apartment, but I also took it a step further and hit essential issues like office politics and office etiquette. I haven't seen another book that puts job hunting, office politics, grooming, business travel, and presentations in the same book. It's different also in that I used my own experiences as well as those of 200 plus other people. I also used a fair amount of secondary research. I combed journals and news sources from *Harvard Business Review* through NIH data.

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