



By Mandy Oaklander

As Careers Wither, Dreams Beckon

What do you do when your industry tanks before you break into it, but not before the ink dries on your diploma? Or when your job is terminated before it even begins?

The economy is rendering obsolete the degrees of many fresh graduates, and no combination of letters is recession-proof: from BAs to MBAs to JDs, degree-holders of all stripes are threatened by a career void after graduation. So while a string of letters after a name on a business card isn't an antidote for joblessness, the pursuit of a different letter just may be a cure-all.

Enter Plan B. It's a backup life that's a recessionary reality, one driven not by a prescribed path but by raw passion, fearlessness, or desperation—a midlife crisis a few decades early. From brand managers-turned-rappers to journalists-turned-video store managers, here are the stories of grads who ditched Plan A and followed Plan B to a job they never dreamed would be theirs.

Note: The interviews on the slides that follow are condensed and edited for clarity.



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Desk Jockey

Name: Sasha Muradali

Hometown: Miami

Education: University of Miami, MA in International Administration, Class of 2009

Plan A: International public relations

Plan B: Clerical work

Forget about moving from Plan A to Plan B; I'm on Plan C. Plan A was to do something in international PR: I went to school for it, got my bachelors in it and had a concentration in it. I grew up always wanting to be in the communications field, and the fact that I can't do that right now is killing me.

I did everything in my power when I was in college to prepare myself best for the working world; I wanted to have an edge over everybody else. I studied abroad, wrote a thesis, interned, went to grad school. I couldn't find a job in PR, which is what I want to do and am supposed to be doing, so I took a job doing documentation/clerical work for a freight forwarder—basically, a shipping middleman that works between the supplier and the shipping lines.

It's really not that exciting: I file paperwork, answer phone calls from people who mispronounce country names, check with vessels about shipping. My job doesn't pay me well at all; I've been here for about six months, no benefits, no accrued sick days, and I'm pretty much still on "probation." It's barely enough to cover the \$1,200 in student loans I pay back each month. My car isn't new and I live at home.

That's right, I'm a 24-year-old with an masters and a poorly paying job. So Plan C is I network and job hunt on Twitter. I joined LinkedIn and I started a blog. I became a beauty blogger and literature blogger to get my name out there. I volunteer with my alumni association and have three part-time freelance jobs with PR firms—two of which I got through Twitter. Do they pay a lot? No. Is it a good experience? Yes.

That's Plan C. Plan C is doing everything you can to make it happen. It's getting creative and going above and beyond.



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