

What does an employer really want from you as an applicant?

One of the most confusing aspects for any job seeker when preparing an application is knowing exactly what skills and attributes an employer is looking for. If you have little or no prior employment experience this can be even more daunting.

We asked more than 350 graduate employers from a range of industries about the most important selection criteria they use when recruiting graduates. Employers were presented with a list of ten common skills and personal attributes and were asked to select their top three (in addition to relevant qualifications, of course!).

Interpersonal and communication skills (written and oral) was the most important selection criterion in 2013, which is consistent with the findings from previous years of the survey.

Drive, commitment and industry knowledge was ranked by employers as the second most important selection criterion, with *critical reasoning* and *calibre of academic results* third and fourth – all consistent with previous years.

So, what can you take away from this?

First, it's important to remember that, while some employers may place greater emphasis on one or more of these skills and attributes when recruiting graduates, it doesn't mean these are the only skills they're looking for!

Even if you don't have much professional experience, it doesn't mean you don't have these skills.

Think about your part-time job, or an extracurricular activity like a sports club, band or community organisation that you've joined. You might be able to draw some parallels between skills and attributes used in these settings and how you could transfer them to your ideal graduate job.

You could also think about other skill areas you're strong in. All of the skills listed here are important. The skills sought by employers can vary between industries, organisations and even individual recruiters. Doing some research about the company, speaking with friends who have gone through the process before and even contacting someone from the organisation to discuss their expectations are all great ways to learn which skills and attributes a prospective employer may be seeking.

This research comes from GCA's 2013 Graduate Outlook Survey of graduate employers in Australasia. If you are interested in viewing more of the survey findings, visit www.graduatecareers.com.au or email research@graduatecareers.com.au.

Top 10 skills & attributes

As ranked by employers; ranked by proportion of employers who considered each to be an important selection criterion.

1. **Interpersonal & communication skills (written & oral)**
2. **Passion/Knowledge of industry/ Drive/Commitment/Attitude**
3. **Critical reasoning & analytical skills / Problem solving/ Technical skills**
4. **Calibre of academic results**
5. **Work experience**
6. **Cultural alignment / values fit**
7. **Emotional intelligence (incl. self-awareness, confidence, motivation)**
8. **Teamwork skills**
9. **Activities (incl. intra & extracurricular)**
10. **Leadership skills**

The numbers:

Employers generally consider a graduates interpersonal and communication skills to be their most important selection criterion when evaluating prospective employees.

(Graduate Outlook 2013, GCA)

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