

Artificial Intelligence

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I am now a member of the working force.

Yes, that's right -- I went out and got a job, something my parents have been telling me to do for years. Every vacation, we have the same situation: I come home, they tell me to find a job, I don't do anything, I get bored, I get a job, my parents think they have influence over me. I think that's something that has been happening since the dawn of man. "Go out and get a job," Cave-Dad would yell at his teenage child. "I don't want you sitting around this cave all day drawing pictures on the walls for anthropologists to find. Why can't you be more like your brother Grog?"

I began my job search in the mall. I know, I know. It's the mall. But it has quite a few places I wouldn't mind working - the arcade, the software store, the pet store. Actually, the pet place was quite an experience. Picture a normal pet store - cramped cages for the dogs, little room to move for the customers, four billion expensive tropical fish that will die if you look at them. The picture this store being named "Pet Club Express."

I kid you not. The shop at which I applied to work first is named Pet Club Express. First of all, why is it the pet club? Do you have Poodles and Great Danes applying to live in it? "Yes, I have experience living in a 2'x2' metal cage." Secondly, and most importantly, what's with "Express"? Is their motto, "Your dog or ferret in 30 minutes or fewer or it's free"? Do they have a "Super Value Menu," like fast food joints? I can see it now:

Employee: Hello, sir, and welcome to Pet Club Express. Would you like to try one of our combo specials?

Me: Umm. let's see. Give me a number 2. with a side of guppies.

Employee: Would you like to "Super-Size" that puppy for only \$99.99?

Me: No, thanks.

Employee: Thank you. That will be \$600. Drive through to the second window, please.

I next wandered over to a local restaurant. Whatever possessed me to go into the restaurant business, I may never know. I enjoy eating there, but eating and working, as most people can tell you, are two very different things. However, I received an application, and filled it out. Have you ever noticed that they ask you on job applications if you've ever been convicted of a felony? And then they ask you, "If YES, what was it?" Then they say, "but it won't affect whether or not we hire you." Why won't it? I mean, honestly, I don't really want someone who has committed a felony in the last 10 years serving me food. "Whatta ya mean, the steak's too rare?" And why do they ask what it was? Is there a difference between where they'll let a convicted car thief work from where a convicted murderer can work? "Oh, you only stole \$20,000 in jewels - you can work with the customers. Bertha tried to kill the president, so she's back in the kitchen."

After I completed the application, I had an interview. During this interview, the manager asked me to fill out a three-part test. The first part was a psychological profile. You know, the ones where they give you sentences, and you rank how much you agree with them, from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." But they ask the stupidest questions. I don't know how people fail these tests. It's like: "Number One: I rarely feel the need to question my superiors." So you put "Strongly Agree," because that's what they want to hear. "Question Two: I occasionally feel the urge to purchase a large, foreign-made weapon, and murder my entire extended family with it." And so on.

Part two was interesting. They actually gave me a 40-question quiz on basic knowledge of such subjects as history, math, and English. Why is this necessary? "Well, let's see. Mr. Bob scored perfectly on the psychological profile, he's excellent with people, and he knows the restaurant inside and out, but he didn't know the square root of 928 offhand. Let's hire Big Ed instead - he got that question right, and the only question on the profile he missed was the 'murder your family' one."

To make a long story short, I took the job as a "host" at the restaurant. I can say, "Hello, welcome to Friday's, how many in your party?" pretty well, right? So that's what I'll be doing, day-in and day-out. It's not much, but it keeps my parents happy. Now if only I could shut Grog up.

Joshua Bob is a senior at Brandeis University, a small-ish, liberal arts, Jewish-sponsored, non-sectarian establishment in Massachusetts. He has had written works published in numerous publications, and eventually hopes to work in the advertising field. He is an avid Oakland Athletics fan.