

Forbes

FORBES > LEADERSHIP > CFO NETWORK

Preparing Future Financial Leaders To Be Successful Post Graduation

Steven Wasserman Contributor @

Steven Wasserman is a Consulting CFO and Lecturer of Finance

Follow

Updated Oct 24, 2024, 04:46pm EDT



I recently read two articles highlighting a concerning trend: Employers are firing Gen-Z employees soon after their hire dates. [One author](#) wrote that “businesses were hesitant to hire recent college graduates over concerns about how prepared they are for the work.” [A second author](#) wrote that “one in six bosses say they’re hesitant to hire college grads.” These reports are troubling and could make it more difficult for new college graduates to find jobs in the future.

[Bryan Robinson, a Forbes contributor, stated that](#) current graduates often lack key skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and relationship building. While new graduates learn on the job, current students should be working to improve these skills while they are still in school. Instructors play a key role in accelerating this skill development by having students practice these skills in their classes.

As a Senior Lecturer of Finance at [Bentley University](#), I bring activities into my classes to nurture these skills. However, I am continually surprised that some students resist the activities that are set up to help them develop important skills. As future financial leaders, students need to develop not only technical skills, but also these equally important soft skills.

Future financial leaders should keep the following in mind:

Working with high-level deliverables – Instructors assign projects with high-level deliverables and general rubrics. Instructors do not provide detailed output requirements, nor do they outline each required step to complete a project. When new graduates are working, their managers will ask them to work on projects, often with unclear paths to completion. Newly hired employees must be able to determine which inputs they need to gather to produce an appropriate solution. An exercise with partially undefined deliverables and an unspecified work plan prepares students for work tasks, such as developing a contribution margin analysis for a product, where a new graduate will need to determine which costs are relevant and how to gather the costs.

Extensive group work – Instructors will require students to consistently work on collaborative projects with diverse groups of students. When new graduates are working, they will work cross functionally with a broad range of personalities. At times, they will be collaborating with people who they would prefer not to work with. In addition, they will need to find ways to persuade other employees to help them with their high-priority projects, when the projects are not high-priority for the coworkers whose help the graduates require. Collaborating extensively with teams prepares students for work tasks, such as collecting inputs from multiple stakeholders to update a business forecast.

Frequent presentations – Instructors will repeatedly ask students to present in class. When new graduates are working, they will need to effectively present their ideas to managers and peers. If graduates cannot effectively present their ideas, they will not be successful. Oral communication is critically important for career advancement. Presenting

frequently prepares students for work tasks, such as leading quarterly business reviews for a company's senior management.

By signing up, you agree to receive this newsletter, other updates about Forbes and its affiliates' offerings, our [Terms of Service](#) (including resolving disputes on an individual basis via arbitration), and you acknowledge our [Privacy Statement](#).

Sign Up

Analyzing written case studies – Instructors will ask students to evaluate complex business cases and provide written analyses of the cases. These cases reinforce that there are rarely clear-cut answers to business questions and that business leaders often must make decisions with incomplete information. The business world operates in shades of grey. Analyzing cases prepares new graduates to think broadly about issues because the information needed to make an ideal decision is often not available. Writing case analyses prepares new graduates for work tasks, such as the day-to-day tasks of writing emails, reports, and documentation memos.

Future financial leaders should understand that their instructors are working to prepare them for post-graduation success. These future leaders should embrace these sometimes-uncomfortable activities in college because they will pave the way for future success.



Steve Weisman

Follow

Steve Weisman is a professor at Bentley University, where he teaches white collar-crime, and is the editor of Scamicide.com, which provides updated information daily about the latest scams, identity theft schemes and cybersecurity. **Read Less**