

Running Head: THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING COLLEGE STUDENTS ABOUT
GLASSDOOR

The Importance of Teaching College Students About Glassdoor

by Dr. Luke Hobson

Introduction

When you were a senior in college, did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up? By this point of time, the answer should be a resounding “yes,” however, I noticed that many of my peers faced the same issues I was facing. We knew the jobs we wanted, but didn’t have a grasp on the job market. Many of my peers back then felt that they weren’t ready to face the real world and couldn’t find answers to commonly asked questions such as:

- How do I get around the fact that employers want experience and a degree at the same time?
- What companies should I aim to work for?
- How should I negotiate my starting salary?
- What typical questions will be asked during an interview?

Every time I asked these questions, I received an answer of “it depends.” This answer, while logical, didn’t help me and I felt lost in my career search. Fast forward ten years later, and I find that I’m an instructor to students asking me these same types of questions. The world is certainly an interesting place... However, I refuse to let these students fall down the same dark, windy road that I was dropped on without a guide. My starting point is an amazing resource called, “Glassdoor.”

Every term, I host a webinar for students on the powers of Glassdoor. For most of the time, students know a little bit about Glassdoor, but not all of its features and capabilities. Glassdoor provides answers to every question I mentioned above and then some. It’s a wonderful tool for soon to be graduates and quite honestly, should be taught in college. Here are my favorite features on Glassdoor and why they are significant to students:

1. Using an Effective Job Search Feature

While there are several competitors of Glassdoor, I have yet to find a job search engine that has worked as accurately as Glassdoor. The job search feature allows a user to search by the job title, key words, company, location, and salary. For example, if a student wanted to search for a Project Manager job in Boston paying 90K a year, it can be done and Glassdoor would find the most relevant jobs related to this search criteria. My favorite part about this tool is that after this search is over, a job alert can be created and will email the latest postings. The student would also receive an email asking if the provided opportunities are still relevant and make sense. Several other job sites will do this, but can't seem to get the algorithm correct, and will provide a slew of jobs that are kind of on track, but sometimes wildly inaccurate.

Why is this significant to students?

The job search feature shows the current trends in demand and what the job market looks like. With an ever-changing job market due to advancements in technology, it's entirely possible for a student wanting one kind of job when they enter a 4-year degree program and then leave seeking a different kind of job. If there are barely any mentions of a position students are looking for, that's a gigantic red flag that the market is changing, the job responsibilities have shifted, or even that the job title itself is morphing. This feature also shows the expected qualifications, preferences, and job responsibilities. Not every degree will provide all of the skills a student will need in the real-world due to the rapid change of pace of most jobs. Reading about these job qualification trends provide students every perspective on what an employer is searching for.

2. Reading Honest Company Reviews

This, in my opinion, is arguably the greatest feature of Glassdoor. Past and present employees can provide an honest and anonymous company review. For the most part, these reviews are incredibly helpful. They'll describe the leadership, culture, politics, environment, and how the company deals with change. Reading that statement may make you think that all of these reviews must be in a negative fashion. Surprisingly, the majority aren't from aggravated former employees. These reviews tell both sides of the story of the pros and cons from different perspectives. This is also quite telling for the specific departments found within an organization as it's common for departments to be isolated from the rest of the organization. For instance, the engineering department and marketing department of a large organization have different subcultures and will behave differently. Glassdoor provides visibility into these departments and will clarify if the company is worthwhile or not.

These reviews are valuable as they show transparency. If there are 20 reviews within a week that are all 5-star reviews, it means that HR reached out to their employees asking them to provide a positive review. It's also common practice now to ask brand new employees to rate the company after orientation. I've even heard of some organizations providing incentives to their employees to write an authentic review. A spike of positive reviews can be due to employees feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment due to a massive company achievement such as awards, milestones, etc. The exact opposite swing of momentum can be a sign of where to stay away from completely during the job search process. Students can read about telling tales such as organizations involved in a scandal, a fake front about a positive

culture, or a massive change initiative being handled poorly. Current or former employees document what troubles they have been through and warn others to stay away.

Why is this significant to students?

This entire section is guidance for students who currently don't possess insider knowledge on the reality of being employed by an organization. Students can read what working there would be like. It cuts through the marketing and self-proclamation of why working somewhere is great on the company's website and shows the heart of what their employees are actually thinking.

3. Gaining Insights to Prepare for Interviews

Years ago, you had to rely on having a connection within the organization to get a feel for what types of questions would be asked. Now, Glassdoor has a section devoted to the interview process, what questions were asked, the vibe from the hiring managers, etc. This is an absolute game changer because it allows students to practice and prepare for their interviews like never before. Instead of only focusing on telling them to make a good first impression, firm handshake, and dress the part, we can advise on how to navigate around some of the most asked questions. These questions are not a guarantee obviously, but they are a start and can be mapped to other most common questions within the industry. My favorite practice exercise with students is based on these questions. After reading all of the previously asked questions, we brainstorm on what problems the organization could be facing, and then solve these hypothetical problems. This allows students to critically think, problem solve, make decisions, and experience what they could be facing in an interview. Not only is this exercise beneficial, but could give the students a solution to physically hand to the employer if they are correct in

their problem-solving assumptions. It shows initiative, drive, and what value could come from the student if he/she was hired.















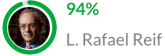
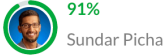
Why is this significant to students?

Feeling confident and prepared for an interview will greatly boost the chances for a student's success. We have known for years that students with a growth mindset are more likely to succeed and will impact their self-efficacy. According to Carol Dweck, Stanford University psychology professor, and her colleagues, "Research shows that students' belief in their ability to learn and perform well in school—their self-efficacy—can predict their level of academic performance ability and prior performance" (2014, p. 5). This same mentality carries over into other performance areas such as phone screens and interviews.

4. Comparing Companies

This is a relatively new feature (two weeks old at the time of writing this post). It's been a desired feature of mine for quite a while and it's exciting that it's finally available! Glassdoor can compare companies in a snapshot. Items such as career opportunities, benefits, work-life balance, senior leadership, and more are included in an overall rating. Below you can see a snapshot of MIT vs Google, which I chose because they are close together on our campus:

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	 MIT <input type="button" value="Change"/>	 Google <input type="button" value="Change"/>
Employee Ratings		
Overall Rating (full-time and part-time employees only)	4.4  (based on 1643 reviews)	4.4  (based on 9810 reviews)
Career Opportunities	4.4 	4.1 
Compensation & Benefits	3.8 	4.4 
Work-life balance	3.5 	4.1 
Senior Management	4.0 	3.9 
Culture & Values	4.2 	4.3 
CEO Approval		

Why is this significant to students?

If students are fortunate enough to encounter a problem of two job offers, this comparison can aid in their decision-making process. Think of how when students applied to several colleges and they had to narrow down their selections by visiting the campuses, speaking with other students, looking at graduation rates etc. This is essentially the same concept, but will apply to their careers.

To sum this up, we as instructors, are privileged to be able to help students figure out their career paths. We have all of the tools available to provide the greatest insights into the job market and who to work for. This whole process reminds me of the “give a man a fish” proverb. Just by giving students the answers won’t solve their problems. Teaching students how to conduct their own research on finding a worthwhile career will be useful for the rest of their lives.

Reference:

Dweck, C.S., Walton, G.M., & Cohen, G.L. (2014). Academic tenacity: Mindsets and skills that promote long-term learning. Retrieved from <https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/manual/dweck-walton-cohen-2014.pdf>