

How Well Do Business Graduates Align With Recruiter Preferences On Hiring Criteria: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

A primary concern for most college graduates is finding employment which meets with their needs and career goals. Though exact numbers are not known, each year thousands of business graduates experience the disappointment of not finding employment that is satisfying to them professionally and financially. An important question in this regard is the extent to which business majors in US colleges know what qualities and skills employers are seeking. Anecdotal observation suggests that many students are not knowledgeable about what companies want in an employee, and what it takes to get an interview, and a job.

This study, which is exploratory in nature, examines the extent to which business student knowledge of recruiter preferences align with the actual criteria on which recruiters evaluate candidates. Both recruiters and business majors at a regional State University were asked to rate the importance of a list of attributes which might be important qualities of a candidate when hiring. The responses of the recruiters are compared to those of the students. A review of the literature indicates that the results from this study are consistent with other recent research reports dealing with the issue.

Both groups in this study indicated that personal qualities of the individual, and the so called "soft skills," often not learned in a business classes, are important in getting a job! Students in this study indicated that they were well-aligned with recruiters in terms of the most highly rated attributes: Positive attitude, respectful of others, trustworthy, takes initiative and takes responsibility. Students differed from recruiters on the importance of knowledge of various subject areas. Students ranked knowledge of finance 8th out the 30 items, while recruiters ranked 22nd. Similarly, for knowledge of one's major field, knowledge of business strategy, and knowledge of global business were all ranked higher by students.

Recruiters rated that a good sense of humor and being a team player significantly higher than students did. Neither group felt high grades or participation in student organizations were important, rating them at or near the bottom.

A big limitation of the study lies in both the size of the sample, and the fact that the students were from one institution. However, the authors feel more research is needed in this area. One important question, to which little research addresses, is the extent to which faculty are knowledgeable about recruiter preferences? Yet another important question, is what are colleges of Business doing to prepare students to rate high on the preferences of recruiters?

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Relevance to Marketing Educators: This research examines the preferences of recruiters of business graduates and the extent to which students understand what attributes companies are seeking in candidates.

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