



The road to the Promised Land is never an easy one. The effort required to get on "The Street" is intense. This book is intended to help position you successfully as a young college student/graduate for a job on Wall Street, and then, once there, to help you keep it.

From Main Street to Wall Street

by Alex Gennaro with Gary Kelman

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From Main Street to Wall Street

A Beginner's Guide to Success On The Street

By Alex Gennaro

With Gary Kelman

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CHAPTER TWO: MY TAKEAWAYS

FROM COLLEGE

Setting Yourself Up For Success

College is an unbelievable, unforgettable, irreplaceable, and unique time in life. You'll have some of your fondest memories there, and unfortunately it truly flies by. Most people honestly have no idea what they want to do when they arrive, but they do know one thing: *they want to have fun*. Uninhibited, unsupervised, unregulated, and uncensored fun is very new to most people in college. Many plan on joining fraternities and sororities to enrich their social lives, and I encourage them to do so. The one thing you have to be careful about is sinking your college career before it even gets off the ground. You obviously want to aim for the highest grades you can; but during your first semester, despite all the new stuff going on around you, you should still realistically aim to achieve no lower than a 3.0 average. The distractions, real and tempting as they are, be damned: if you goof off and get a very poor GPA your first semester, you will never dig yourself out of it (see *First Rule of Holes* above) even if you're scoring 4.0s every subsequent semester. Don't put yourself behind the eight ball; it's a bad place to be.

Pledging a fraternity, sorority, or just general partying and neglect of your studies is not a valid excuse or winning strategy, especially if your parents are paying for you.

When you go about selecting your courses for freshman year you don't want to be a hero, nor do you want to be a chump. As I said in the Prologue, most of us aren't superheroes, so bombarding yourself with 18

credits of hard courses, as admirable and attractive as that seems the summer before you start, is, in fact, asinine. On the flip side, taking 12 credits so you can relax for the first semester doesn't help get you adjusted to college (although if you are feeling nervous it would be better to take this option as you can always make up credits in the summer, and you should be able to get all A's with such a light load). Find the happy medium that suits and works for you. The ideal freshman semester should consist of 15/16 credits. One thing you should also be doing is making sure that all of your credits count towards *something*. Taking "rec" classes in your freshman year is probably not your best choice unless you are taking 15 credits and the rec class is a pass / fail course that has almost no work and doesn't take time away from your other more difficult and focused classes.

If you were a direct admit to the undergraduate business program, kudos to you! But if not, and you are looking to enter the business school of your university, it is important to take the necessary classes needed for entry, **and do well in them**. Backload other "general" requirements you may need to graduate, as your requirements will most likely change once you have entered the business school.

Alternative Pathways

A Business, Finance, Economics, or Accounting major used to be the traditional path to a job on Wall Street. With the world quickly becoming digitized the need for certain essential skills has increased. Becoming a Math, Computer Science, Informatics, or even Physics major will now help you stand apart from other applicants, and gain the competitive edge needed to succeed in the Finance world. Think out of the box, and

separate yourself from the pack with marketable skills that make you special, unique, desirable, *and, hopefully, indispensable.*

FYI-- In 2018, JP Morgan's Asia-Pacific incoming analysts' class consisted of roughly 40% non-business majors (Engineering, Neuroscience, Psychology). A word to the wise is sufficient...

Early Networking

You should create a *LinkedIn* page when you get to college or at the end of your first year. The percentage of people using *LinkedIn* at an earlier age has skyrocketed since I've left college. Having a *LinkedIn* page young in life will allow people to keep an eye on you earlier in your career development. It also serves another important function: it will become your business contact book. Instead of having to save business cards or scribble down emails in a safe place, you can have everything stored in one digital location.

Extracurricular Activities / Clubs

When you were applying to colleges and universities, your guidance counselor probably explained to you that it was important to have charity work or interesting extracurricular activities to distinguish you from the other applicants. The same applies in college. Whether you're trying to get into an elite program within the business school, or applying for an internship or for a full time job, some of the extracurricular activities you did in college may be able to distinguish you, particularize you, and give you interesting things to talk about in an interview. There are plenty of Finance related clubs you can join such as an Undergraduate Investing

Club or Private Wealth Management Club. Often these are led by associate professors through whom you have access to tangible Wall Street products like a Bloomberg Terminal. These clubs will sometimes hold mock investing competitions where you and a team (or you solo) create a portfolio of securities that go head to head with each other. You manage that portfolio for the semester and the portfolio with the greatest returns wins. This is something you'll be able to speak about in depth in an interview: Why/how you chose these securities? What is your investing style and strategy? etc. In some rare cases, the school will choose a student to be on the Endowment Investment team. This is as close to "running money" in the real world as you'll get before you graduate (unless you invest in your personal account) and you should leap at the opportunity. There is usually a highly selective interview process, so **come prepared**. There are other competitions you can enter, mainly case studies on companies, which lend themselves more to a consulting role; but these can be very helpful as well.

Career Fairs

If you're a sophomore or junior, you'll be looking to attend career fairs. This is where (hopefully) the banks and financial services companies you're looking to join will show up, set up booths, and allow you to engage them. If you attend a "target school", then you will have the usual suspects show up. Otherwise, you're still not totally out of luck. You will probably have some smaller or regional firms show up, and, if they don't, you need to go to them, i.e. call/email them and apply online. The business firm's people attending these events are usually younger employees at the company, often alumni from your school sent there to take a look at the possible talent they can bring to the bank. It is

a very informal process, although every student there will (should) be wearing a suit. **Come prepared** with a folder containing 20 copies of your resume; one can never be too prepared. You'll circle the fair and look for the firms you're most interested in and go chat with the person standing in front of the booth. Unless you have researched the company well, don't ask generalized questions. It is a waste of their time and yours. They will most likely ask you to walk them through your resume. Do so, but try to connect with them on a personal level. They will be scrutinizing your resume much more thoroughly after the fair, along with HR in the Home Office. You want to stand out, be memorable. They are less likely to remember that you have a 3.67 GPA as opposed to the fact that you have gone skydiving over 10 times around the world and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. Ask for their business card, thank them, and then follow up the next day with an email saying it was very nice to meet them and that you'd love the opportunity to speak again.

If you are selected for a first round interview, it will most likely be over the phone unless you are near one of their major offices. If you crush that, you'll be selected for a "super day" which is a big deal. The call-back is key. This is usually when they fly you to New York and put you up in a hotel near their HQ. It will be a long day during which multiple people around the firm drill you with questions from early in the morning until the afternoon. If you impress them you will be offered an internship (or a real job if you are doing this senior year, but you really should try to have a job locked up by then). Now all you have to do is go kill your summer internship (if you're a junior) and hope that you get that return offer!



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