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**Advantages Of Earning Your Degree Online**

**By Robert Michael**

Online at the Back of the Line

If earning your degree, especially as a mid-life returning student, is about personal fulfillment or training to start your entrepreneurship, then where or how you get your degree isn't important to you. What's important is simply that you learn what you need to learn.

If, however, you're looking for a degree to start or advance your career and you'll need to impress an employer or potential employer with that degree, you may be somewhat at a disadvantage having earned it online.

It doesn't seem fair, and in the next few decades this will undoubtedly change as online degrees become more common. But for now there is some resistance on the part of employers to the idea that you have learned as much as you might have in the classroom. The most notable exceptions to this are in the areas where the job skills you'll tackle once you get your degree rely on your technical and Internet savvy: high tech, new media, and telecommunications. Many employers also value an online consultant-related degree as highly as one earned on campus.

Employers' concerns about online degrees are that the student is losing out on valuable career-related input because of failure to interact face to face with instructor and peers. They also say it's just such a new concept that the jury has to be out on whether students are really learning this way – unlike classroom-focused education.

The career choices for which employers are least likely to accept online training are in health care, legal professions, biotechnology, governmental and financial services.

A survey of hundreds of human resource executives resulted in several suggestions for online-degreed job hunters: (1) Be up front with the employer that you earned your degree online; (2) Come to the interview armed with verification of the courses' or degrees' value – textbooks, tests, course materials, information on accreditation and even testimonials from respected educators or graduates who now hold influential and respected positions; (3) Offer some real hands-on experience such as an internship in the field. (4) Intersperse your online courses with courses or outside activities that show your team

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and people person skills – join Toastmasters, hold an office (student, non–profit organization or otherwise, join the school debate team or write for the school paper).

With one notable exception these do seem like good suggestions. The first idea, to let your employer know up front that you earned your degree online, seems self–serving on the part of these human resource folks. Surely this is not good advice for a job candidate who is under no obligation to explain how she or he got the degree – unless of course she bought it.

But that's an ethics issue. This is not. What this is more likely about is the employers' desires to delve into things about which they have no business. In the minds of many, undoubtedly, those who earn their degrees online are those who are tied down as caregivers of children, older than the age of the typical college student (which isn't really typical anymore anyway,) or perhaps medically homebound for a time. None of which is ever the business of a recruiter.

The best advice, ultimately, for those who earn their degrees or part of their degrees online, is that they do not share this information unless asked directly. This is probably going to be sound advice at least until there has been a decade or so of entrepreneur or executive level success as a result of online–degreed education.

Robert Michael is a writer for Degree–SU which is an excellent place to find degrees links, resources and articles. For more information go to:

<http://www.degreesu.com>

### **Hanging Out Earning An Online College Degree**

**By Andy West**

Could you ever imagine hanging out at home by choice, and earning an online college degree in the process? Many people think that obtaining an online college degree is something that requires frequent trips to the computer lab and ongoing technical issues. It is anything but this way when you enroll in your choice of online college degree programs. The simple fact is that with a steady internet connection you can access the most powerful and effective programs. This sounds easy, but it does take effort. For the self–motivated, online programs are great ways to get an education.

The fact is that most online college degrees are based upon the self paced method that allows students to work at the time most convenient for them. Given that most self paced online programs are still in some way regimented by a timeframe, within this timeframe one can obtain an online college degree in a manner that suits the needs of the person and can still be somewhat flexible. This means that you will literally be able to login, and deal with every aspect of your online education, and your online college degree program specifically at a time suitable for you. This will allow you to meet your personal or professional needs while obtaining your degree.

Earning an online degree can be individually structured to meet your specific timetable. You will never

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have to take an online degree class at a time that is not going to work for you. Essentially, you will be earning your degree while allowing life's priorities to come first, and your education will fall into the place that is best suitable for you. This means that for most classes you will be able to work at night on your coursework if you have to work during the day, and vice versa if you have a night job. With the recent advancements in technology and broadband connections, one attending online degree programs can watch video and do coursework anytime in as much clarity as if it were being played on their television.

So what is the downside of being able to hang out and earn your online college degree at the time you prefer? The answer is that you still must do the work, which means that you must be self disciplined enough to deal with the intensity of being enrolled in college, and especially in a self paced online college degree program. This is not a great fit for everyone, as self paced does not mean no pace, and in order to earn your degree you must be prepared to work, and be prepared to make sacrifices, just as you would in any traditional college degree program

While earning an online degree is much different in scope and breadth than earning a traditional four-year degree, it is similar in the fact that both ventures require a considerable amount of work. This means that one must be prepared to give the online college degree as much effort on studies and the coursework as they would if enrolled in a traditional program. Taking advantage of the online college degree program's flexibility is the key.

Andy West is a freelance writer for Virginia College. Virginia College Online offers many online college degree programs. Please visit Virginia College Online at

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