

Dive Into
ACTION!

For Recent Graduates

Don't Be **A Part Of** the Pack,
Be **Apart From** the Pack!

Gary Lim

Dedicated to my wife Judy and our daughter,
both of whom keep me looking ahead
to what can be, and what will be.

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PRAISE FOR

Dive Into ACTION! For Recent Graduates:

Don't Be A Part of the Pack, Be Apart From the Pack

“In *Dive Into ACTION! For Recent Graduates*, Gary Lim lays out a clear, defined process to undertake the challenges of finding a job and launching a career. Students and recent graduates alike would do well to consider his approach.”

– Dr. Cornelius B. Murphy Jr., President, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

“*Dive Into ACTION! For Recent Graduates* does an excellent job of breaking down what can be an intimidating process into easy to understand steps. This is the job search information all new graduates need, delivered in a way that quickly communicates the essential points and encourages the reader to move the process forward.”

– Rick DeVecchio, Director of Career Placement,
Sacred Heart University

“Sound advice and methodology for the job search process that undergraduate and graduate students need to execute to get their careers started.”

– Dr. Shiu-Kai Chin, Professor, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department, Syracuse University

Also by Gary Lim

Dive Into ACTION!

Find Your Niche in Times of Uncertainty

Let It Fly!

Defy the Laws of Business Gravity and
Keep Your Company Soaring

The Road to Gumption

Using Your Inner Courage To Balance
Your Work and Personal Life

Introduction

This work is an adaptation of my well-received third book, *Dive Into ACTION! Find Your Niche in Times of Uncertainty*, which has been a helpful resource for many professionals in the workplace who find themselves looking for their next great opportunity. That book was focused mostly on people who have been in the workplace for a number of years or more.

But what about you, the recent or soon-to-be graduate from an institution of higher education? Every year, approximately 2.5 million degrees are earned: associate, bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctorate. Many of the degrees are earned part-time by people who are already employed, but everyone else will need to seek positions upon graduation. Add to that the number of people currently unemployed in the U.S., and you have a challenging job market.

Don't be discouraged by the numbers. There are still many opportunities at "entry level" positions and above, and although many open positions get filled, the candidate pool will be very competitive. The key is getting a company to understand your value to them. You will need to become very good at making yourself stand out from the crowd at every stage, to:

- get a phone screen
- be invited to an initial interview
- go back for a second round of interviews, and
- get that job offer.

Don't be a part of the pack, **be apart from the pack.**
To make this happen, take ACTION:

A is for **Accomplishments**

C is for **Connect**

T is for **Target**

I is for **Implement**

O is to be **Objective**

N is for **Nerves**

Master these phases of your job search, and you will maximize your chances of finding an opportunity that you seek. It won't be easy, and there are no guarantees, but what choice do you have? After all, we're talking about your career, so why wouldn't you give it your all?

In this book I'll share with you my perspective on the things you can do that will help you stand out. It's a perspective that I've acquired from a career where I've interviewed and hired many people, and also from competing for positions where there was much competition. I want you to be **apart from** the pack, and not become a **part of** the pack.

Keep reading to find out exactly what you need to do during each of these phases, to maximize your chances in the job market. All the best ... now Dive Into ACTION!

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“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work
a day in your life.”

— Confucius

“All that stands between the graduate and the top of the ladder
is the ladder.”

— Author Unknown

“A” is for Accomplishments

“Never mistake activity for achievement.”

--John Wooden

One of the first things many students or recent graduates do when searching for a job is to prepare their resumes. They list the positions they had during the summer, or internships held during the school year. And when they describe what they did in each position, they often list as many things as they can to make the position look more substantial. As you prepare your resume by thinking back on what you can put into it, beware of falling into this trap.

It’s not about how much you should put into your resume. It’s about knowing what should be in your resume, and what shouldn’t.

Mistake #1 in this phase ... thinking that what you *did* in a job, is what you *accomplished*. As the quote from legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden indicates, “activity” and “achievement” (accomplishments) are two different things. Since most students or recent graduates make this mistake, if you make sure you don’t, you stand to be apart from the pack.

So what should you put in? The answer is, as many “accomplishments” as you can think of, and as few “activities” as possible. Accomplishments are things that you achieved that have an effect on people or

situations. Activities are merely what you did to pass the time of day while you were working.

Granted, all jobs are made up of activities of one type or another, but it's what resulted from those activities, the impact of those activities, that potential employers are more interested in than the activities themselves. Allow me show you what I mean with a hypothetical example.

Let's say one of your summer jobs was being a camp counselor at a local camp in the mountains. It consisted of the usual collection of duties that a camp counselor would have, maybe leading group activities for the kids, organizing short outings, and helping to serve the meals. If you just listed these items on your resume, you would be merely listing activities.

What employers will find more interesting is the impact these activities had, on the kids, on the camp, and even on you. And if you can connect the dots for them and show them how your activities made you a better person, made the kids better kids, or made the camp a better camp, that's what employers really want to know about you.

So maybe because you led group activities, the way you did it allowed the kids in camp to learn more independence and become more self-starting. Or because you organized some of the outings for the entire camp, you sharpened your organizational skills and became much better at coordinating different aspects of a bigger picture. Or maybe in the course of helping to serve some of the meals, you made some

suggestions that helped mealtimes progress smoothly and with very few hitches.

Get the picture? If you merely list activities, employers will not always have the time to figure out what the impact of your activities were. You might think that it's obvious, and that they should be able to figure it out, but they won't have time to spend on it. It's easier for them to move on to the next resume to see if there's anything interesting that jumps out from that one.

What if you think you had a job that's routine, and you don't think there's much impact from it? A major grocery store not far from where I live employs lots of students in summer or part-time positions, working as check-out cashiers. I'm sure a lot of these students think that they wouldn't be able to list any accomplishments that would sound interesting, because all they did all day was scan the customers' groceries, pack them, and collect payment.

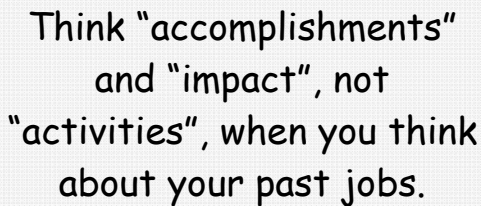
If you had one of these positions, you might think the same. And, in fact, if all you did was scan the customers' groceries, pack them, and collect payment, and nothing else, then it would be routine, and you'd be a part of the pack.

But you want to be *apart from* the pack, so if you had that job you should have been looking for ways to make your experience fuller. Maybe you'd be asking your supervisor if you could experience a couple of different departments during the summer, not just the cashier line. Or maybe you'd ask her if you could sit in

on a company training class or seminar, perhaps even on your own time.

Employers want to know how your past positions impacted you, the company you worked for, and the people you worked with. If you can describe your positions in those terms, you're well on your way to being apart from the pack. Most of the other candidates who are competing for the same positions as you, are not doing this.

This is the mindset I want you to get into, thinking "accomplishments" and "impact" instead of "activities". It's so important, I want to place this sticky note here to remind you.



Think "accomplishments"
and "impact", not
"activities", when you think
about your past jobs.

It involves some thought, but remember, this is about setting you apart from the pack, to get invited to those phone screens and interviews. So here's what I want you to do, to turn your list of summer jobs and internships into accomplishments:

Step 1. On a sheet of paper, or in a new Microsoft Word document (or other PC, Mac, or web-based word processing application of your choice), list the

companies or organizations where you held your most recent internships, part-time, or summer jobs, latest positions first. Using any word processing application would make things easier, since you will be inserting new information in between the lines.

Step 2. Under each company/organization name, enter a job title that best describes what you did. If you were working for a company or other organization, you probably had a job title like “Retail Sales Clerk”, “Receptionist”, “Computer Technician”, etc. If you held an internship, you might or might not have had a specific title, but you could use “Business Intern”, “Engineering Intern”, or other title you choose that fits the function you served.

Step 3. Start with the most recent position first. Under your title for the job, make a list of things you did in that position while you were there. You can list ongoing, repetitive “day-to-day” duties (e.g. answering phones, responding to customer service emails), and also any special projects you worked on during that time. List whatever comes to mind, and for now don’t worry about how many items you have in your list.

Step 4. For each item in your list, answer the following question about how that duty, activity, or project helped the company, your co-workers, or the customers:

So what?

For example, say you were working at a computer service company one summer. In your list of activities,

you might have listed that you “serviced, repaired, and optimized clients’ computers.”

So what?

Maybe you serviced those computers faster than the clients expected. They were hoping to get their systems back in one week, and you were able to get them returned to them in 3 days. Net result, a pleasantly surprised customer.

Or maybe you took each computer and ran optimization scripts on them, then looked at their directory structures to see how things might be improved.

So what?

Bottom line, the systems on average ran 25% faster after you got done with them, and the customers were again pleasantly surprised.

And perhaps another activity was the owner of the firm asking you to give him some feedback on the process in the shop. You studied the flow and made some recommendations.

So what?

The owner took some of your suggestions, and the result was a shorter turnaround time for systems to be completed. In fact, your suggestions reduced the average time a system spent in the shop by about one-third.

Get the idea? Take every activity, duty, or project that you’ve listed under your job title, and think of how

your customers, company, or co-workers were positively affected by your efforts. If you can, express those positive impacts quantitatively, such as “increased by a factor of 2”, or “cut the time spent in half”, or “doubled the number of customers served”, etc.

What you’re doing is answering the “so what?” question by listing the benefits of what you did. Enter the benefit below the listed activity it corresponds to. If you’re using word processing, change the color of that text to green.

Step 5. Look over your green list of benefits, the answers to the “so what?” question. Pick the 3 or 4 that seem to suggest the largest impact, and use them in your resume for the description of what you did in that position. By describing your activities in terms of benefits or accomplishments, instead of just activities, you set yourself apart from the pack. You also help “connect the dots” for those interested in knowing more about you, as to what you might be able to do for them.

Keep this “green list” in mind whenever you get interviewed about your previous jobs. It will help your interviewer see how you were able to add value to your position, and that’s what can really catch their attention.

Summary – “A” is for “Accomplishments”

Think accomplishments, not activities. It’s not just about what you’ve done, but more about the impact and value of what you’ve done.

Use the 5-step process and the “so what?” question to take your activities and emphasize how they brought value and benefit to where you worked. How did your job tasks bring benefits to:

- Customers
- The company
- Your own skills

Focus on these benefits to connect the dots for readers of your resume.

Keep your list of accomplishments and examples of impact in mind, for when you get interviewed for possible jobs.

ACTION! Summary

A is for **Accomplishments**

C is for **Connect**

T is for **Target**

I is for **Implement**

O is to be **Objective**

N is for **Nerves**

Accomplishments are the key, not activities that you've done to pass the time. Be apart from the pack by focusing on your value to organizations you've worked for in the past.

Connect with everyone you know. Maybe even some you don't know, yet. Create an elevator pitch, and print some business cards.

Target the companies and industries that you're interested in. Dive deep and research all you can find out about them.

Implement your action plan. Dive into ACTION! with the 8 things you should be doing.

Be **Objective** before making decisions that affect you over the long-term. The only offer you have is not necessarily the best one.

Nerves are good. Channel and focus your nervous energy to look passionate and ready to rock.

About the Author

Gary Lim, M.A., is Visiting Professor of Entrepreneurship at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York. He is also the founder of ActionPronto.com, the business through which he offers “action plan coaching” services, keynote speaking, and seminars, and president of Aurarius LLC, a management consulting firm he first founded in California’s “Silicon Valley” then relocated to Upstate New York. Gary is a co-founder of HealthcareBusinessOffice LLC, and his past business experience includes leadership positions at larger firms such as Hewlett Packard, ROLM, XEROX, and Novell, and at small companies and start-ups.

A seasoned and energetic public speaker, Gary has spoken to audiences in many venues, including keynote addresses, conference workshops, corporate/executive seminars, product launches, and training courses. He has worked with thousands of attendees from organizations ranging from Fortune 500 corporations and mid-market firms to not-for-profits and educational institutions.

As an author, *Dive Into ACTION! for Recent Graduates* is Gary’s fourth released work. His first, *The Road to Gumption: Using Your Inner Courage to Balance Your Work and Personal Life* (Dorato Press) was an Amazon #1 Bestseller in its category. Next came *Let It Fly! Defy the Lams of Business Gravity and Keep Your Company Soaring* (Dorato), a business parable featuring effective business leadership principles and a story set at a well-known golf course along the Pacific Ocean. Then came the original *Dive Into ACTION! Find Your Niche in Times of Uncertainty* (Dorato), the book upon which this work is based.

In his work with students, coaching clients, seminar attendees, and at company meetings, Gary is often considered among the best at assessing a complex business or personal

situation, identifying the critical issues, and offering practical insight for solutions.

He earned a Bachelor's degree *cum laude* from Princeton University, and a Master's degree in organizational management from University of Phoenix.

To book speaking engagements and seminars, you can find more details on the Web, or contact Gary directly:

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He can speak more about addressing customized needs, such as:

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