

# NEW GIS PROFESSIONALS

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A PANEL DISCUSSION WITH:

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# SCHEDULE

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- Quick overview of tips that came out of May 2016 session at VT GIS Forum – 5 minutes
- Each Panelist will discuss the following topics (5 minutes for each response for each topic):
  - Top three tips to job applicants to make themselves marketable
  - Example of mistake applicant made that took them out of the running for a position
  - Top three neglected areas of “career development” for people in or wanting to start GIS-related careers
- Q&A

# OVERVIEW – CERTIFICATION AND CERTIFICATES

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- Certification (experience, education, contribution to the profession, perhaps exam) - results in credential like GISP.
- Certificate (formal educational program) - results in certificate that indicates completion of program.
- GIS Professional (GISP) Certification - One key bit of news is that those applying for the GISP will now have to pass an exam. Those renewing their GISP will not have to take the exam unless they let their GISP lapse and don't renew within the 1-year grace period after their GISP lapses. Value of GISP varies across the country.
- Other certifications that are relevant to GIS practitioners:
  - ASPRS - LiDAR, Remote Sensing, Photogrammetry
  - AICP (planning) – includes GIS but it is a bit simple and not up to date

# OVERVIEW – COMMUNICATING YOUR EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

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- Combination of Education and Experience should be goal – very worthwhile to do internships.
- Resume:
  - Show spectrum of skills and experience
  - Include some details about projects, balance with the appearance of padding
  - Quantify your experience if possible (# of hours spent...)
  - Link to portfolio for more details, also highlight in cover letter
  - Include non-GIS skills that can be applied in any job
- Cover Letter:
  - Highlight specific skills/experiences that relate to position being applied for
  - Spell/grammar check!

# OVERVIEW – A FEW MORE TIDBITS

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- General:
  - Do research on employer and show that knowledge in cover letter and interview
  - Don't be intimidated by positions that seem to require everything
- Applicants Request of Employers:
  - Be explicit about grunt work that will be required element of position.
  - It would be useful to post State of VT GIS career ladder position descriptions

# PANEL DISCUSSION

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  - Example of mistake applicant made that took them out of the running for a position
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# TOP THREE TIPS TO JOB APPLICANTS TO MAKE THEMSELVES MORE MARKETABLE

- Internships, some have stipends! Times 3
- Emphasize communication skills
- Portfolio, start building it now, make sure it is available online, variety of topics, skills, projects
- Internships provide opportunities to build portfolio
- Experiential/service learning courses in school
- Soft skills – emphasize on resume, communications, customer services...show that you can translate between technology and non-techies.
- Take advantage of opportunities that are multi-disciplinary, show flexibility, variety of skills, software familiarity
- Tailor resume to job listing to which you are responding – times 2
- Learn about organization to which you are applying, fill in gaps in your experience if time
- Take temporary positions as well- they give opportunity to build skills and experience
- Have realistic expectations about entry-level tasks, pay, etc. Expect grunt work!
- Be mindful of social media. Hiring managers check. Make sure it represents you as a professional, set up a Linked In profile and keep it accurate and up to date.
- Act like a professional, learn how to deal with difficult co-workers and managers.

# EXAMPLE OF MISTAKES APPLICANT MADE THAT TOOK THEM OUT OF THE RUNNING FOR A POSITION

- Incorrect info on cover letter and resume – who you are applying to, etc.
- Don't act entitled, Be humble and willing to learn,
- Badmouthing previous employer or software – stay positive instead, focus on strengths, maybe problem solving
- Being unprepared for interview – not knowing info about the hiring organization and names of participants
- Not enough detail on resume – identify skills learned in classes
- Not highlighting unique value you brought to positions, tasks, etc.
- Exaggerating your skills – be honest and realistic, identify what you would like to learn
- Leaving it to the last minute to work on cover letter, resume, and submittal. Submit early if at all possible.
- Missing deadline – often there is no flexibility
- Bad Spelling/Grammar!
- Not answering all questions or following all directions in application process. Some State positions have application questions that serve as filter – i.e. response may lead to application going forward or not.
  - If application asks for work experience it does generally mean you need to list it explicitly rather than assuming resume covers this. Better to be redundant than thrown out!
- Not sending thank you note, with specifics about conversation.



# TOP THREE NEGLECTED AREAS OF “CAREER DEVELOPMENT” FOR PEOPLE IN OR WANTING TO START GIS-RELATED CAREERS

- Develop a portfolio: platforms that work well?
- Cartographic design skills
  - NACIS – North American Cartographic Information Society, website, magazine
  - [Cartonerd.blogspot.com](http://Cartonerd.blogspot.com)
- Broaden your geospatial technology knowledge and awareness of software and solutions, data sources, ESRI, CartoDB, Mapbox, QGIS, etc.
  - Anything that broadens your skills beyond desktop software is good.
  - Database management, coding
- Develop soft skills: management, teaching, communication, customer service,
  - Interpersonal Skills
  - Presentation skills, public speaking,
- Participate in listservs, connect with other professionals in various ways, build professional network
  - Who you know matters!
- Being an Introvert in an Extrovert world – book that provides guidance on how to push outside of your comfort zone (“Quiet” is the name of the book)
- Understand how to work with your own strengths and “weaknesses”