

Top Skills Employers Seek

Internship & Job Search Series

Each year, the professionals from the Career Services Center attend the Trends in Recruiting Conference. Below is a summary of key points presented by Dr. Phil Gardner, Director of The Collegiate Employment Research Institute from Michigan State University.

Top Qualities & Skills Employers Seek

- **Communication skills:** The ability to demonstrate solid verbal, written, and listening skills. The capstone is presentation skills that include the ability to respond to questions and serious critique of the presentation material.
- **Computer/technical aptitudes:** Computer ability is now perceived as a given core skill. The ability levels (expectations) for computer knowledge and applications continue to rise.
- **Critical thinking/problem solving:** The ability to identify problems and solutions by integrating information from a variety of sources and effectively weighing alternatives.
- **Intelligence and common sense.**
- **Interpersonal abilities:** Abilities that allow a person to relate to others, inspire others to participate, or mitigate conflict between co-workers.
- **Leadership:** The ability to take charge or relinquish control (followership) according to the needs of the organization; closely aligned with possessing management abilities.
- **Multicultural Competence:** Awareness, understanding of differences and personal cultural identities; Knowledge, specific social histories and environmental contexts; and skills, culturally relevant strategies for applying cultural knowledge.
- **Personal traits:** Initiative, motivation, flexibility/adaptability, strong work ethic, reliability, honesty and integrity, ability to plan and organize multiple tasks, customer service skills.
- **Teamwork:** Working cooperatively and collaboratively with different people while maintaining autonomous control over some assignments.
- **Willingness to learn quickly and continuously.**
- **Work-related experiences** that provided an understanding of the workplace and served to apply classroom learning.

Source: *Recruiting Trends 2006-2007*, Collegiate Employment Research Institute, Michigan State University
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What methods are employers using to recruit new talent?

- **Employee referrals:** Many organizations have incentive programs for current employees who refer new talent. When conducting your internship or job search, be sure to call upon those in your personal network. Friends of family and family of friends make a good start to your networking leads. Be sure to let everyone know what position you are seeking.

- The Career Services Center: Working through the career center will help students connect with employers. Interviewing on campus continues to increase. Organizations that recruit on campus tend to be bigger and have many positions available.
- Internships: In a market that appears to be competitive, graduates with prior workplace experience will be the first hired. Make a goal to gain career-related skills through internships, co-ops, summer jobs, part-time jobs, leadership, volunteer, and service positions that facilitate career-related skill development.

Strategies for students to connect with employers

- On Campus Recruiting: Active engagement with employers by meeting at career fairs and information nights while also tapping into on campus recruiting events.
- Networking:
 - Develop a target list of organizations that interest you. Contact employer and alumni working at those organizations.
 - Build relationships through alumni networks and events on campus.
 - Be active in your community. Volunteer with an organization, get involved in your faith community, choose something that energizes you while giving you the opportunity to meet others.
 - Consider walking through the door and presenting a resume directly to employers with whom you have interest.
- Use a Variety of Resources Available to You: Online job boards, on campus recruiting, and career fairs fall into one category of the job search: responding to openings. There are two additional ways that people find jobs: through networking and a targeted list of employers. The Career Services Center houses resources and services as well as expert advice for students conducting a job search. Be sure to tap into all of these.

What employers would like students to know

- Do your research: Don't interview if you haven't done your homework—researching the organization before you interview is critical. Employers are interested in candidates who ask intelligent questions and are able to make intelligent conversation based on what they know about the organization. They are equally unimpressed by candidates who know nothing about the company or the position being offered.
- Be prepared: To score additional points, be sure you're prepared for the interview when you arrive. Using career services, learning how to articulate your skills, and practicing interview techniques beforehand are excellent ways to ready yourself. You can also get high ratings by brushing up on verbal communication skills, arriving on time, dressing appropriately, and conducting yourself in a professional manner.
- Have a focus: Employers recommend that you base your job search on criteria you develop for jobs and companies. Think about what type of position you're seeking and what type of organization you are interested in, and consider your geographic preference and other related issues.
- Bring experience to the table: Rated very highly by employers, relevant work experience can give you the edge over other candidates. Internships and co-ops are excellent experience builders and can help you "sample" different organizations and opportunities, which will give you focus on the type of job and work environment you want.