

Title: What Skills Do Recruiters Seek?

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What are the skills that recruiters seek as they review student applicants? This question was asked in a survey to the 102 recruiters attending the SUNY-Utica October 2000 Career Fair. This survey asked the recruiters to rate the importance of academic skills, professional competencies, and personal characteristics in their organizations' selection decisions. 51 recruiters completed this survey.

This survey presented recruiters with a list of academic skills (e.g., degree-specific knowledge, computer, communication, problem solving, ability to learn), professional competencies (e.g., decision making, interpersonal communication, teamwork), and personal characteristics (e.g., honesty, motivation, flexibility, strong work ethic, enthusiasm). Recruiters responded using a scale of 1=not important, 2=somewhat important, 3=important, 4=extremely important.

The results from this survey provide useful information to students as they seek to match their qualifications with what an organization seeks to hire. Highlights of the survey results emphasize the importance of the ability to learn, differences amongst recruiters as to the importance of degree-specific knowledge, and the importance of personal characteristics (e.g., honesty, motivation, work ethic). Highlights of the survey results include the following:

* Ability to Learn: 92% of responding recruiters rated ability to learn as extremely important; 8% rated this as important.

* Degree Specific Knowledge: 53% of the responding recruiters rated degree-specific knowledge as extremely important; 31% rated this as important; 12% as somewhat important, 4% as not important. An observation from the career fair is that job openings exist for both degree-specific knowledge and for a general set of professional skills.

* Computer Skills: 55% of the responding recruiters rated computer skills as very important; 26% rated it as important, 15% rated it as somewhat important, 4% rated it as not important.

* Problem Solving: 70% of responding recruiters rated problem solving as very important; 28% rated it as important; 2% rated it as somewhat important.

* Teamwork: 88% of responding recruiters rated teamwork as very important; 10% rated it as important; 2% rated it as somewhat important.

* Personal Characteristics: The responding recruiters strongly indicated that these characteristics (e.g. honesty, motivation, flexibility, work ethic, enthusiasm) are very important. For Honesty, 90% rated it extremely important; 10% rated it important. For motivation, 82% rated it extremely important; 18% rated it important. For Flexibility, 76% rated it extremely important; 24% rated it important. For strong work ethic, 96% responded extremely important, 4% responded important. For Enthusiasm, 70% of responding recruiters responding rated it as extremely important, 30% rated it important. These results emphasize the importance of the personal characteristics in the selection process.

What are the implications of these survey results for students? This survey reminds students of three things. First, both degree-specific and non-degree specific jobs are available. Second, the ability to learn is a critically important skill in the current work environment. Third, build a strong set of personal characteristics (e.g., honesty, motivation, flexibility, work ethic, enthusiasm.)

This survey is a first step in a planned stream of research exploring the skills required by organizations compared to the skills taught by the business degree programs. This study is limited in that all career fair jobs are grouped together. In other words, it is not possible to analyze the survey responses according to computer jobs, nursing jobs, sales jobs, banking jobs, etc. This study is also limited by the small number of respondents.

A future research study is planned for the Fall 2001 career fair using a similar survey method. An important improvement of the survey will be to ask not only what skills are important, but to also explore to what degree did our hired alumni possess those skills.