

DEVELOPING THE QUALITIES YOU NEED FOR CAREER SUCCESS

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Do you know what qualities you need to develop to be successful in your future career? If you've had an internship, you may have started to realize that the qualities necessary for career success aren't necessarily what you had imagined, and may in fact differ from what is necessary to get the job.

While getting the job is highly important, it is also beneficial to know what qualities will help you be successful in your career once you get that coveted job. Working on developing these qualities will enhance your chances of being successful in your career.

AFA FUTURE LEADER PREPAREDNESS STUDY

Agriculture Future of America (AFA), in partnership with Millennium Research, recently conducted a study titled the "AFA Future Leader Preparedness Study."

The study was administered to compare and contrast the traits that corporate leaders and college students felt were most important to career success. In addition, the study was used to benchmark AFA's Leader Development Model and to quantify employers' satisfaction with AFA students.

The survey was sent out to agricultural corporate leaders and college students in agriculture with response rates of 29% and 16%, respectively.

Students and corporate respondents were asked to select which traits they felt were important to career success from a given list, and then from the list they selected the traits they felt were most important.

STUDY RESULTS

Corporate and student respondents varied on the importance they placed on a number of qualities, but were similar on many others. The areas where the respondents differed

"AFA FUTURE LEADER PREPAREDNESS STUDY" COMPARISON OF STUDENT AND CORPORATE RESPONDENTS WHO SELECTED TRAITS IMPORTANT TO CAREER SUCCESS

	STUDENT RESPONSE	CORPORATE RESPONSE	DIFFERENTIAL
Work ethic	99%	97%	2%
Communicate accurately and pleasantly	98%	80%	18%
Think through problem	97%	97%	0%
Excellent time management	98%	96%	2%
Self starting	92%	98%	6%
Thoroughness	95%	88%	7%
Networking	93%	77%	16%
Positive attitude	93%	91%	2%
Intelligence	78%	87%	9%
Innovative solutions	85%	85%	0%
Hands-on ag experience	65%	32%	33%
Excellent project management	89%	74%	15%
Presenting well in groups	82%	80%	2%
Results oriented	76%	96%	20%
Practical approach	75%	91%	16%
Quick study	60%	85%	25%
Convince others	81%	81%	0%
Enlist others to support mission	82%	80%	2%
Applying business principles	80%	79%	1%
Resolve conflicts	82%	85%	3%
Excellent business writing	61%	60%	1%
Computer skills	64%	75%	11%
Global knowledge	70%	40%	30%
Follow company procedures	67%	91%	24%
Valuing diversity	60%	69%	9%
Accounting	49%	35%	14%
Sense of urgency	50%	82%	32%
Fluent foreign language	21%	9%	12%
High GPA	20%	14%	6%
Well respected university	37%	18%	19%

Columns shaded in green note the areas of greatest difference between students and employers.

are the ones that students should take note of and learn from.

OVERESTIMATED SKILLS

Students overestimated the importance of skills and qualities such as networking, excellent project management, global knowledge,

hands-on ag experience, accounting, coming from a well-respected university, being fluent in a foreign language, and having a high GPA, placing a higher value on these skills than the corporate respondents.

In some cases, the overestimates were by a significant amount. Students

placed a 30% higher value on the importance of global knowledge and hands-on ag experience. They also placed a 20% higher value on the importance of attending a well-respected university.

Students who had higher GPAs were more likely to say that having a high GPA was important, and that may well be the case with the other over-estimated qualities as well, however, GPA was the only quality that was determinable from the study results.

UNDERESTIMATED SKILLS

Naturally, just as students overestimated the importance of certain skills and qualities, they underestimated the importance of others.

The traits that they underestimated included: being self-starting, having a positive attitude, following company procedures, intelligence, being results oriented, having computer skills, being a quick study and having a sense of urgency.

The skills and qualities that stood out the most were: being results oriented, being a quick study, and having a sense of urgency, with underestimations of anywhere from 20% to 40%.

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES

When asked which qualities of those that they selected as important were the ones that they felt impacted career success, the corporate and student respondents selected three of the four similarly.

Students again underestimated the importance of being results oriented, as 12% of corporate respondents selected that quality as the most important, while just 2% of students did.

Instead the students chose hands-on ag experience as their fourth most selected answer, with 7% selecting it as the most important quality.

However, many students and corporate respondents selected other traits as well, as neither total percentage was above 80%.

Of particular note from the corporate respondents: 67% of those that supervised engineering and

product development positions selected being able to think through a problem/situation to find the best solution as the most important trait for career success.

USING THE RESULTS

It's important to keep in mind that these results reflect what respondents felt were important to success in their careers, and not the skills that they felt were important to obtaining a job.

For instance, a high GPA may not mean as much once you actually have a job but it likely holds much more regard when it comes to getting a job. Someone with a lower GPA may perform just as well as someone with a higher GPA on the job, but that higher GPA is likely to get your resume noticed more easily because it helps to set you apart.

After all, an employer may not have a guaranteed way of determining if you have a positive attitude or are a self starter from your resume. They may have to turn to more objective aspects to determine if you get the interview or the job.

Students should take special note of the qualities and skills where student and corporate respondents differed greatly in the importance they placed upon them.

Traits that students underestimated the importance of could be ones that they may not be paying enough attention to and need to devote more time on developing. Computer skills especially, are one quality that students should work to develop since it is something that can be easily developed and for which employers are looking.

Similarly, if you are aware that you do not always have the most positive attitude, you can work on trying to be more positive, especially in the workplace. If your supervisor gives you a task you're not sure you can handle, don't immediately discount it. Try to remain positive about the task and find a solution.

One way to develop the qualities and skills that employers desire is to participate in AFA and attend the AFA Leaders Conference. The conference, held November 4-7, 2010, is designed to prepare collegiate men and women for careers in agriculture through

personal and professional training and development. Attending the conference allows you to interact with nearly 500 peers and meet with many corporate leaders.

The study showed that AFA graduates were rated higher than others directly out of college. Being in AFA can help set you apart and show employers that you have the skills necessary for success.

For more information on the conference, go to: www.agfuture.org.

It would be wise not to neglect aspects that students overestimated, as they still hold some importance to career success, just not as much as students may have thought. While developing the qualities and skills that employers feel are the most important is great, you should not neglect those that you feel are important.

If you feel that having global experience is important to you, then go ahead and take that study abroad semester or learn another language. Even if it is not as important to your employer, you should not immediately discount it. A global experience may not have a significant impact on your everyday career success, but in the long run it could certainly make a difference.

Similarly, networking will not necessarily have a direct impact on the quality of the work you do, but it could help you get a promotion.

Each of the skills and qualities mentioned in the study are ones that are common throughout any career. Whether you plan on going into communications or agronomy, it is important to have a positive attitude, a good work ethic, and be able to think through problems.

Because of this, the "AFA Future Leader Preparedness Study" is relevant to anyone in the agriculture industry. Now that you know what employers feel is important for you to be successful in your career, you can use that knowledge to your advantage to ensure success!

For further information on the "AFA Future Leader Preparedness Study" and to download the complete report, submit your request at <https://agfuture.wufoo.com/forms/afa-future-leader-preparedness-study-request/>.