



Presented by DeVry University

Executive Summary

THE CAREER ADVISORY BOARD Job Preparedness Indicator Study

2015 Job Preparedness Indicator Survey Results Suggest Narrowing Skills Gap, Especially at the Entry and Mid-Levels

The 2015 Job Preparedness Indicator survey identifies gaps between the skills and traits candidates have and the skills and traits employers seek to fill open positions. Gaps are measured by assessing skills that are most desirable but least common among entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level candidates. This year's research of 500 U.S. hiring managers uncovered an overall emphasis on character over skill and hiring manager receptiveness to career changers – tempered by the preference for candidates who have directly related experience.

Integrity Trumps All

Prior JPI results have suggested that integrity is an essential trait for candidates. This year, however, integrity was ranked the #1 most important trait for job seekers at every level. Many respondents commented that they were looking for honesty first, having been burned by candidates who lied on their resumes or about their background. Following integrity, at the entry-level and the mid-level, hiring managers indicated that the most essential traits were a strong work ethic, accountability, and a high degree of self-motivation.

At the senior-level, while accountability also ranked as most important, decision-making and problem-solving take the next spots. Interestingly, the higher-order traits of strategic perspective, business acumen, and global competence were not as important to hiring managers as in prior years.

High Expectations Continue

During the recession and immediate post-recession years, we noticed a trend toward hiring managers wanting “the world” of candidates. Although the economy has improved and it's less of a buyer's (hiring manager's) market, expectations remain high. At the entry-level, the skills and traits that were ranked least important in our list of 23 were still considered somewhat important.

For the mid-level and senior-level, hiring managers ranked all 23 skills and traits with at least middle of the road importance. Overall, the higher the position, the more candidates are expected to be the perfect package.



Survey Methodology

The 2015 Job Preparedness Indicator research was conducted online within the United States by DeVry University on behalf of the Career Advisory Board in November 2015. Survey respondents included 503 U.S. individuals with full-time positions screening post-college level applicants and making hiring decisions in organizations with more than 10 employees. These hiring managers have been in their positions an average of 6-10 years, with over two-thirds hiring entry-level and mid-level professionals, and 43 percent hiring senior-level professionals. The most commonly represented industries were retail, consulting, manufacturing, healthcare, and finance.

Career Advisory Board

Established in 2010 by DeVry University, the Career Advisory Board is comprised of leading representatives from business and academia who deliver valuable insights on today's most important career trends and provide actionable advice for job seekers. The Career Advisory Board generates original research and commentary, and creates tools, insights and resources to prepare job seekers for success. Its members include executives from DeVry University, Google, Apple, HP, IBM, and LinkedIn, as well as nationally recognized career experts. For more information, visit CareerAdvisoryBoard.org.

Skills and Traits Listed “Somewhat Important” At All Three Levels

Integrity	Strategic perspective	Assimilation of new information
Work ethic	Networking skills	Decision making
Time management	Business acumen	Analytical skills
Written communication	Global competence	Innovation
Problem solving	Accountability	Presentation skills
Adaptability	Self-motivation	Real world work experience
Technology skills	Verbal communication	Risk taking
Ability to work in a matrixed environment	Interpersonal skills	

Progress Closing Skills Gap

As in previous years, **the greatest gaps between what candidates are bringing to the table and what hiring managers expect to see occurred at the senior-level**, with the skills and traits of strategic perspective and integrity considered critical but less frequently seen. The only significant gap recorded this year at the entry-level and mid-level was adaptability.

Gaps at the entry-level and mid-level have always been smaller than at the senior-level, and they have decreased further over the last five years. In JPI’s first year, 2011, minor entry-level gaps were recorded for the skills and traits of self-motivation, the ability to work well with others, and flexibility. Relatively small mid-level gaps in 2011 were recorded for business acumen, interpersonal skills, networking, and strategic perspective. At the senior-level, strong gaps existed for strategic perspective, global competence, and business acumen.

In 2012, we saw similar results. Small gaps at the entry-level were recorded for the skills and traits of flexibility, the ability to work well with others, and technology skills, while small gaps at the mid-level were recorded for business acumen, networking, and strategic perspective. The largest gaps were again present at the senior-level, specifically for the skills and traits of strategic perspective, integrity, and global competence.

When JPI was conducted in 2013, we noted small, entry-level gaps for work ethic, self-motivation, and the ability to work well with others; small, mid-level gaps for problem-solving, time

management, and communication; and larger senior-level gaps for strategic perspective, integrity, global competence, and business acumen.

In 2014, like this year, adaptability was one of the most desirable but least frequently seen traits at the entry-level. Written communication reflected the only significant gap at the mid-level. At the senior-level, more significant gaps were recorded for integrity, adaptability, and strategic perspective.

It’s worth noting that, at the entry-level, all of the “most important” skills ranked between “somewhat common” and “common.” In other words, they are below average in commonality, which is perhaps to be expected in individuals just launching their careers.

JPI 2015’s hiring managers indicated that at the mid-level, all of the “most important” skills were average in commonality. At the senior-level, all of the “most important” skills ranked between “common” and “very common” (i.e. above average), suggesting that most people do gain these skills as they move up. In any case, **the general trend toward increased commonality demonstrates that hiring managers are able to find valuable skills and traits more easily than in prior years.**

Skills and Traits Demonstrating Gaps*

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Strategic Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-motivation • Ability to work well with others • Flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work well with others • Flexibility • Technology skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ethic • Self-motivation • Ability to work well with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability • Written communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability
High Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business acumen • Interpersonal skills • Networking • Strategic perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business acumen • Networking • Strategic perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving • Time Management • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability
Global Outlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic perspective • Global competence • Business acumen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic perspective • Integrity • Global competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic perspective • Global competence • Business acumen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic perspective • Integrity • Adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic perspective • Integrity

*Note: Gaps were measured differently in 2014-15 than in 2011-13. In 2011-13, the commonality of a skill/trait was based on job seeker self-reports, while in 2014-15, commonality was based on hiring manager reports of candidates.

Identification of Top Talent

Continuing the trend from last year, our hiring managers seek candidates from a variety of sources, but only 16 percent are using outside recruiters. And, despite the move toward globalization and remote work, most still prefer prospective employees to live locally. Only 31 percent of respondents hire and relocate regularly. Twenty-nine percent will only relocate people if they can't find a local candidate first, and 40 percent don't relocate.

When reviewing resumes, hiring managers most want to see "directly related experience in a similar position." Secondly, they're looking for transferable skills that are appropriate for the position in question.

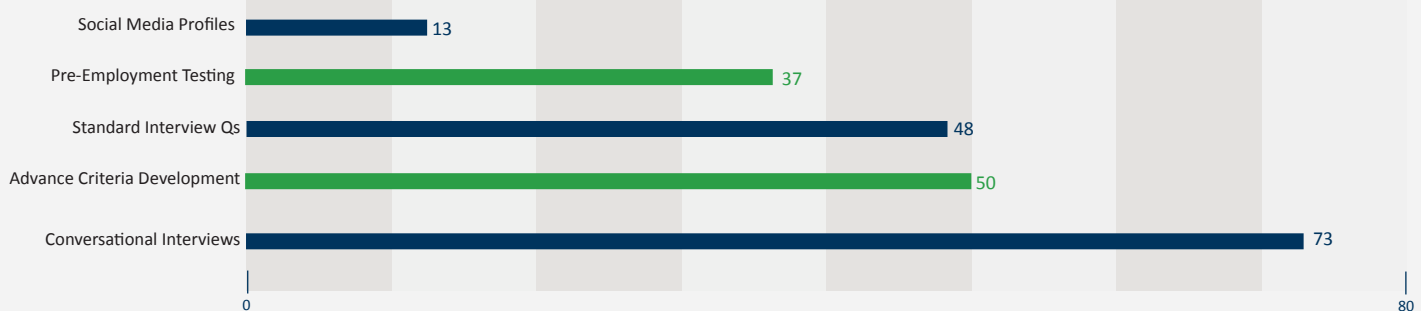
It makes sense, then, that 57 percent of respondents want to hire people who have the willingness to gain the right experience and develop job skills. Additionally, 51 percent cited having

appropriate education and 46 percent cited strong interviewing skills as important for candidates. Interestingly, only a third of hiring managers felt it was essential for candidates to have strong references.

In terms of how they evaluate candidates' skills and fit for a position, the conversational interview format still reigns supreme with 73 percent of hiring managers saying they assess candidates this way. Similar to last year, 50 percent of respondents develop a specific set of criteria to use in interviews, and 48 percent create a standard set of questions to ask all candidates for a given position. Thirty-seven percent engage in pre-employment testing, and surprisingly, only 13 percent of respondents review candidates' social media profiles.



Assessing Candidate Fit



Openness to Career Changers

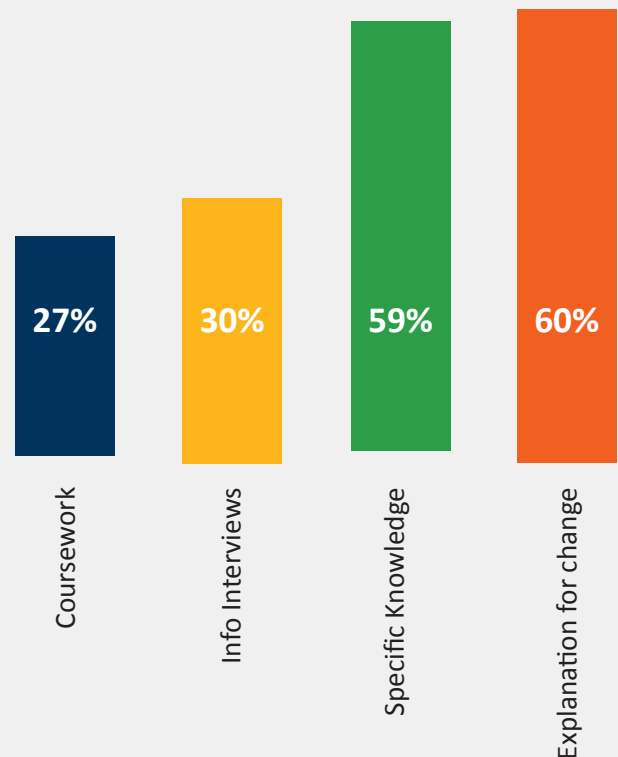
Overall, most hiring managers indicated that they would hire a candidate who was changing careers. Thirty-eight percent said they were “very likely” or “extremely likely” to consider a career changer with the right skills. An additional 55 percent said they were “somewhat likely” to make an offer to a career changer.

However, **most respondents did not feel that the majority of career changers coming through their doors were presenting their experience in a way that warranted serious consideration.** Sixty-two percent indicated that only “some” career changers were doing this, and 26 percent said that “very few” were doing it.

What are hiring managers looking for from mid-level and senior-level career changers? Forty-five percent felt it’s most important for these candidates to show they can learn new skills and information quickly, and 26 percent said it was most important for them to focus on skill acquisition relevant to the open position. Only 11 percent felt it was most important to have an internal recommendation.

The top concerns cited about career changing candidates included a lack of industry experience and an inability to assimilate into the organizational culture. Career changers can better their chances of serious consideration by devising a concise and sensible explanation for the change (60 percent of respondents), showcasing specific knowledge of the industry and company (59 percent), doing informational interviews with individuals in the field or company (30 percent), and taking relevant coursework (27 percent).

How Career Changers Should Prepare





Advice for Job Seekers

» **Always bring your best game:** This year's JPI results indicate that most individual skills are increasing in commonality, meaning that more job seekers are displaying them during the application process. This could reflect the fact that, as the job market improves, competition from high-quality candidates is heating up. Therefore, it's more important than ever to prepare substantially for every opportunity. You can't take anything for granted, so do your due diligence, customize your materials, and rock your interviews.

» **Illustrate comfort with an uncertain business environment:** Today's work world changes quickly, and hiring managers seek candidates who can demonstrate effectiveness and productivity despite frequent upheaval. Entry-level and mid-level candidates who show how they are highly adaptable stand out, and at the senior-level, adaptability is an expectation. To showcase this trait, brainstorm examples of how you've coped with curveballs and generated positive results in stressful and unpredictable situations.

» **Provide examples of strong character:** Throughout JPI's five years, we have observed that attitude often outranks skill – especially as it pertains to personal ethics. Before you go on your first interview, think through work situations in which you've had to be transparent, authentic, and honest. Be prepared that hiring managers are naturally skeptical of what you tell them.

Only report educational or career attainments that you can back up with concrete evidence, offer references to support unusual achievements, and share how important high integrity is to you personally.

» **Establish a good rapport with interviewers:** Although interviewing technology has advanced, most hiring managers are still not taking full advantage, and the process remains very subjective. Therefore, a top priority is to get the interviewer to like you. You can encourage this by using their name, finding a common ground, prompting the person to talk while you listen, and immediately sending a follow-up thank you note.

» **When changing careers, emphasize how you will contribute immediately:** While JPI's respondents showed flexibility regarding hiring career changers, it's up to you to show them why bringing you on board is a smart and non-risky proposition. Research your new industry and role so that you can speak like someone who has been in the field for 10 years. During your interviews, be candid yet positive about the reason for your change, translate exactly how your experience will benefit the organization right away, and communicate that you are ready and willing to learn.

Find more information on the Job Preparedness Indicator at www.careeradvisoryboard.org

