

## **What Employers Are Really Looking For:** Insights from the 2014 DeVry University Employer Survey By Madeleine Slutsky, VP of Career & Student Services at DeVry University

Ever wish you could read a potential employer's mind? Figure out what that inscrutable human being across the desk from you is *really* thinking? Well, we did the next best thing. We asked.

Among other things, we wanted to know employers' biggest needs when seeking new hires, and their biggest hiring challenges. The results may surprise you.

### **We asked: What are the most important qualities and skills in a potential job candidate?**

You might think that education and work experience would be the first two things mentioned. The top two qualities mentioned were: communication skills and attitude.

#### **1. Communication skills**

We've been teaching our students for years that job candidates are often judged on their "soft skills"; things like: being friendly and personable, making eye contact, writing an error-free cover letter, and sending a follow up note expressing interest and appreciation for the opportunity. All of these steps are critical forms of interpersonal communication that show a potential employer you have a positive attitude and you care about doing the job well.

The truth is communication is absolutely and fundamentally important in any job. What's the point of being brilliant at what you do if you can't get along with your coworkers or your boss? What's the value in knowing how to do a task well if you can't explain it patiently and thoroughly to someone - like a client? Demonstrating that you understand how to work on a team, collaborate with others, explain things well and display common courtesy during an interview can make the difference between moving on to the next level or being dropped onto the "no" pile.

#### **2. Attitude**

Here are a few of the answers we received when we asked the second question: *What are your biggest challenges in hiring new employees?*

*"Finding employees who are dedicated to the job and who put forth effort."*

*"Finding people who can self-manage time and projects."*

*"Finding people with a strong work ethic and commitment."*

*"Finding employees that are eager to work and not text their friends."*

So, the next time you are in an interview, wondering what the person across the desk is thinking, remember: He or she is looking for someone with a strong education and relevant experience, but more important, someone who is easy to work with, excited about the job, eager to do it well, and willing to go above and beyond to do it right the first time. Prove to them that you have the communication skills and attitude to be a smart, responsible employee. Demonstrating these "hidden" skills might just be the key to a new and exciting career.