CAREER ADVISORY BOARD · EST. 2010

Presented by DeVry University

Executive Summary

THE CAREER ADVISORY BOARD
2016 Job Preparedness Indicator Survey Shows That Hiring Manager Expectations of Candidates Remain High, But Dedication to Talent is Lukewarm

The 2016 Job Preparedness Indicator survey continued to identify gaps between the skills and traits candidates have and the skills and traits employers seek to fill open positions. Gaps were measured by assessing skills that are most important but least common among entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level job candidates. This year's research of nearly 500 US-based, senior-level hiring managers also explored how organizations are developing the necessary skills and competencies in their workforces, as well as their level of commitment to strategic talent development and management.

Strategic Focus on Talent Development is Lacking

Senior hiring managers are lukewarm in terms of how effective their organizations are at talent management and competency development. In this survey, few were willing to boast that they were employing sophisticated recruitment, development, and retention practices. Only 13 percent of respondents, for example, said that their companies' talent development initiatives are very well-aligned with overall business strategy, and only 11 percent said their initiatives help "a great deal" in providing employees with the skills they need to be successful.

In order to ensure that employees are adequately trained to do their jobs, 80 percent of respondents rely on on-the-job training, 34 percent on formal mentorship, 31 percent on one-off online learning programs, and 30 percent on one-off in person learning programs.
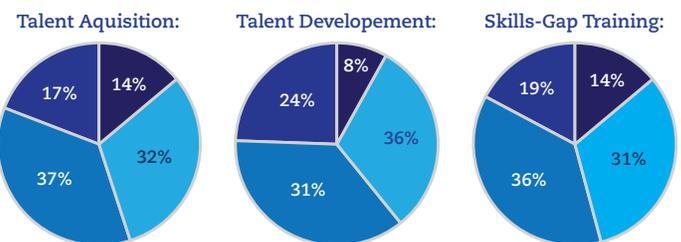
Furthermore, only 12 percent of respondents indicated that their organizations align talent development initiatives to retention strategies "a great deal," and only 11 percent said their companies very effectively align employee competency development to advancement at all levels.

And, just 17 percent of respondents said their organizations place a great deal of value on leadership development training, and only 13 percent place a great deal of value on succession planning.

Perhaps most significant, however, our respondents shared that they feel that their organizations are weak when it comes to tracking the return on investment (ROI) of talent development initiatives. Only eight percent said they do this "a great deal," while 21 percent said they do it "a fair amount," 31 percent said they do it "somewhat," and 40 percent said they don't believe that they do it at all!

My company has established strategies in place for:

Talent Aquisition: 14% / 32% / 37% / 17%

Talent Developement: 8% / 36% / 31% / 24%

Skills-Gap Training: 14% / 31% / 36% / 19%

A great deal: ▪
A fair amount: ▪
Somewhat: ▪
Not at all: ▪

Formal Education Emphasis is Promising

Despite a "so so" attitude toward talent development, senior hiring managers believe their companies still prize formal educational attainment in both candidates and employees. For example, 79 percent of respondents said their organizations value candidate degree completion at least "somewhat," and 82 percent said the same about employee degree completion. And 76 percent of respondents commented that their companies place at least some value on employee tuition reimbursement for formal education.

Senior hiring managers are also expanding their horizons with respect to relationships with educational institutions. Sixty-eight percent of our senior-level respondents said their organizations place at least some value on developing partnerships with schools, and they are receptive to different types of partnerships. While a little over a third of respondents still turn mostly to schools to supply intern and entry-level talent, 37 percent want to partner with schools to create a local talent pipeline, and 22 percent want to work alongside schools to develop better candidate competencies.

Critical Soft Skills Sustain Importance Throughout Careers

This year, senior-level hiring managers assessed the following 23 skills – presented here in no particular order – according to importance and commonality among entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level job candidates:

1. Time Management
2. Work Ethic
3. Written Communication Skills
4. Verbal Communication Skills
5. Presentation Skills
6. Business Acumen
7. Problem Solving
8. Initiative
9. Accountability
10. Integrity
11. Interpersonal Skills
12. Strategic perspective
13. Networking Skills
14. Global Competence
15. Adaptability
16. Assimilation of New Information
17. Decision Making
18. Risk-Taking
19. Innovation
20. Data Analytics
21. Organizational Skills
22. Cross-Functional Ability
23. Information Technology

Generally speaking, our respondents ranked the same skills as most important for entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level candidates. At all three levels, the three most critical skills are work ethic, integrity, and accountability. This finding illustrates that employers want to be able to

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trust and depend on their people, regardless of their level in the organization.

As might be expected, the most important skills do get more common as individuals progress in their careers. For instance, many of our respondents said that the three most important skills for entry-level professionals are only "somewhat common" or "not common at all" in this population. Specifically, 47 percent of respondents said accountability is only "somewhat common" or "not common at all" among entry-level candidates. Forty-two percent said the same about work ethic, and 39 percent said the same about integrity.

Evidently, senior hiring managers are not confident that entry-level candidates have the complete package of necessary skills and attributes: more than half of respondents disagreed that today's college graduates are fully prepared to enter the workforce.

At the mid-level, the most important traits of accountability, work ethic, and integrity are felt to be considerably more common, with only 25 percent of respondents claiming that accountability is "somewhat common" or "not common at all" among mid-level candidates. Twenty-two percent said the same about work ethic, and 19 percent said the same about integrity.

Notably, our respondents also felt that adaptability is a critical skill that is not nearly common enough among this population. Indeed, senior hiring managers may be dismayed by the level of coping skills exhibited in a business world that's in massive flux.

As in previous years, our study revealed the perception of a more significant skills gap at the senior-level. This year's respondents cited accountability, integrity, and adaptability as the most important skills for senior-level professionals, but also listed these skills as some of the least common of those assessed.

Overall, however, respondents felt that individual skills are considerably more common at the senior-level than they are at the entry and mid-levels. For example, just 15 percent of respondents said integrity is either "somewhat common" or "not common at all" among senior-level candidates. Only 13 percent said the same about accountability, and 11 percent said the same about work ethic.

Commonality of Most Important Skills (according to percentage of respondance)

	Low commonality at entry-level:	Low commonality at mid-level:	Low commonality at senior-level:
Accountability	47%	25%	13%
Work Ethic	42%	22%	11%
Integrity	39%	19%	15%

Senior hiring manager expectations remain high across all levels of employment. Less than half of our respondents (44 percent) agreed that the majority of candidates have the right skills to fill open positions, and hiring managers often must look long and hard before making an offer. Our respondents said they interview an average of six candidates for every job, and 32 percent regularly interview more than six.

Even if time-consuming, this approach appears to be working. The hiring of the right individuals upfront, combined with the fact that American employees are looking for more stable employment (according to the Career Advisory Board's 2016 "Most Desirable Jobs" survey), may partially explain why, according to our respondents, organizational tenure is lengthy. Our respondents have been with their current organizations an average of 10 years, and their employees have been there an average of eight years.

Desired IT Skills Are Consistent Among Levels

The role of information technology continues to expand in American workplaces. To that end, this is the first year that the JPI survey examined IT skills specifically. We defined IT as the use of computer systems for managing, storing, and retrieving information, and surprisingly, the most valuable skills for entry-level IT professionals (networking, systems integration, and security) were also cited as most valuable at the mid- and senior-levels.

According to Karl Fisch and Scott McLeod at the *Shift Happens* wiki, 65 percent of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist. Our respondents indicated that, already, we are rapidly moving toward new job types such as data analyst. Fifty-five percent of respondents said that greater than 10 percent of their current open positions did not exist just five years ago, and for a job like data analyst, many of the skills below are helpful if not essential.

Most Valuable IT Skills

Entry-Level
1. Systems integration
2. Security
3. Networking
4. Programming
5. Software engineering
6. Web development
7. Data architecture

Mid-Level
1. Networking
2. Security
3. Systems integration
4. Data architecture
5. Programming
6. Software engineering
7. Web development

Senior-Level
1. Security
2. Systems integration
3. Networking
4. Data architecture
5. Programming
6. Web development
7. Software engineering

Advice for Job Seekers

If you're looking for new opportunities this year, there are a variety of ways to use JPI's senior hiring manager data to your advantage.

Look carefully at job descriptions: Hiring managers spend a lot of time interviewing numerous candidates in the quest to find someone with every qualification on the list. Of course, no human being is perfect, but you want to come across as close to it as possible, and this requires advance preparation. Every trait on an advertised job listing or description should appear in some form on your resume, and take the time to think through concrete results you've achieved in every target skill area.

Demonstrate flexibility: Hiring managers recognize that the job they hire you for today may not be the one you have tomorrow. Understandably, this makes them nervous. Show them, in both your application materials and in interviews, that you are accustomed to coping effectively with change and unpredictability in a business environment. The trait of adaptability is highly differentiating at the entry-level, and essential at the mid- and senior-levels.

Remember that trust is king: The JPI results, for the sixth year in a row, show that soft skills like accountability, integrity, and work ethic outrank hard, job-specific skills. Hiring a new employee is a risk, so do what you can during the interview process to illustrate that the hiring manager will be able to trust you. Brainstorm past business situations in which you've had to display exemplary personal ethics, and do not fudge anything on your application materials!

Be proactive about your development: As these results indicate, some organizations are not fully committed to rigorous employee training. Take it upon yourself to identify the skills you need to move ahead and seek out the appropriate resources like coursework and mentors to fill in any gaps.

Keep in touch with your career center: If you graduated from a university – even if it was a long time ago – it's worth an email or visit to the career counselors there. This year's JPI confirms that many employers are looking for both guidance and talent from formal education providers. Developing relationships with career center staffers and letting them know about the types of opportunities you're looking for will help to keep your resume top of mind.

About the Job Preparedness Indicator Survey

The 2016 Job Preparedness Indicator research was conducted online within the United States by DeVry University on behalf of the Career Advisory Board in November 2016. Survey respondents included 484 US-based individuals (53 percent male, 47 percent female) with full-time positions at the director level or above, in companies with more than 10 employees (mean company size was moderately large at 8,500). Most frequently in the education, financial services, and healthcare industries, our respondents' primary job responsibilities include management of staff (84 percent), hiring of new employees (67 percent), firing/laying off of employees (55 percent), and HR management (30 percent). Fifty-nine percent of respondents hire entry-level professionals, 80 percent hire mid-level professionals, and 37 percent hire senior-level professionals/executives.

About the 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.

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