



Presented by DeVry University



Research Report – Career Advisory Board Job Preparedness Indicator

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Created by: The Career Advisory Board, presented by DeVry University, and Harris Interactive

Interviewing: September 6, 2011 through September 12, 2011

Respondents: 734 U.S. Adults aged 18+ and 540 Hiring Managers

METHODOLOGY

The Career Advisory Board Job Preparedness Indicator survey was conducted online within the United States between September 6, 2011 and September 12, 2011 among 734 US adults aged 18 and up who are looking for work (“job seekers”) and 540 employed US adults with responsibility for hiring decisions within a company with Fortune 1000-equivalent annual revenue (“hiring managers”). Results from the study were weighted as needed for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, and household income to align them with their actual proportions in the population among job seekers and by company size among hiring managers to align them with their actual proportions among US businesses and international corporations with US operations. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Please note that due to rounding, calculated scores may appear to be a point off and that not all percentages will necessarily add up to 100%.

OVERVIEW

The roots of the ongoing unemployment crisis run deep in the current economy. For those on the frontlines – both Americans currently seeking employment and people looking to find quality candidates for positions at the nation’s largest companies – the situation is one of agonizing stasis. Namely, job seekers see a bleak economy with few positions available, while hiring managers see a paucity of people prepared to succeed at the jobs they need filled. Finding a way to build a bridge between these two seemingly symbiotic entities, job seekers and hiring managers, demands a creative approach that looks deeply into what hiring managers are hoping to find and how job seekers can best present themselves as capable of filling those hopes.

Job seekers view their current predicament with some personal confidence but an overall sense of despair. They see an economy already in (if not shortly headed for) another recession and hiring managers who refuse to hire a person who is unemployed. While acknowledging the importance of prior experience, they underestimate its true importance to hiring managers. Job seekers concentrate more than hiring managers on factors they can control, such as resume-writing and willingness to learn, when looking at what it will take for them to find a job. Job seekers express optimism that important skills or traits can be learned academically, whereas hiring managers see many of these skills as learned only on the job. Perhaps worst of all, job seekers at all levels – those searching for entry level, mid-level, or managerial/executive positions – all describe themselves in terms which are important* to hiring managers mostly for entry level positions. This means that those pursuing positions beyond entry level (a majority of job seekers) are by their own description not desirable candidates for hiring managers.

For hiring managers, they have a clear sense of what they are looking for when it comes to the three different job levels (entry, mid-level, managerial/executive), though they frequently cannot find it. They strongly value traits, such as a strong work ethic and ability to get along well with others, that will enable an entry level employee to learn and integrate well into their company. For mid-level candidates, hiring managers want problem-solvers who communicate well, which is necessary to help prevent crises and keep open lines with those under them and those over them. Once a job seeker arrives at the managerial/executive level, however, hiring managers want someone who can truly lead, someone who demonstrates business acumen and a strategic perspective. Interestingly, the skill or trait that scored best overall in terms of importance was high integrity, a value that extends beyond the professional life.

Lastly, this study looked at looked both the importance of job skills/traits to hiring managers and how common hiring managers feel these skills and traits are among job seekers. These two metrics, importance and commonality, were then combined to create an Indicator Score for each skill and trait which indicates the *value* of each skill/trait, determined by the skill/trait’s level of importance and how rare hiring managers say it is among job seekers.

Overall, it is clear there are tremendous hurdles due to the gaps on a variety of issues between job seekers and hiring managers. Helping job seekers find a way to get their skills more in line with what hiring managers are looking for is a key step in this process. Also, job seekers can exploit the Indicator Score to see which traits are most valuable, due to their perceived importance and rarity, to better position themselves to successfully find sought-after employment.

* Throughout this report, “importance” and “commonality” of job skills and traits refer to questions directly asked of hiring managers. Similarly,

DETAILED FINDINGS – Importance of Job Skills/Traits and Self-Description of Job Seekers

The following tables show the 15 job skills/traits tested in terms of importance to hiring managers and how well job seekers feel the job skill/trait describes themselves. Both questions employ max-diff exercises*. Answers were then scaled from 0 to 100 points depending on level of importance (0 being the lowest possible score on importance; 100 being the highest score on importance among hiring managers) or quality of self-description. Negative gaps have been noted in red in the tables throughout.

[*See Appendix B for full questionnaire; Appendix C for description of max-diff exercises.]

Job Skills/Traits for Entry Level, Ranked on Importance to Hiring Managers

| | Importance to Hiring Managers (n=540) | Entry Level Job Seekers Self-Description (n=247) | GAP** |
|--|--|---|--------------|
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 79 | 82 | 3 |
| Ability to work well with others | 63 | 57 | -5 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 60 | 49 | -11 |
| High integrity | 42 | 69 | 27 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 41 | 45 | 4 |
| Flexibility | 40 | 45 | 5 |
| Accountability | 38 | 51 | 13 |
| Problem solving | 35 | 50 | 15 |
| Interpersonal skills | 35 | 29 | -5 |
| A good understanding of technology | 32 | 32 | 0 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 31 | 42 | 11 |
| Business acumen | 9 | 6 | -3 |
| Ability to network effectively | 8 | 11 | 3 |
| Strategic perspective | 5 | 13 | 7 |
| Global outlook | 3 | 7 | 4 |

** "GAP" is the difference between the self-description among job seekers and importance to hiring managers

As the table shows, hiring managers place a primary importance when looking to fill entry level positions on more basic and rudimentary skills and traits that clearly relate to a person's ability to integrate successfully into the company's overall environment. Obviously, someone who is willing to work hard, works well with others and displays a high level of self-initiative can be expected to put in the leg work to master the elements of learning a new position.

Job seekers at this level largely describe themselves in terms that closely adhere to what hiring managers feel is important. Of note, the largest negative gap is on "self motivated/high degree of initiative" indicating that job seekers at this level could benefit from recognizing how vital this is to potential employers and seeking ways to highlight this during the job search process.

Job Skills/Traits for Mid-Level, Ranked on Importance to Hiring Managers

| | Importance to Hiring Managers (n=540) | Mid-Level Job Seekers Self-Description (n=331) | GAP |
|--|--|---|------------|
| Problem solving | 53 | 54 | 1 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 45 | 49 | 4 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 44 | 59 | 15 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 43 | 53 | 10 |
| Accountability | 42 | 50 | 8 |
| High integrity | 39 | 68 | 30 |
| Interpersonal skills | 36 | 27 | -8 |
| Ability to work well with others | 35 | 54 | 19 |
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 34 | 83 | 49 |
| Business acumen | 28 | 9 | -19 |
| Ability to network effectively | 18 | 12 | -6 |
| Flexibility | 16 | 35 | 19 |
| Strategic perspective | 16 | 10 | -6 |
| A good understanding of technology | 15 | 30 | 15 |
| Global outlook | 8 | 4 | -4 |

For mid-level candidates, hiring managers show an apparent interest in finding candidates who can navigate the tricky position of being between top management and ground-level employees. It is likely felt that people who are good problem-solvers and strong communicators help maintain an efficient organization and provide good fodder for future leadership positions. However, it should be noted that more complicated, higher level traits such as “global outlook” and “strategic perspective” still fall short at this level when compared to other job skills/traits, possibly showing that hiring managers feel these qualities can be grown into over time.

Encouragingly, job seekers searching for mid-level positions see themselves in terms that accord generally well with what hiring managers view as important. No negative gap is seen until the 7th ranked job skill/trait, and the negative gaps cluster toward the bottom of the rankings. However, it is interesting to note here a large *positive* gap on “strong base work ethic/dependable”; indeed, this is the skill/trait that performs best on self-description for mid-level job seekers. In this case, mid-level job seekers may do well to concentrate more on ensuring their problem-solving and communication skills come across during the interview process, rather than their drive.

Job Skills/Traits for Managerial/Executive Level, Ranked on Importance to Hiring Managers

| | Importance to Hiring Managers (n=540) | Managerial/Exec Job Seekers Self-Description (n=156) | GAP |
|--|--|---|------------|
| Strategic perspective | 78 | 21 | -57 |
| High integrity | 63 | 68 | 5 |
| Business acumen | 59 | 14 | -45 |
| Global outlook | 53 | 6 | -47 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 41 | 60 | 19 |
| Accountability | 39 | 41 | 2 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 30 | 62 | 32 |
| Problem solving | 27 | 67 | 40 |
| Ability to network effectively | 23 | 8 | -15 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 19 | 43 | 24 |
| Interpersonal skills | 19 | 26 | 7 |
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 18 | 76 | 58 |
| Ability to work well with others | 12 | 45 | 33 |
| Flexibility | 7 | 24 | 17 |
| A good understanding of technology | 4 | 25 | 21 |

At the level of managerial/executive, the most obvious breakdown emerges between what hiring managers consider important and how job seekers see themselves. Hiring managers place the highest importance on big-picture skills/traits such as strategic perspective and business acumen, yet job seekers do not view themselves strongly in these terms. Instead, managerial/executive job seekers are most apt to describe themselves with job skills or traits that are more sought after by hiring managers for lower level positions, such as “strong base work ethic/dependable” and “problem solving.”

Worse, the negative gap here is enormous: of the four most important job skills/traits, three have gaps of -45 or worse, far larger than any negative gap seen for entry and mid-level job seekers. This shows that job seekers pursuing managerial/executive positions are by their own admission unqualified. The question then becomes: are job seekers at this level truly ill-suited to the jobs they are after, or are they ignorant of what hiring managers for these positions are looking for?

An answer emerges in the table on the following page:

Job Skills/Traits for All Levels, Ranked on Self-Description for Managerial/Executive Job Seekers

| | Managerial/Exec Job Seekers Self-Description (n=156) | Mid-Level Job Seekers Self- Description (n=331) | Entry Level Job Seekers Self- Description (n=247) |
|--|---|--|--|
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 76 | 83 | 82 |
| High integrity | 68 | 68 | 69 |
| Problem solving | 67 | 54 | 50 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 62 | 59 | 49 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 60 | 49 | 42 |
| Ability to work well with others | 45 | 54 | 57 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 43 | 53 | 45 |
| Accountability | 41 | 50 | 51 |
| Interpersonal skills | 26 | 27 | 29 |
| A good understanding of technology | 25 | 30 | 32 |
| Flexibility | 24 | 35 | 45 |
| Strategic perspective | 21 | 10 | 13 |
| Business acumen | 14 | 9 | 6 |
| Ability to network effectively | 8 | 12 | 11 |
| Global outlook | 6 | 4 | 7 |

As the table shows, there is little difference in how job seekers describe themselves across the three separate levels. What could be occurring is that higher-level job seekers are stuck on the job skills and traits that first won them entry into the professional world, when they were most likely interviewing and job searching the hardest. Since that point, they have not considered what new job skills/traits they've gained or improved on. Lastly, this could mean that upper-level job seekers are falling too much into the rut of looking at how the positions can fit them, rather than how they can fit the positions.

Clearly, it would be invaluable to encourage job seekers to consider what new skills and traits they have gained throughout their professional life, and what skills/traits would be most important as they move up (or even laterally) in the professional world.

DETAILED FINDINGS – Value of Job Skills/Traits: The Indicator Score

The following tables show the same 15 job skills/traits tested in terms of their value. Value here is determined by a combination of how important hiring managers view these skills/traits in relation to each and how common the hiring managers feel these job skills/traits are among job seekers at the entry, mid, and managerial/executive level. Essentially, the more important a skill/trait is and the rarer it is, the higher its overall score*. As in the previous tables, answers were then scaled from 0 to 100 points, with 0 representing the lowest possible value score and 100 representing the highest. Again, the gap is given between the Indicator Score from hiring managers and the job seekers’ self-descriptions.

[*See Appendix D for full description of how the Indicator Score was developed.]

Indicator Score for Entry Level and Job Seeker Self-Description, Ranked on Indicator Score

| | Indicator Score for Entry Level (n=540) | Entry Level Job Seekers Self-Description (n=247) | GAP |
|--|--|---|------------|
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 62 | 82 | 20 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 53 | 49 | -4 |
| Ability to work well with others | 50 | 57 | 8 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 46 | 45 | -2 |
| Accountability | 45 | 51 | 6 |
| Global outlook | 45 | 7 | -38 |
| High integrity | 44 | 69 | 25 |
| Strategic perspective | 44 | 13 | -31 |
| Problem solving | 43 | 50 | 7 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 42 | 42 | 0 |
| Flexibility | 42 | 45 | 3 |
| Business acumen | 41 | 6 | -35 |
| Interpersonal skills | 40 | 29 | -10 |
| Ability to network effectively | 37 | 11 | -26 |
| A good understanding of technology | 36 | 32 | -4 |

The Indicator Score for entry level job seekers reveals that the basic, rudimentary skills and traits such as a strong work ethic and good time management, can be overall considered of the highest value. Notably, the top two Indicator Score skills/traits, “strong base work ethic/dependable” and “self-motivated/high degree of initiative” are two out of just three skills/traits that a majority of hiring managers feel cannot really be learned: 61% of hiring managers say this about a strong work ethic and 69% say the same for self-motivation (68% also say this of high integrity)³². This makes it crucial that entry level job seekers make sure they exemplify these skills and traits during the hiring process.

Further, taking advantage of traits highly valued due to rarity, such as higher level skills/traits of a global outlook and strategic perspective, can differentiate a job seeker at this level from their competitors.

Indicator Score for Mid-Level and Job Seeker Self-Description, Ranked on Indicator Score

| | Indicator Score for Mid-Level (n=540) | Mid-Level Job Seekers Self-Description (n=331) | GAP |
|--|--|---|------------|
| Problem solving | 45 | 54 | 8 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 42 | 49 | 7 |
| Accountability | 40 | 50 | 10 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 40 | 53 | 13 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 40 | 59 | 20 |
| High integrity | 38 | 68 | 30 |
| Global outlook | 38 | 4 | -34 |
| Business acumen | 37 | 9 | -28 |
| Strategic perspective | 37 | 10 | -27 |
| Interpersonal skills | 36 | 27 | -9 |
| Ability to work well with others | 36 | 54 | 18 |
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 35 | 83 | 48 |
| Ability to network effectively | 32 | 12 | -21 |
| Flexibility | 31 | 35 | 4 |
| A good understanding of technology | 30 | 30 | 0 |

As before, problem solving and strong communication skills emerge as the top two skills/traits for mid-level job seekers. In addition, accountability, good time management and self-motivation tie for a third place spot in terms of their value. In general, mid-level job seekers see positive gaps between the value given to these skills/traits by hiring managers and their self-description.

Of interest, the top two Indicator Score skills/traits, problem solving and strong communication skills, are skills/traits that hiring managers feel can be learned, equally as well in a professional as in an academic environment. 62% of hiring managers say this about strong communication skills, and 65% report that problem solving can be learned, either on the job or at school³². This indicates that mid-level job seekers can increase their attractiveness in the eyes of potential employers by making it clear that they possess these traits and are eager to develop them on the job as well.

It should also be noted that, as with entry level job seekers, higher level skills/traits such as having a global outlook and business acumen, can help a mid-level job seeker stand out from the rest of the pack and draw the attention of employers. Given that these are key skills/traits in the next level up, this could provide a tremendous benefit to mid-level job seekers.

Indicator Score for Managerial Level and Job Seeker Self-Description, Ranked on Indicator Score

| | Indicator Score for Managerial/Executive (n=540) | Managerial/Executive Job Seekers Self-Description (n=156) | GAP |
|--|---|--|------------|
| Strategic perspective | 52 | 21 | -31 |
| High integrity | 48 | 68 | 19 |
| Global outlook | 44 | 6 | -38 |
| Business acumen | 42 | 14 | -28 |
| Accountability | 36 | 41 | 5 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 35 | 60 | 26 |
| Problem solving | 30 | 67 | 37 |
| A good understanding of technology | 29 | 25 | -4 |
| Flexibility | 28 | 24 | -4 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 27 | 62 | 35 |
| Interpersonal skills | 27 | 26 | -1 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 27 | 43 | 17 |
| Ability to network effectively | 26 | 8 | -18 |
| Ability to work well with others | 25 | 45 | 20 |
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 25 | 76 | 51 |

For managerial/executive job seekers, hiring managers are hungriest for candidates who demonstrate qualities capable of leading an organization. Three out of the top four Indicator Scores are given to skills/traits that exemplify high level leadership: strategic perspective, global outlook and business acumen. However, there again is a striking negative gap between these traits and how managerial/executive level job seekers describe themselves. Encouragingly, hiring managers view these skills as possible to pick up on the job:

- 46% of hiring managers say a strategic perspective can be learned in a professional environment only and an additional 41% say it can be learned equally well in an academic or professional setting; only 5% feel it is a skill/trait that cannot really be learned³².
- 38% of hiring managers say a global outlook can be learned in a professional environment only and 49% say it can be learned equally well in an academic or professional setting; just 3% feel it is a skill/trait that cannot really be learned³².
- 51% of hiring managers say business acumen can be learned in a professional environment only and 37% say it can be learned equally well in an academic or professional setting; a mere 3% feel it is a skill/trait that cannot really be learned³².

These numbers make it clear that managerial/executive job seekers would benefit enormously from discussing their higher level skills that they have developed, in addition to stressing their ability to grow and adapt while on the job itself.

Overall Importance, Indicator Score and Job Seeker Self-Description, Ranked on Indicator Score

| | Overall Importance to Hiring Managers (n=540) | Overall Indicator Score (n=540) | All Job Seekers Self-Description (n=734) | GAP between Indicator Score and JS Self-Descrip. |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Strategic perspective | 33 | 44 | 15 | -30 |
| High integrity | 48 | 43 | 68 | 25 |
| Global outlook | 21 | 42 | 5 | -37 |
| Strong base work ethic/dependable | 44 | 41 | 80 | 40 |
| Accountability | 40 | 41 | 47 | 7 |
| Self motivated/High degree of initiative | 45 | 40 | 57 | 17 |
| Business acumen | 32 | 40 | 10 | -30 |
| Problem solving | 38 | 39 | 57 | 18 |
| Strong communication (i.e., written and verbal) skills | 39 | 39 | 51 | 11 |
| Good time management skills (e.g., multitasking, organizational ability) | 34 | 38 | 47 | 9 |
| Ability to work well with others | 37 | 37 | 52 | 15 |
| Interpersonal skills | 30 | 34 | 27 | -7 |
| Flexibility | 21 | 33 | 34 | 1 |
| A good understanding of technology | 17 | 32 | 29 | -3 |
| Ability to network effectively | 16 | 32 | 10 | -22 |

Above is the overall importance, Indicator Score and job seeker self-description for the job skills/traits. It is revealing to note that high-level skills/traits are highly valued, the top skill/trait on importance is high integrity. Given how closely high integrity can track with both loyalty and dedication, and also help corporations avoid the legal issues that have bedeviled major corporations of late, this is no surprise.

DETAILED FINDINGS – Profile of Job Seekers and Hiring Managers

Job Seeker Profile

Job seekers find themselves in an extraordinarily difficult position. They take a dim view of the current economy, which is unsurprising as nearly half are currently without a job and many are unemployed. Those who work part-time or are self-employed take a darker view of the economy than job seekers who currently have full time employment.

Job seekers are also mostly looking for mid-level and managerial/executive level positions and most are also looking for work either both outside and inside their industry or completely outside their current industry. This is despite the fact that few are confident in their ability to get work in an industry that they have little experience in.

- 44% of job seekers say the “US is already in a recession”, and an additional 29% see a recession as either “extremely likely” (7%) or “very likely” (21%)¹.
 - This is particularly stark among job seekers who are either part-time or self-employed: 53% say the US is already in a recession¹.
 - Notably, there is no statistically significant differentiation on this question among job seekers in different areas of the country or among those who live in urban, suburban or rural settings¹.
- 45% of job seekers lack employment: 21% are unemployed, 9% are retired, 12% are students and 4% describe themselves as a stay-at-home spouse or partner².
 - Education clearly matters here, with just 14% of job seekers who have some graduate school education or above reporting being unemployed and looking for work, while 22% of those with a college education or less are unemployed and looking for work².
- When asked which category best describes the positions they are applying for, 15% of job seekers say they are searching for managerial/executive level positions, 42% for mid-level positions and 43% for entry level positions. This means that 57% of job seekers are pursuing either mid-level or managerial/executive positions³.
 - Among full time employed job seekers, 53% are looking for mid-level positions and 22% are looking for managerial/executive positions³.
- Among currently employed job seekers, 42% are looking for employment in the industry they are currently working, 32% are seeking employment in a different industry and 26% are looking for work in both their own industry and in a different one⁴.
 - However, employed job seekers lack confidence in their ability to acquire a position outside of their current industry, with just 29% saying they are “very confident” (9%) or “confident” (21%) they could get a job in another industry⁵.

Hiring Manager Profile

Hiring managers have a much more positive view of the current economy than job seekers, though there is some regional differentiation here. Also, hiring managers with primary responsibility in the hiring process view the economy as being in worse shape than hiring managers with just “significant” responsibility in hiring. A substantial number of all hiring managers are themselves looking for another job, providing them with perspective from both sides of the issue.

Hiring managers also report a paucity in seeing fully qualified job candidates. While there is some regional differentiation, it is striking to see how consistent this sentiment is across company size, revenue size, level of responsibility for hiring, and type of job the hiring managers are involved in searching for.

- Just 20% of hiring managers feel the US is already in a recession, though an additional 31% feel a recession is “extremely likely” (10%) or “very likely” (20%)⁶.
 - 25% of hiring managers with primary responsibility for hiring view the US as already in a recession compared to just 17% of hiring managers with only “significant influence” in the hiring process at their company⁶.
 - Hiring managers in the Midwest are most adamant about another recession not being likely, with 10% saying it is “not at all likely” that the US is headed for another recession⁶.
 - However, 16% of hiring managers in the East say another recession is “extremely likely”⁶.
- 7% of hiring managers say they are “actively looking for a job” and an additional 38% say they “occasionally browse through job listings”. Just 54% say they are not actively looking for another job⁷.
 - 38% of job-seeking hiring managers see the US as headed for a recession in the next year, compared to just 24% of non-job seeking hiring managers⁶.
 - 24% of non-job seeking hiring managers have been working at their current position for more than 20 years, compared to just 14% of job-seeking hiring managers⁸.
- Hiring managers in our study were all screened to ensure their company’s revenue is at least \$1.5 billion per year*, though most far exceeded this: 71% of all hiring managers work for a company with \$6 billion or more in annual revenue⁹.
 - 62% work for companies that employ more than 30,000 people in the US¹⁰.
 - 37% of hiring managers have been at their current position for 5 years or less, 24% for 6-10 years, 20% 11-20 years and 20% for more than 20 years⁸.
- A mere 1% of hiring managers said that “nearly all” of the candidates they’ve seen over the past 3 years have had the skills/traits their company is looking for in candidates, and only 13% said “most” have had the skills/traits being sought¹¹.
 - The East saw hiring managers report most positively here; however, the numbers were still low: 2% said “nearly all” candidates were qualified while 20% said “most” candidates¹¹.
 - Urban hiring managers register even greater issues than their suburban/rural counterparts: 93% say only “some” (65%) or “very few” (28%) candidates are qualified, compared to 83% of suburban/rural hiring managers (70% “some”; 13% “very few”)¹¹.
 - When looked at by company size, annual revenue, years of experience, level of responsibility for hiring, and what types of job the hiring managers are tasked with finding candidates for, there is no statistical differentiation, showing how deep this problem is¹¹.

* \$1.5 billion a year in revenue or more is standard for all companies listed in the most recent Fortune 1000.

DETAILED FINDINGS – Factors Leading to Job Search Success

For the factor that will help job seekers land a job, both job seekers and hiring managers picked “prior experience in similar position” most often, both in terms of the top 5 factors and the factor most likely to lead to a desirable job for a job seeker. However, hiring managers put significantly more emphasis on this than job seekers. The primary importance of prior experience increases dramatically for hiring managers from entry level, through mid-level to managerial/executive level.

Other vital factors were rated differently by job seekers and hiring managers, in addition to various subgroups within these populations. In general, job seekers place more emphasis on factors that they have more direct control over, such as willingness to pursue further education or develop while on the job, than hiring managers do.

- 83% of hiring managers said prior experience was a top 5 factor in leading to a desirable job and 43% said it was the most likely factor, compared to 72% of job seekers who said it was a top 5 factor and just 30% who said it was the top factor in leading to a desirable job^{12 & 13}.
 - For job seekers, no statistically significant differences were found among subgroups¹⁶.
 - Hiring managers at companies with more than 30,000 employees picked prior experience as the top factor at a significantly higher rate (48%) than hiring managers at companies with 30,000 or fewer employees in the US (36%)¹⁴.
 - Just 9% of hiring managers say they would be “extremely” (2%) or “very” likely (7%) to hire someone “who lacked the necessary skills for a job but appeared eager to learn those necessary skills on-the-job”; 22% said they would be likely to do so for a mid-level candidate and 78% said the same for an entry level candidate²⁰.
- Hiring managers also placed a statistically higher level of importance on interviewing skills than job seekers, with 70% of hiring managers picking this as a top 5 factor, compared to just 54% of job seekers¹².
 - Hiring managers with only significant influence in the hiring process placed greater emphasis (74%) on strong interviewing skills as a top 5 factor than their counterparts with primary responsibility for hiring (63%)¹⁵.
 - For job seekers, those with some graduate school or more are significantly more likely to view strong interviewing skills as a top 5 factor (68%) than those without a college degree (58%)¹⁶.
 - Instead, those without a 4 year college degree rate a willingness to develop job skills and gain experience in the top 5 (61%) much more often than those at the graduate level or above (39%)¹⁶.
- On skills that a person could easily control, job seekers were significantly more likely than hiring managers to place these in the top 5:
 - Willingness to take a pay cut¹²: 19% job seekers vs. 12% hiring managers
 - Willingness to develop job skills and gain experience¹²: 56% job seekers vs. 46% hiring managers
 - Willingness to pursue additional education or training¹²: 35% job seekers vs. 23% hiring managers

DETAILED FINDINGS – Influence of Education

Hiring managers are unimpressed with the success of education in preparing people for today's job market. Job-seeking hiring managers are even harsher on the education system than non-job seeking hiring managers. Job seekers feel quite the opposite, with a significant number positive that they were well prepared by their education.

However, this is not to say that hiring managers do not see a significant potential for education and training as they clearly see it as among the top factors in a successful job hunt.

- 44% of hiring managers feel the education system prepares individuals well for today's job market, with just 2% saying it prepares people "very well" and 42% saying it prepares individuals "fairly well"¹⁷.
 - 37% of job-seeking hiring managers say the education system prepares individuals well (1% "very well"; 36% "fairly well"); compared to 50% of non-job seeking hiring managers (3% "very well"; 47% "fairly well")¹⁸.
- However, 69% of hiring managers picked education as a top 5 factor leading to a desirable job, showing they still feel it is highly important¹⁵.
 - Hiring managers in the Midwest (76%) and the South (75%) saw this in stronger terms than their counterparts in the West (60%)¹⁵.
- Hiring managers' negative view of the education system's ability to prepare individuals stands in sharp contrast to job seekers, 62% of whom feel their education has prepared them well: 13% say "very well" and 49% say "fairly well"¹⁷.
 - Those at the graduate level or above were most positive on their education, with 72% saying it prepared them well, compared to 59% of college graduates and 60% of those with less than a 4 year college degree¹⁹.

DETAILED FINDINGS – Attitudes on Acquiring a Desirable Job

On key attitudes concerning successful completion of the job search, job seekers and hiring managers differ sharply. The only aspect that there seems to be agreement on is the difficulty of job seekers caught in a significant catch-22: many jobs require experience one can only gain after getting the job. Elsewhere, while it is expected job seekers would take a very negative view on companies' willingness to hire someone who is currently unemployed, it is stunning to see the high number of hiring managers who agree with this sentiment.

- 62% of hiring managers agree that "it is nearly impossible for an individual to obtain anything beyond an entry-level job in an industry where they have little experience"²¹.
 - This is highly unfortunate as job seekers demonstrate a strong willingness to work hard to catch up once they are brought onboard: 93% agree (including 71% who strongly agree) that if they do not have the experience necessary for a position they apply for, they "would be eager to develop those skills on-the-job"²¹.
- Though there is a statistical difference between hiring managers and job seekers, both groups overwhelmingly agree that there is a continual conundrum faced by job seekers in attempting to gain experience in jobs that require experience to obtain the job in the first place:

- 66% of hiring managers agree that “job seekers often find themselves applying for jobs that require skills and experiences that can only be acquired after being hired for the job”²².
- 78% of job seekers agree that “too many of the positions in today’s job market require skills and experiences that can only be acquired after being hired for the job”²².
- It is not surprising to see that job seekers feel that companies in their hiring practices discriminate against the unemployed, but it is shocking to see that nearly half of hiring managers agree as well:
 - 69% of job seekers and 47% of hiring managers agree that “companies often times refuse to consider a candidate for a job if he or she is not currently employed”²³.
 - The number among hiring managers is driven by job-seeking hiring managers, 54% of whom agree with this statement, compared to 41% of non-job seeking hiring managers who feel the same²⁴.

DETAILED FINDINGS – Job Seeker Confidence

Despite their pessimism toward the economy and the job market in general, job seekers are confident in their own abilities, whether this is merited or not. Managerial/executive level job seekers in particular appear to be unaware of the gulf that exists between how they view themselves and the exigencies of the job market according to hiring managers. This is extraordinary in light of earlier findings, namely that managerial/executive level job seekers are most of out of sync in describing themselves in terms of jobs/skills that are most highly valued and those that are considered most important by hiring managers.

- 68% of job seekers are either “very confident” (14%) or “confident” (54%) they know where to go for help in developing their professional skills²⁵.
 - Managerial/executive level job seekers are by far the most “very confident” here of the 3 types of job seekers, at 28% “very confident” (11% mid-level; 13% entry level)²⁵.
- 72% of job seekers say they are either “very confident” (20%) or “confident” (52%) they know how to present themselves during a job interview²⁶.
 - Managerial/executive level job seekers express the highest confidence here, at 92% (38% very confident; 54% confident)²⁶; compared to 76% for mid-level and 61% for entry level job seekers²⁶.
- 56% of job seekers report they are “very confident” (9%) or “confident” (47%) they “know what employers are looking for in job candidates today”²⁷.
 - 73% of managerial/executive job seekers are “very confident” (17%) or “confident” (55%) that they know what employers are looking for in job candidates, well above 59% for mid-level job seekers and 47% for entry level job seekers²⁷.

DETAILED FINDINGS – Responsibility for Improving Employee Skill Levels

Though job seekers are more likely than hiring managers to feel that employers should bear most of the burden in finding ways to develop employees to be successful, it is not the majority of job seekers who feel this way. Rather, most job seekers place this responsibility on employees themselves.

As far as what employers should do to help employees be more successful in their jobs, job seekers and hiring managers generally agreed on the top two items: providing training for general skills/traits and for providing for job-specific training. Where the two groups diverged, however, was on the idea of employers partnering with educational institutions to develop more applicable curricula (job seekers rating this more highly than hiring managers) and on employers helping to foster mentor-mentee relationships among employees (hiring managers rated this more highly than job seekers).

- 57% of job seekers feel that employees should bear most of the burden in developing their skills and traits, with 5% saying that employees should be solely responsible and 51% saying that employees should be “mostly responsible”²⁸.
 - This number climbs to an impressive 69% among job seekers in the West, with 4% saying employees should be solely responsible and 65% saying “mostly responsible”²⁸.
 - Hiring managers concur, with 70% emphasizing employees’ responsibility here (2% employees “solely responsible”; 67% employees “mostly responsible”)²⁸.
- Job seekers and hiring managers also generally see steps employers can take to help employees be successful at their jobs in a similar light:
 - 74% of job seekers and 79% of hiring managers say that employers should provide employees with general job skills/traits training²⁹.
 - Education matters here for job seekers, with 81% of job seekers with a college degree or higher saying employers should do this, compared to just 70% of those without a college degree³⁰.
 - Rural/suburban hiring managers rate providing general training more highly (83%) than their urban counterparts (68%)³¹.
 - 75% of job seekers and 71% of hiring managers say employers should provide job-specific training²⁹.
 - 65% of job seekers and 62% of hiring managers support employers providing employees incentives, such as tuition reimbursement, to further their education and training²⁹.
 - Again, education plays a role here for job seekers: 74% of job seekers with a college degree or higher say employers should do this, compared to just 60% of those without a college degree³⁰.
 - For hiring managers, this is highest in the South, where 71% support this³¹.
 - A key area of divergence is in partnering with educational institutions, as 46% of job seekers say employers should do this, compared to 35% of hiring managers²⁹.
 - Interestingly, the South has a very high rating here among hiring managers (46%)³¹ but very low among job seekers (36%)³⁰.
 - This is an area where there are no statistically significant differences among job seekers with different education backgrounds.
 - Lastly, hiring managers are much more likely than job seekers to place value on employers fostering mentor-mentee relationship among employees, with 59% of hiring managers saying employers should do this compared to just 40% of job seekers²⁹.

- 54% of job seekers at the graduate level or above back this, compared to just 37% of job seekers with a 4 year college degree or less³⁰.

APPENDIX A – NOTES

¹Job Seekers Q600, Table 1

²Job Seekers Q410, Table 2

³Job Seekers Q705, Table 10

⁴ Job Seekers Q1100/Q1105 combined, Table 109

⁵Job Seekers Q1031_2, Table 102

⁶Hiring Managers Q600, Table 1

⁷Hiring Managers Q610, Table 4

⁸Hiring Managers Q1115, Table 110

⁹Hiring Managers Q620, Table 6

¹⁰Hiring Managers Q1120, Table 111

¹¹Hiring Managers Q1000, Table 80

¹²Total Sample Q905, Table 79

¹³Total Sample Q910, Table 80

¹⁴Hiring Managers Q910, Table 79

¹⁵Hiring Managers Q905, Table 78

¹⁶Job Seekers Q905, Table 78

¹⁷Total Sample Q1005/Q1020 combined, Table 92

¹⁸Hiring Managers Q1005, Table 81

¹⁹Job Seekers Q1020, Table 90

²⁰Hiring Managers Q1011, Table 82

²¹Total Sample Q1016_1/Q1026_1, Table 98

²²Total Sample Q1016_2/Q1026_2, Table 99

²³ Total Sample Q1016_3/Q1026_3, Table 100

²⁴Hiring Managers Q1016_3, Table 89

²⁵Job Seekers Q1031_1, Table 101

²⁶Job Seekers Q1031_4, Table 104

²⁷Job Seekers Q1031_3, Table 103

²⁸Total Sample Q1035, Table 106

²⁹Total Sample Q1040, Table 107

³⁰Job Seekers Q1040, Table 106

³¹Hiring Managers Q1040, Table 106

³²Hiring Managers Q901, Table 61