

THE BOEHLY CENTER

FOR EXCELLENCE IN FINANCE

CAREERS IN FINANCE PODCAST

EPISODE 5: CAREER PREPARATION - BEFORE THE JOB OFFER

Jeffrey Rich

Welcome to Careers in Finance, presented by the Boehly Center for Excellence in Finance at William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. This podcast will explore various areas of the financial services industry, career paths in finance, and other practical insights that will help students better understand and prepare for professional success in the field of finance. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast and catch future episodes as we explore the field of finance. And now your host, Jad Howell.

Jad Howell

Welcome, everyone, to this next podcast. As part of the Boehly Center podcast series. Today, I am excited to introduce you to three of the who's who in terms of career and academic advising. And we have with us today Patrice Lincoln, who is the Director of Graduate Career and Advising at the Graduate Career Management Center. We also have with us Morgan Hutter, who is the Associate Director of Strategic Engagement with the Boehly Center. And last but certainly not least, we have Renard Miles, who is our Director of Employer Engagement and Programming at the Cohen Career Center. So thank you again, all three, for joining me today. We're excited to hear your insights and perspectives on many questions that are likely timely and quite helpful to students as they continue to navigate their career path.

Morgan Hutter

Thanks, Jad. Glad to be here.

Patrice Lincoln

Thank you so much. I am very excited to be here.

Renard Miles

I would definitely echo everyone's sentiments and say that I'm excited to be here as well. So thank you for having us.

Jad Howell

Terrific. Well, we'll go throughout today, and I'll post several questions to the three of you, and we'll try to divide and conquer in terms of who answers which questions. But the first that I'm going to pose is we talk frequently about mastering the outreach between the student and prospective employers and alumni in order for them to be successful in identifying and securing internships and full-time employment opportunities. How can students best get the attention of these fairly busy prospective employers and alumni as they seek to make those connections? And maybe Patrice will begin with you? Can you please respond to that question?

Patrice Lincoln

Yes, that's a great question and a subject that I am currently going over and over and over again with our students right now. So our alumni at William & Mary are very friendly. Tribe pride is very strong. And so it's likely that you're going to make a connection with alumni. But being that they are getting so many connection requests, it really will help you if you make yourself stand out a little bit more than just the generic vanilla message that talks about, you know, hi I'd like to learn more about the culture of your company. And so what about you or about that person, in particular, might grab their attention. So if you follow that person, if you've looked at any of their career paths, you can talk about their transition into their career and how you find it intriguing. If they've published anything on Facebook or LinkedIn, you can actually take a look at that article and mention that article. So people love to talk about themselves. So when you have that little bit more of a hook, and you're asking them for just a small amount of time, like ten minutes for an informational interview, that can go a really long way to having them answer your connection over the other hundred that they've received.

Jad Howell

I like that a lot, having familiarity with your audience, knowing who they are. Morgan, what about you? Any thoughts?

Morgan Hutter

Yeah, I mean, I think I think Patrice hit the nail on the head, right? I mean, especially with LinkedIn. I think you get three hundred characters or words to make an introduction. So you really have to be concise and specific with your request and be unique. We see that all the time, and we too recommend that to our students. And remember, alumni are a very forgiving audience, right? I mean, you need to get their attention. But as Patrice said, our alumni are awesome, and they want to support you. So the hardest step sometimes is just making that step and getting out of your comfort zone and reaching out. But that's why you have resources like the GCMC and the Cohen Career Center, and the Boehly Center. So if you need help, you know, we can help you draft what that could look like.

Jad Howell

Terrific. Thank you. Morgan. Renard, any thoughts from you?

Renard Miles

Yeah, I'll add as well. So kind of going along with what Patrice mentioned. So if there's maybe a particular organization that you're interested in. Look and see if there's information sessions within Cohen or the GCMC or within Boehly and attend those sessions, and then you have a connection right there from the individual who may be facilitated that that information session, but then also follow the organization on LinkedIn. So when they do publish new content. That's something that you're able to use as an introduction as well, so maybe you lead with I saw the post that the organization posted on LinkedIn, and I wanted to follow up with that, but looking for those connections so that you do have a way in and something that allows you to have a lead. I would definitely echo what Morgan and Patrice said with that.

Jad Howell

Terrific. Thank you, Renard. Renard, why don't we stay with you as we talk about the manner in which we or a student can make that initial outreach. Let's talk a little bit about the various modes or the ways in which to communicate to them. LinkedIn has been referenced several times already as a way in which to interact, to communicate with these various parties. What would you recommend students use, or how should they make that initial outreach? What venues?

Renard Miles

Yeah, that's a great question. And I think, of course, there are many avenues that students can utilize. And so, LinkedIn is definitely my go-to. So I enjoy the function that you can do LinkedIn.com/alumni, and it pulls up all of those alumni that are from your institution. So whichever institution that you have listed for your degree to pull those alumni up, and so you can then search by geographical locations, or you can search by industries. And so, if you have someone, you're interested in reaching out to, that's one way that you can make a connection. And generally speaking, recruiters or alumni or employers they're not going to frown upon you reaching out to them via LinkedIn. Some individuals even have emails listed on there as well. So my rule of thumb is if they have it listed on their LinkedIn and that profile is public, then, by all means, utilize the email to reach out to them. If there's also someone who we may have a connection with, whether that's in Cohen or GCMC or within Boehly, reach out to those staff members as well and tell them that you're interested in connecting with someone from a particular organization and see if they have any ideas or connections within those individuals, because oftentimes alumni reach out to us and they'll say, I'm more than happy to facilitate a conversation with a student, or more than happy to make an introduction. So look at those opportunities as well. I know that LinkedIn also has an option where you can do a E introduction. So say, for example, Patrice knows someone who works in an organization, and you want to be introduced with them that she can do a E introduction for a student as well. So look at those avenues. Also, look at email as well. So what we mentioned in the previous response with reaching out to individuals, if you're going to reach out through email, have your pitch crafted, don't just reach out and say that I'm interested in learning more about your organization. Have a brief introduction about yourself. And if you feel comfortable, go ahead and attach your resume as well so that they have that information readily available. So those are my ideas for reaching out. I think it really depends on what you're most comfortable with, but then also familiarize yourself with the approaches that the organization has. So if they say, you know, don't reach out via email, then respect those wishes. But if they don't have anything listed, then feel free to either call or email or reach out via LinkedIn.

Jad Howell

You know, I really like that the idea of using others who perhaps are closer to your desired audience and leveraging that connection to get access ultimately to who you need or desire to speak with. And that's incredibly powerful. Morgan, any thoughts from you?

Morgan Hutter

Yeah, I mean, I think that's completely accurate. And I know we'll talk probably shortly. And I might tee-up the next question about kind of, you know, the best practices on what those emails should look like. Right. And I think to some point know whom you're writing. Right. That's

huge. Know what the role is and what their maybe experiences are like Patrice said, check out their LinkedIn and know who they are and what they are. And what do you hope to accomplish from that reach out? Right. I mean, like Renard said, are you just asking about the company, or are you really trying to dive in and get to the meat and alumni aren't they aren't in your shoes, right? They know you're probably reaching out for a job. But, you know, it's not polite to say that in your initial outreach. Right. Get to know the alumni really sincerely care. We talked about this a little bit in prior podcasts, right? I mean, it's really about building those relationships and building those networks. And that's important, you know, and just some advice. You know, we've all been in a situation where we hit send, and we're like, oh, no autocorrect strikes again. Right? I mean, that's just like the worst feeling in the world. We've all been there, right?

Jad Howell

Absolutely.

Morgan Hutter

I mean, it's just terrible feeling. Where you say see attached, and you forgot to hit attach, right.

Jad Howell

Or you try to pull back the email, go through outlook and try to rescind the email, you know, and that never works.

Morgan Hutter

No, no, never works. So, you know, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of proofreading double-checking. You know, you get one shot, you know, to make this outreach and to make an impression and a positive impression. Right. So we can't emphasize enough to really check that work. You get one chance to be put in that kind of right bucket. You know, however, that employer, alumnus or alumna defines that bucket, but you definitely don't want to be in the wrong bucket. Right? So give yourself that chance to set yourself up for success.

Jad Howell

That's great, Patrice. Any thoughts from you?

Patrice Lincoln

Yes, I think these are all great strategies and what Renard was alluding to on LinkedIn. It's really important to check out those second connections because that does mean that you are connected with somebody who is connected directly with them. And it's okay to reach out to those seconds on your side and ask them for the e introduction like Renard mentioned. I would also say that it's probably well worth springing for the LinkedIn premium account. So if you don't already pay for the premium account while you're job searching, it's really important to have that added functionality. And then what Morgan had mentioned about the auto-correct, not only auto-correct, but a lot of students will take a mass approach. And so they will have one message, and they will send it out to everyone. And we see it time and time again where they put the wrong name in. They forgot to change the name of the company. Those little details are very important, especially if you're being connected by somebody else. So that person is trusting you with their connections. And so just making sure that you're taking that time, you're slowing

down, your proofreading, and you're making sure that everything in that initial connection is accurate and correct. So you don't want to send something to Jad that says, Dear Morgan. And so that is very important that you have those details accurate.

Jad Howell

That's terrific. Yeah, great insights, especially to preserve the relationships and the confidence in you as a as an applicant. You know, recently, I was speaking to a student who was a bit reserved and had some trepidation in terms of reaching out for the first time to some of these parties. What would you encourage students to do to become more comfortable in making that initial outreach and ultimately, you know, being successful in connecting with whomever they have interest in speaking with? Morgan, why don't we go back to you? Any thoughts on this?

Morgan Hutter

Yeah, I think, like anything, Jad, it just takes practice, right? I mean, you've got to be comfortable with that outreach, and nobody is ever comfortable with the first thing they do, no matter what the item is. Right. I mean, the first time you rode a bike, I'm pretty sure you probably aren't comfortable with it. Right. So it's really no different. But remember, alumni were once in your shoes, and someday you're going to be in their shoes, and we're going to call you. Right. So, you know, you're in those shoes. They were, you know, they remember the anxiety and, you know, the stress that might come with that outreach. But again, it's about your approach, and it's okay to ask for forgiveness. You know, we're all kind of in this for the first time together. But practice makes perfect. And that's why you have those on this call. Faculty are great resources. We've unbelievable faculty here at William & Mary, you know, mentors. If you've already had another internship and you made a really nice relationship with somebody, you know, skip all this stuff with these people. But the more you do it, the more comfortable you'll become. And here's the key. Alumni want to help.

Jad Howell

Right.

Morgan Hutter

So it's okay, right? I mean, they're here to help you, and they want to. So you know that to me, the keys are just, you know, probably to start sooner than later, you know, know that it might take some time to build some of these relationships and for you to feel comfortable. And then you just follow kind of everything we said in the last topic. Right. You do that outreach, do your homework, do what it takes to feel comfortable. And then the best thing is to make sure you thank them for their time, you know, at the end of all of that. But I think that is some of the keys.

Jad Howell

I think that's you're spot on there, Morgan. You know, anything worthwhile is going to involve some degree of uncomfortableness, especially at the outset. And I think part of life generally is just trying to move forward and work through that uncomfortableness, acknowledging that you're going to survive. Right. Take a few deep breaths and continue to move forward, and good things will happen. Renard, any thoughts from you on that?

Renard Miles

Yeah, I'll definitely echo Morgan and say that, you know, this is something that takes practice, and it's something that I'm not sure you ever feel just completely comfortable doing because you're reaching out to someone. Maybe sometimes you don't necessarily know. I would definitely say my rule of thumb is to not reach out to a person for the first time asking for a job. I think it's more important that you reach out to just but maybe conduct an informational interview or just learn a little bit more about the organization and then maybe that follow up connection that you have with them or a later connection is ask them more specifically about a job, but looking for mutual interests. Is always something that's helpful as well. So I'd like to call it stalking but in a professional stalking. Right. So looking to see what interests they may have and see if you have any common interests. That's all within an easier way to make a connection with someone. I know when I was in the job search for coming to William & Mary, I had some colleagues who work here, and I and I reached out to them in terms of just learning more about the William & Mary's culture – asking questions about what they really enjoy about the university. What are the directions they see the university going? And then I followed up later with I'm interested in applying for a position, and I wanted to get your input and your thoughts on that. Right. So not necessarily asking for that first time that you reach out about that job that you're thinking of doing. But do be transparent and let them know that you are maybe job searching and that you may follow up, but that you have those interests. And so that's really my advice for that area.

Jad Howell

That's really helpful. And I think being patient with the process and allowing it to play out, albeit, you know, be intentional as you're taking those steps, you know, you touched on. And Morgan, you mentioned it too. The importance of saying thank you after you've connected, especially the first time. Patrice, do you have any thoughts on how to best express appreciation after students have made that initial connection?

Patrice Lincoln

Absolutely. I think that's one of the most important parts of connecting and networking is the follow-up thank-you note. It's really hard to do any written notes nowadays with just the timeliness. And right now, with everybody being remote, nobody's giving out their home addresses, certainly. And so following up with an email, it's the polite thing to do. Somebody took time out of their schedule and met with you. And I will tell students, you know, take notes while you're talking to them. What did you connect on? In terms of what Renard had mentioned. It's important to find those personal connections. So how do you take it outside of, you know, just the dry work conversation? So how do you move it to a little bit of a civil conversation? And so it could be something similar or as simple as, you know, I just got back from a run. I feel so much better. Oh, you run. I'm a runner, too. So here's this personal connection. And now you can talk about your joy of running and could virtually be anything. I've had some students tell me that in their background, they had a painting of a famous artist on the wall, and their interviewer saw that painting, and they had a discussion for fifteen minutes just about the painting. And so they made this great personal connection on that. So their thank you note definitely included that particular subject matter. And that person actually got a job offer from that, you know, painting. And so just those thank yous, those personal connections, and every thank you note should be different. So you don't want to just put one thank you note and send it out to everyone and send it to the recruiter. Sometimes you can't get

those people's information. And so, in that case, it's okay to ask the recruiter to forward that message to you. But each message should be personalized for whatever it was that you spoke about in your informational interview or in your actual interview.

Jad Howell

That's terrific. Thank you. Patrice. Morgan, I've heard you describe this as an art. You know, can you speak a little bit, you know, your thoughts on this?

Morgan Hutter

I do think it's an art, you know, because in the sense you're trying to summarize a conversation within three or four sentences, you know, or maybe a little longer than that. Be memorable. Right. I mean, a thank you note. Sometimes will seal the deal. And I'll tell you what, not sending a thank you note. Sometimes will seal your fate, too. Right. So they are noticed. They are expected to some level. So when you don't do it, it stands out too. I get asked a lot when to send a thank you note. And I think for me it's twenty-four hours. Maybe I'll give you a grace period of thirty-six to forty-eight. But remember, they're interviewing likely multiple people. Or if you're not even interviewing for meeting with alumni. Right. You want to be top of mind. So it's important you respond really quickly, and before they put you in the bucket that you're not going to write them a note. Right. It's important that you know, you proceed with that. And I also ask the question of how to write them. And I tend to give the advice, and Patrice and Renard feel free to chime in if you agree or disagree. But error on the side of formality, right? I mean, you're not friends with this person yet. You don't have the job, or you're not an alumni yet if you're on that level. Right. So, you know, I always suggest to be more formal. Maybe you don't say the Mr. and Mrs. but, you know, it's the dear, it's the good morning, it's the good afternoon, it's the thank you very much. I can't emphasize enough in any of these communications, whether it's your intro info session outreach or your during the interview or afterwards when you're writing a thank you note, slang is bad. Don't you're not texting your buddy, you know, I mean, this is not your family member, you know.

Jad Howell

No emoji usage.

Morgan Hutter

Yeah, no emojis. You know, I mean, it's this is a professional opportunity, professional contact for you. Right. So air on the side of formality. And again, I'm going to say it again, maybe not even the last time today proofread. You've got to proofread. And if you're handwriting that note, I know we're getting away from that a little bit, but if you do, make sure your name is legible. Because if you sign the note and they don't know who wrote it, you then don't get credit for it. So make sure that you're those are just some tips of the art of writing a thank you note.

Jad Howell

To Patrice, your comment. If you have the ability to connect directly, I think the power of a written thank you note really goes a long way to distinguish you from others because it's just a lost art, a lost form of use. So, okay, so let's talk a little bit about, okay, the student has made the connection. They've scheduled the initial interview. What now should they be thinking about,

and where can they turn to resources that will help prepare them for the interview? Renard, why don't we go back to you? Can you maybe speak to that?

Renard Miles

Yeah, I think kind of the theme of our conversation today has been LinkedIn. So, of course, that's the first place that they or one of the first places they can go to look for information so that they know who the interview committee is going to be. And definitely looking up those individuals on LinkedIn and just get an idea of their background, maybe from education all the way to their work experience. Sometimes people even have interest groups that they follow on LinkedIn. That's a good way to get some background on a person as well. But then Google those individuals right. Google those people who you're going to be interviewing with to see what comes up. You know, have any written any articles or have they been mentioned in any recent publications is going to help you get an idea of their professional aspirations and attainment as well. Also, look at the organization, maybe on Glassdoor, or look them up just really in Google as well to see what are they going? What are their what's the trajectory of the organization? Have they been mentioned for one of the best places to work, or have they been touted in the industry for what they do? So looking up that information as well, sometimes people use Facebook. I would just say, you know, be careful with Facebook because you don't want to be too personal. So if there's some information that you may be found on, there it may be a little weird if you say, oh, I saw that you have two kids and you just recently got married. Right. So I think that's a little weird, in my opinion. But you can definitely maybe have that information to help guide and inform your interactions with that individual. Look in where they maybe went to college or if they went and got a certification from somewhere is also helpful because I have found that while you may not necessarily know that person in a personal level, it gives you a little bit of ease when you have a little bit more information about them, because it makes you feel like you have a connection and that you actually know them a little better than you do. So that's my recommendation is just really looking up, get as much information as you can. And going back to what Patrice mentioned earlier, if you have that connection in terms of, you know, some commonalities, that helps you to be able to mention that in your interview when it's appropriate. And so you may be saw that they went to a particular college or university and you have family members who went there maybe as you're in passing or you may be going to the next interview. You can mention I noticed that you went to William & Mary. I have family members who went there as well, and they really enjoyed the institution. So that's going to be that extra nugget or the extra care that you can put in your toolbox when you do either write that thank you note, or you follow up with them for that opportunity. You can say I was elated to see that we both had a connection to William & Mary, or we both had a connection to something else. And so definitely looking for those opportunities to stand out and to be able to sell yourself to them is great.

Jad Howell

That's great feedback, Renard. I think just recognizing that a candidate has the emotional intelligence, the ability to formally speak and to fit within a broader culture. Right. If you're able to make those connections, like you say in between interviews, in the hallway, it goes a long way to reinforcing that. That's the case. And you're the right candidate for that particular company. Patrice, any thoughts from you on that particular front?

Patrice Lincoln

Yes, definitely. In addition to knowing a little bit about the person, you have to know about the company. And so when the company asks you why this company or why are you the best fit for the job, you need to have really compelling answers for that. I send a lot of our students right to our amazing library. So Market Line Advantage is one of my favorite databases for students to check out. It gives SWOT analysis. It gives the leadership of the company. It talks about the competitors and doing Google News search on that company. What has come up recently that you can actually share with your interviewer and show them that you've done more than just go to their about page on their website and finding out a little bit more in-depth information about the company? It really leaves an amazingly positive impression with interviewers.

Jad Howell

Thank you, Patrice. Morgan, any final thoughts from you? Yeah, I think I'll take another level and kind of go into once you've done all that, you know, things to consider, to know the medium, right? I mean, nowadays, are you doing it virtually? Are you doing in person? Right. It takes time to prepare for that. Is it going to be via phone, right? Think through that and practice that because those would be different experiences? You know, are you talking to a computer? Are you talking to somebody in person? And then body language in some of those scenarios is very important. You know, and there's a lot of resources as far as know, big interview and prepping. And the Cohen Career Center has great resources or prior students that worked there. Right. They might have some tips on how to know about the company or know about the people you're interviewing with. But the biggest thing I can say is it comes back to practice. You've got to practice that elevator pitch, right? You've got to be able to say that in with confidence, no hesitation, know who you are, know what you're trying to get across, and have that in 60 to 90 seconds. Be ready to go. And then, you know, when when you're actually there on interview day, congratulations. Be on time. You appreciate you got there, but be on time. You know, dress the part, you know, be in a suit, have your hair done, you know, have shiny shoes, you know, make sure there's no reason they, in theory, can judge you negatively. Right. I hate to say that, but that's kind of the truth, right? I mean, you get one chance to showcase who you are and what you stand for and what you represent. And again, as Patrice said, you're representing maybe another alumni that got you in the door. Or you're representing Mason or Cohen or William & Mary. So we're proud of you for being there. Take time to appreciate that you got there. But we're here to help you if you want to talk through kind of what that looks like further.

Jad Howell

Thank you, Morgan. Well, this has been incredibly helpful for students who are listening. Realize that you can connect with the Cohen Career Center, the Boehly center, the Graduate Career Management Center for additional support and resources as you prepare to identify and prepare yourself for that that initial interview ultimately to secure your desired career. Thank you for listening.

Jeffrey Rich

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