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### Human Resource Professional's Attitudes Towards Creativity

Emily A. Leminger

State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State College,  
lemingea01@mail.buffalostate.edu

#### Advisor

Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers

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Buffalo State  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

Human Resource Professional's Attitudes Towards Creativity

A Project in  
Creative Studies  
by  
Emily A. Leminger

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Science

April 22, 2020

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by

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An Abstract of a Project

in

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Buffalo State

State University of New York

Department of Creative Studies

## ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

## Human Resource Professional's Attitudes Towards Creativity

This project explores the current attitudes of local human resource professionals in and around Western New York regarding creativity as an employable skill. Human Resource professionals from multiple fields were surveyed regarding their attitudes toward creativity. Positive comments were reported by all respondents regarding the need for creativity, creative problems solving and/or educating for creativity in the workplace. Survey results are discussed and discrepancies within this work with regard to inconsistencies of individual opinions on creativity are addressed. Limitations of the study are discussed as well as options for future research.



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Signature

04/23/2020

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Date

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Dates of Approval:

April 23, 2020

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Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers

Associate Professor

International Center for Studies in Creativity

April 23, 2020

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Emily Leminger

Student

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I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's project Human Resource Professional's Attitudes Towards Creativity as an online resource.

*Emily Leminger-Look*

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Name

April 23, 2020

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Date

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## **SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT**

### **Purpose of Examining Human Resource Professional's Attitudes**

The intended purpose of this master's project is to explore the attitudes towards creativity within the Human Resources Community in Erie and Niagara County, New York. Many studies reflecting topics within the human resources field point towards the value of creativity as an employable skill (Basadur, 1997; Hunter et al., 2012; Mishra, 2014). With that being understood, I would like to begin the exploration of the current local climate for recruitment and hiring, and its relationship to creativity. I have chosen this project, as it is my belief that those who participate in and utilize creativity training can be incredibly useful to any workplace. It is my goal to educate the local human resource community regarding the gaps in understanding of creativity.

### **Rationale for Selection of Creative Problem Solving, Divergent and Convergent Thinking**

While gathering data, professionals' opinions on creativity will be surveyed, and responses will be collected and analyzed. The survey will also contain general questions surrounding creativity. The questions asked of these professionals will attempt to form an understanding of attitudes towards those who have professional qualifications in the area of creativity studies. Gathering data on attitudes toward creativity professionals will be especially interesting in careers that are considered less creative. Creativity, Creative Problem Solving (CPS) and an educational background in creativity will be explained to those surveyed before each question pertaining to these categories.

I have chosen divergent thinking specifically, as a skill to utilize during this process. I have done so because I understand the importance of utilizing an open-mind and deferring judgement, especially in early stages of discovery. I am going to continue to work on this skill myself, making my best effort to see potential within fields that I do not necessarily consider to be creative. I feel that this will be useful to the project, as once I've had the opportunity to utilize divergent discovery, I believe that I can offer these insights to those being surveyed, after the completion of the data gathering. This project is extremely important to me as I have had the opportunity to learn creativity as a skill and I firmly believe that the working community would benefit from more creative professionals across the workforce.

### **Goals of the Project**

I have set forth several goals for this project. I would like to have a clearer understanding of the creative climate for interview candidates in and around Buffalo, NY. I would like to be purposeful in choosing a variety of organizations when surveying participants to allow for robust results, although the sample will be one of convenience and limited in scope as a master's project. It would be ideal that the data allows for many angles of interpretation, allowing for sectioned groups to be analyzed within the larger group. This would include females versus males in the field, age ranges, years of experience, and field of work. I am expecting to gather a reasonable amount of data for this project. Lastly, I would like to make an impact on the future generations of creativity professionals by helping the local community develop a greater understanding for creativity, opening doors for future applications within their chosen field.

## SECTION II: PERTINENT LITERATURE

### Literature Exploring Creativity's Place in the Workforce

**Basadur, M. (1997). Organizational development interventions for enhancing creativity in the workplace. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 31(1), 59-72.**

Basadur (1997) defined organization creativity as process that is deliberate and continuous that focuses on change-making, problem finding, problem solving and the implementation of solutions. Innovation and adaptability were defined as synonyms with creativity. Basadur (1997) recommended that those in organizational development should promote the development of new thinking skills that will in turn promote an employee's creativity, motivation and commitment. Along with this, a supportive structure must be present within the workplace.

Effectiveness is defined as having high skill in efficiency while also having high skill in adaptability, while promoting the creative process allows for and promotes both of these skills. With creativity, employees are able to development solutions and implement them towards new and unprogrammed problems. Basadur et al. (as cited by Basadur, 1997) found in a study that creativity training promoted trying new things, open-mindedness, deferral of judgement, an increase in both the quality and quantity of ideas and an increase in defined problem with a decrease in negative criticism. To go along with this, Basadur (as cited by Basadur, 1997) found that organizations that nurtured creativity had new and improved services and products, savings

in cost with increase in quality and quantity, a reduced amount of turnover and absenteeism, among others. With regard to people, employees practiced higher level thinking, improved strategies and customer service satisfaction focus, improved managerial and leadership training, experienced cooperation among departments, and increased job satisfaction, among others.

**GE Global Innovation Barometer. (2011) An overview on messaging, data and amplification. Retrieved from:**

<http://files.gereports.com/wpcontent/uploads/2011/01/GIB-results.pdf>

General Electric conducted a study in 2011 with a wide array of 1,000 executives in 12 countries. Of those surveyed, 88% identified innovation as the catalyst for future success.

**Hunter, S.T., Cushenbery, L., Friedrich, T. (2012) Hiring an innovative workforce: A necessary yet uniquely challenging endeavor. *Human Resource Management Review*, 22 (4), 303-322.**

Creativity offers a competitive edge, allowing businesses to practice consistent ideation for implantation of product or processes (Hunter et al, 2012). Additionally, Hunter et al. (2012) stated that due to the constant emergence of innovation, it is essential that companies make considerable efforts to recruit and select individuals that are capable of working within an ever changing environment.

**Mishra, K. (2014). Employability skills that recruiters demand. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 8(3), 50.**

Mishra (2014) identified communication skills, a problem or conflict solving attitude, interpersonal skills and team work as preferable skills that are sought out by recruiters. All of

these skills, especially having a problem or conflict solving attitude, is very much in line with the creative individual.

**Newman, S. & Ketter, P. (2019) Future- Ready or not? *Association for Talent Development Magazine*. Retrieved from:**

**<https://www.td.org/magazines/td-magazine/future-ready-or-not>**

McKinsey (as cited by Newman & Ketter, 2019) emphasized the importance of high cognitive skills that include creativity, complex information processing and critical thinking and decision making, citing that these skills will continue to grow in necessity by as much as 19% in the upcoming years.

**Mumford, M. D., & Simonton, D. K. (1997). Creativity in the workplace: People, problems, and structures. *The journal of creative behavior*, 31(1), 1-6.**

Mumford and Simonton (1997) explained that creativity has not been given the proper consideration within organizational design and structure. Creativity is a key component in order for organizations to adapt and grow and should be encouraged within the workplace. Changes occurring within the workplace at a rapid speed call for a premium to be placed on creativity and innovation. With creativity and innovation new technologies, products and practices are developed. Mumford & Simonton (1997) promoted the need for appropriate conditions that allow for creativity to foster. Organizational environments should foster characteristics aligning with autonomy, discretion, task identity and creative exploration. Additionally, organizations should allow time for idea generation, incubation, risk taking and planning. Both a climate and culture conducive to the creative process will allow for individuals to further utilize and deepen their creative abilities. A culture and climate that promotes creativity, assists its employees in remaining motivated. It is especially important to remember that creativity may exist in the most

unsuspecting positions, such as sales, customer service, or even auto repair. When organizations make time for creative and innovative efforts and pursuits, they are setting themselves up for success in the future.

**Puccio, G., Mance, M., Barbero Switalski, L., & Reali, P. D. (2012). *Creativity rising: Creative thinking and creative problem solving in the 21st century*. Buffalo, NY: ICSC.**

Puccio et al. (2012) explained that creative thinking is a true requirement for the workforce as change continues to occur, as change is continuous and continues to be accelerated. Creativity can be utilized as a domain general skill, in that qualities of a creative individual, including critical thinking, learning and innovation, and problem solving are all useful qualities in any domain.

**Robles, M. M. (2012). Executive perceptions of the top 10 soft skills needed in today's workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 453-465.**

Robles (2012) describes the top ten soft skills that recruiters look for during an interview. Many of these skills are those that are present within creative individuals. Clear communication, flexibility, interpersonal skills, positive attitude, responsibility and team work are some of the top ten skills identified that also fit the role of a creative individual (Robles, 2012).

**Zhou, J., & Shalley, C. E. (2011). Deepening our understanding of creativity in the workplace: A review of different approaches to creativity research.**

Zhou and Shalley (2011), stated that creativity is an essential process for societal and economic growth. They stated that creativity contributes heavily to entrepreneurship, performance, growth and an individual's competitiveness. Amabile (as cited by Zhou & Shalley, 2011) stated that in order for individuals to be creative, three components are necessary: a

possession of domain-relevant knowledge and skills, skills and abilities relating to creativity, and intrinsic motivation must be present with regard to the task at hand. Employees are more likely to be motivated, both intrinsically and extrinsically when the behaviors of leadership are appropriate for creativity. A controlling supervisor may cause a dampening of creative ability and willingness among employees, causing a feeling of constriction, whereas, a more informational supervisor that allows for autonomy and freedom of expression may assist in the creative culture. Sin and Zhou (as cited by Zhou and Shalley, 2011) found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and creativity. Opposite of this, studies by Stahl & Koser and George & Zhou (as cited by Zhou and Shalley, 2011) found that managers possessing controlling behaviors negatively impacted their subordinate's creative behaviors. Similar to this, when employees are surrounded by peers who are informational and open, creativity is more able to flourish, whereas more controlling peers may diminish creativity and intrinsic motivation.



## **SECTIONS III: PROCESS PLAN**

### **Plan to Achieve Project Goals and Outcomes**

To begin the execution of my project, I intend to use creative problem-solving tools, beginning with asking data questions to truly establish the: who, what, where, when, and why. I will utilize brainstorming to begin developing questions that I would like for Human Resource (HR) professionals to answer. Once I have had the chance to diverge on this topic through brainstorming, I will utilize a convergent tool, most likely the Evaluation Matrix or choosing Hits with my feedback partner and additional members of a resource group. I would also like to utilize Assisters and Resisters to really identify what I may struggle with, as well as tasks that may take less time. A Pluses, Potentials, Concerns and Overcoming Concerns (PPCO) may also be useful for the project in its entirety. Action steps will include writing a cover letter to be sent with each set of surveys to companies participating in the survey. Additionally, I will formulate survey questions to be asked and have these approved by both my instructor and the research approval process. It is my plan to select those that I would like to survey by compiling a large list of local companies in a multitude of fields, along with companies that are large and small. I will include companies that are newer and those that have more experience.

At the culmination of the project it is my goal to have valuable and representative data on human resources professionals and their attitudes towards creativity as an employable skill. I would like to be able to present this information in an info-graphic manner. Once the data is available I would like to disseminate information on creativity and its value to those who were surveyed. This information would ideally help to dispel myths or assumptions around creativity.

## **Project Timeline**

February 3- March 8, 2020: Submit next set of drafts and final concept paper for approval. Work with feedback partner to discuss any potential additions/ changes. (10 hours)

Select organizations to work with (2 hours)

Continue research that supports creativity in the workforce (3 hours)

Finalize questions for survey after feedback is received and questions are approved (2 hours)

**POST APPROVAL FROM INSTRUCTOR:**

Distribute surveys

Collect data

Analyze Data

Finish research on creativity in the workforce (3 hours)

Begin writing large sections of paper (2-3 weeks)

Begin creating infographic (4 weeks)

## **Evaluation Plan**

In order to feel that my goals were met, I would like to gather data from at least 30% of those surveyed, with a minimum of 20%. Being that this is an introduction to the investigation surrounding creativity within the local community, I look forward to the possibility of replicating this study on a larger scale in the future. My hope is that the results of this survey offer a snapshot into creativity within the workplace, as a fully comprehensive evaluation is beyond the limitations of this study. I know I am hopeful for a high response rate, and would like to be able to have data that is meaningful and useful. I would like to understand how the HR community views creativity within their applicant pool and within their organization.

This project should offer information about the surrounding workforce community, adding to any present and available data on how professionals treat creativity in the workplace. Resolution will be represented by the culmination of data collection and evaluation.

I am hopeful to receive a fair amount of feedback within the first few weeks of the surveys being sent out. Through utilization of the survey, I am giving the professionals an opportunity to give their honest feedback on an anonymous platform. Surveys will be kept anonymous and will not include any identifiable data. Participants should feel open to express their opinions to the fullest degree.

## **SECTION IV: OUTCOMES**

### **The Effects on Outcomes from COVID19**

The intention of this project was to design, disseminate and evaluate a survey asking about attitudes towards creativity from local human resource professionals. Many times, those completing academic work cannot accommodate for all the unknown or unexpected. For this project, the unknown and unexpected was COVID19, which is still affecting the local community, nation and world as this project culminates. For the purpose of this project, my explanation of the effects of COVID19 are in past tense, referring to the time when respondents were being contacted and filling out the survey. For those unfamiliar with COVID19 or the novel Corona virus pandemic, this highly contagious virus has had an immense impact on the surrounding area's workforce. Based on the New York State governor's orders, many businesses were mandated to shut their doors, as they were considered "non-essential", while "essential" business were forced to make changes in their workflows, environments and workforce. We as a community were asked to self-quarantine and stay six feet apart from each other, even our own friends and family, while wearing masks in public, to assist in fighting this community infection. There were of course many other effects of this virus both locally and worldwide, but this work focuses specifically on the potential impacts on the project in Western New York during this time period.

This project includes an explanation of COVID19 and its effects on the local community for two distinct reasons. The list of companies contacted (See Table 1 in Appendix A) may have had a dramatic change to their workforce or the work in their company. For example, a local distillery, Black Button Distilling, seeing the need for hand sanitizer changed their production to stop making their product and switched to producing only the disinfectant. Other companies,

especially those that were considered non-essential may have furloughed many employees or had human resource partners managing different roles during the pandemic. Companies with essential status, like grocery stores, may have been working vigorously to hire new employees, removing human resource workers from their day to day operations, standards and routines. It is possible that due to the change in status quo, many individuals who received this survey were unable to respond. I received responses from some potential participants stating that because of the current community health crisis, they were unable to take away any additional time from their current role.

To combat this, measures were taken to reach out to members of the community and to further contact individuals known to myself, furthering the sample of convenience. Although posting the link to the survey on a social media forum would have been an easier way to reach out to many individuals, this would have come with potential consequences. As previously discussed, the survey is completely anonymous to protect participants while allowing them to express themselves freely. This is a positive with regard to obtaining authentic data but must also be closely monitored. If the survey were open to a large community without prior screening, guaranteeing the integrity of the data would not have been possible. This is because there would be no way to tell if the person filling out the survey worked in or fulfilled the role of human resources or if they were providing genuine answers to the demographic or opinion questions.

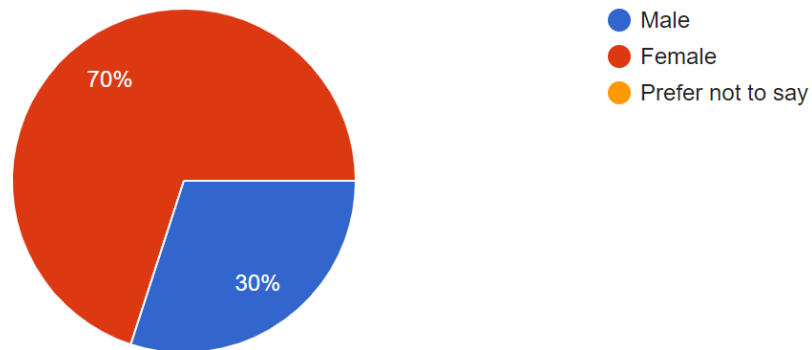
Importantly, answers provided by those surveyed may have been contingent upon the current health crisis. Often, a crisis calls for an alternative manner of thinking or the drastic alteration of protocol. Certainly, a pandemic may be a good time to consider the benefit of creative thinking. The results are overwhelmingly positive when considering attitudes towards creativity, and although it is my hope that human resources professionals hold this high regard

for creativity training continuously, it must be considered that COVID19 and its effects may have altered their opinions.

## The Results

What is your gender?

10 responses

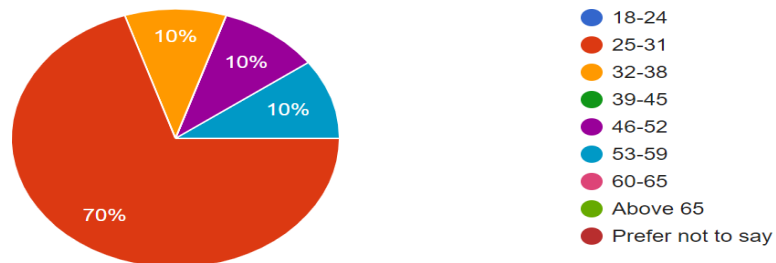


*Figure 1*

In total, thirty-five professionals received the survey including the original list and the additionally outreached individuals. Of those thirty-five, ten individuals or 28.5% responded to and completed the survey. The gender makeup of those surveyed was 70% female and 30% male. All individuals chose to identify their gender.

What is your age range?

10 responses

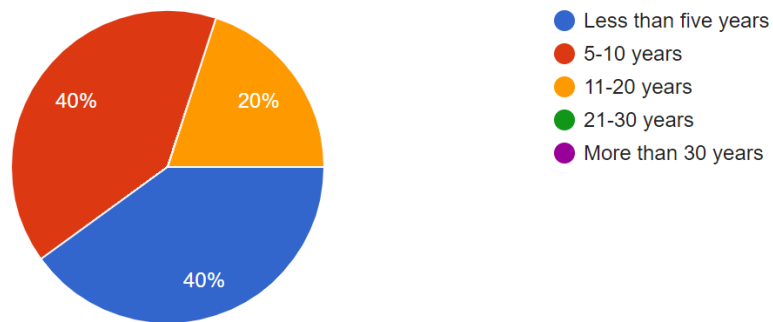


*Figure 2*

Of all those surveyed, 70% of individual fell into the age range of 25-31 years old, 10% in each age range of 32-38, 46-52, and 53-59 years old. None of the respondents fell into the age ranges of 18-24 years, 39-45 years, 60-65 years or above 65 years old. All individuals chose to identify their age range.

Years of Experience Working in Human Resources, in ANY Capacity:

10 responses



*Figure 3*

Both 5-10 years and less than 5 years of experience each consisted of 40% of those surveyed, while 20% of individuals had been in human resources for 11-20 years. None of the individuals reported that their experience level was 21-30 years or more than 30 years. This was a required question.

Creativity was defined for respondents as “something that is both novel and useful”. Respondents were asked “What is your personal definition of creativity?”. Various responses were received, including:

- “The ability to think uniquely about different situations and find new solutions to problems”
- “Creativity is the ability to see a problem and find a solution that others would not try or be afraid to try.”

- “Experiencing something and processing it so it would come out different”
- “Thinking outside the box”
- “My personal definition of creativity is the ability to view existing things in a unique manner, or create new solutions in order to solve a problem.”
- “Outside-of-the-box ingenuity and problem solving”
- “Is coming up with a new way to be innovative.”
- “Utilizing thoughts and experiences to produce ideas and functions”
- “Unique problem solving”
- “Using your own ideas to think outside the box”

30% of the respondents used some form of the term “think outside the box”. Kihn (2005) explained the origin of the phrase “think outside the box” and its common associations. According to Kihn (2005) the phrase was meant to prompt people to “think creatively”. Generally, the phrase is thought to be credited to 1970s and 1980s consultants asking their clients to use a different method of thinking while solving a puzzle (Kihn, 2005). Kihn (2005) supports that the utilization of creative thinking has long been synonymous with “thinking outside of the box”, while the answers from 30% of the respondents supports the longevity of the association.

Additional similarities are seen from responses. The words “unique/ uniquely” or “different” is present in three of the responses, while “finding a solution” or “problem solving” is also frequently present. “Innovation”, a word thought to be synonymous with creativity, is also seen among the responses. After the academic definition of creativity was defined for participants, they still submitted a variety of responses. Interestingly, none of those responses explicitly stated that they thought of creativity as something “novel and useful”. However, as previously discussed, respondents chose to use the word “unique”, which in relation to this

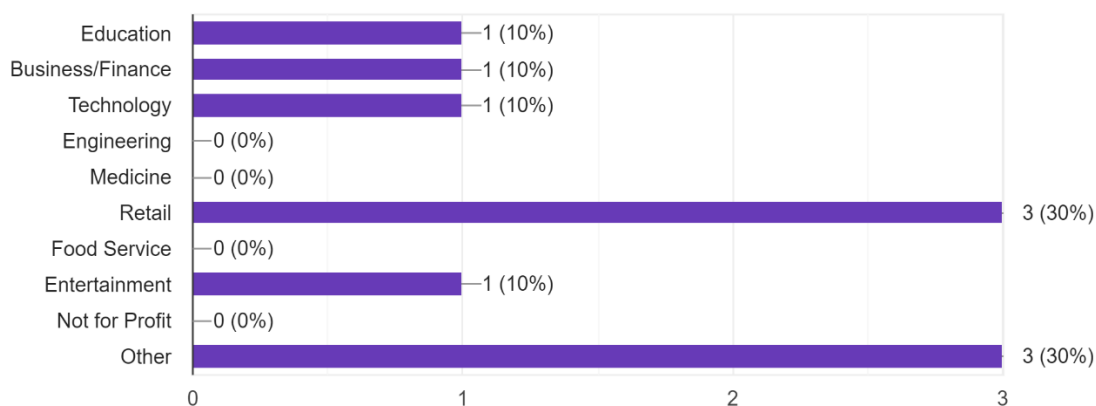


project, acts appropriately as a stand in for the world “novel”. When considering the word “useful”; “solutions”, “functions” and “problem solving” lend themselves to the idea of usefulness.

Although many of the words chosen by participants fit the bill for creativity, there are also several descriptor words that they did not choose. The definitions were general, which may support the idea that creativity is a domain general skill. A student of creativity knows that it is a science that exists in play, music, art, photography, and business, among many others. This of course supports that creativity can also be a domain specific skill.

#### Field of Work (Select All that Apply):

10 responses



*Figure 4*

The intent of this project was to get responses from a variety of fields. An effort was made to accomplish this by hand selecting organizations for outreach both during phase one and phase two. Participants were asked to self- identify which field they worked in. Thirty percent of the participants worked in retail, while another 30% selected “other” for their field of work. Ten percent of the participants each worked in education, business/finance, entertainment, and

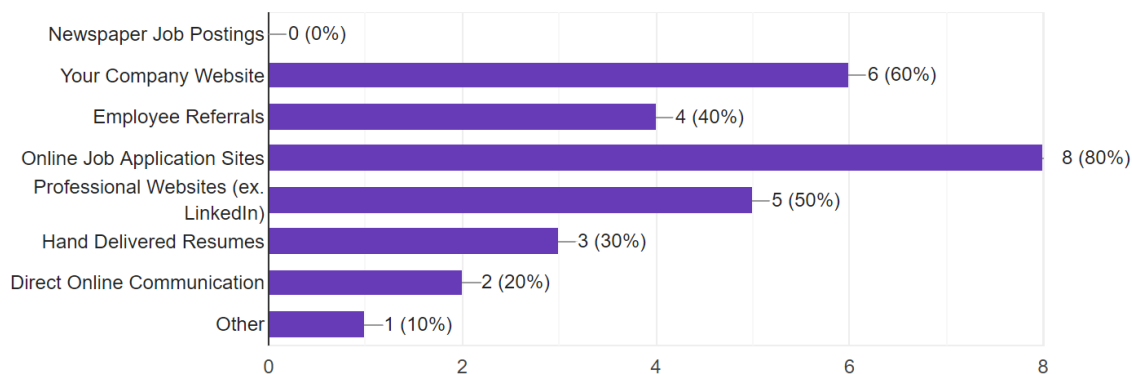
technology. None of the participants identified themselves as working in engineering, medicine, food service, or the not-for-profit sector. All participants were required to answer this question. Ideally, there would have been a more even spread across fields in order to get a more honest reflection of the entire surrounding community. Although not all fields were represented, and those that were, were represented at a disproportion, data was still received from six different sectors of the local community.

Prior to receiving results, this writer hypothesized that responses provided by participants regarding their definition of creativity would be impacted significantly by their gender, field of work, age, and years of service. Reviewing a random sample of responses, a male, in between the ages of 32-38 with 5-10 years as a human resource professional within the entertainment industry defined creativity as “outside-of-the-box ingenuity and problem solving”. A female, in between the ages of 46-52, with 11-20 years working in an “other” field, defined creativity as “...coming up with a new way to be innovative”. A female, in between the ages of 25-31, with less than five years of experience that works in business and finance defined creativity as “the ability to think uniquely about different situation and find new solutions to problems”. These responses are different, but hold similar qualities to them, reflecting the attitudes towards creativity very positively overall.

After a baseline of demographics, as well as the personal responses on the definition of creativity, participants were asking a series of questions pertaining the interviewing and hiring of candidates with a creativity background.

When identifying new candidates, where do you most frequently find interview candidates?  
(Select ALL that Apply):

10 responses



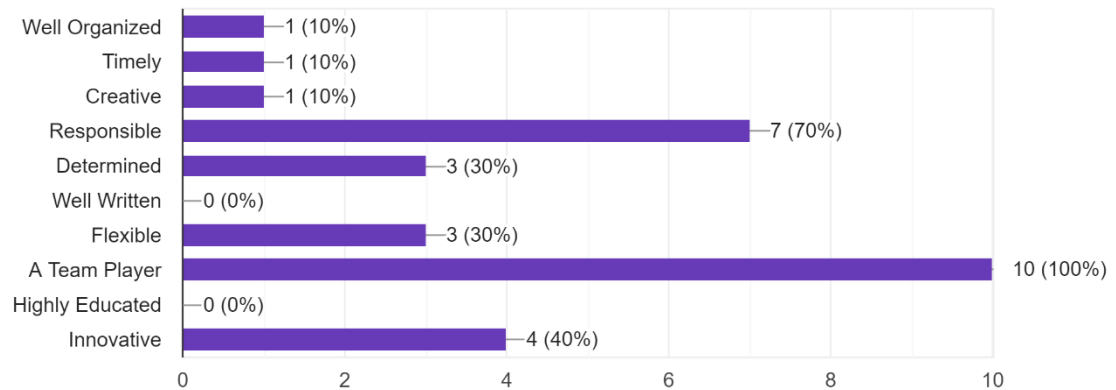
*Figure 5*

Of all of the responses to the question “When identifying new candidates, where do you most frequently find interview candidates? (Select ALL that Apply)”, all options were chosen except for newspaper job postings. The most popular selection was online job application sites with 80% of participants, followed by 60% using their company website. Fifty percent of participants reported utilizing LinkedIn to find potential candidates, while 40% of participants used employee referrals as a source. Looking at options with smaller numbers, 30% of participants received hand delivered resumes, 20% of participants received referrals from direct online communication and 10% of participants chose the “other” option to describe a source of potential candidates. This question was mandatory. This question was asked to gain a better understanding on where human resource professional look for potential candidates. It is important to understand where they look for candidates, as this gives specific insight to the reader on the most prominent places to apply when looking for work, regardless of field. Alternatively, the reader may chose to view the results and chose the “road less traveled”,

especially if they have the unique set of skills learned during creativity training. Dropping off resumes used to be prominent, the results support that this is no longer a frequent occurrence within this sample.

Please select the top THREE qualities below that you find to be HIGHLY valuable when interviewing a potential hire:

10 responses

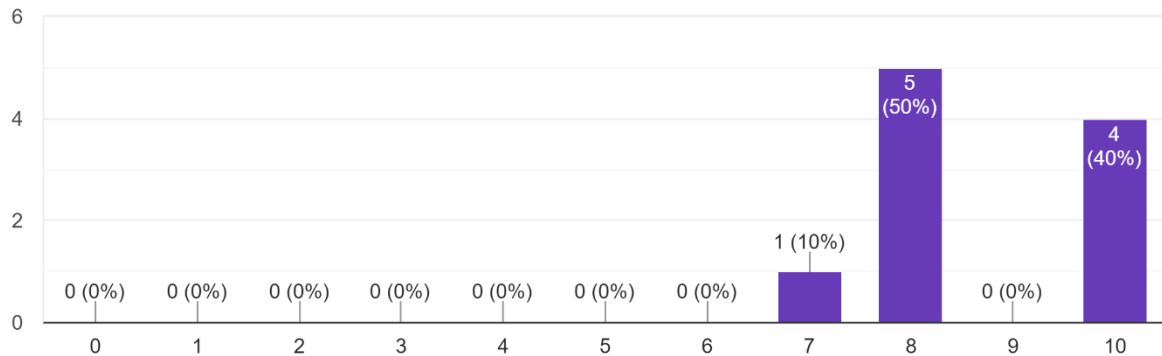


*Figure 6*

Participants were asked to select their top three qualities that they considered to be highly valuable for a potential hire. 100% of participants identified that new hires must be a team player. 70% felt that being responsible was important. 40% found innovative to be among their top-quality selection. Determined and flexible was each chosen by 30% of participants. Well organized and timely were each chosen by 10% of participants. Creative was chosen by 10% of participants. Highly educated and well written were not chosen amongst the highest qualities. This question was mandatory for all participants.

To what degree do you believe that creativity belongs in the workplace? (0 being not at all, 10 being all of the time)

10 responses



*Figure 7*

Participants were asked to identify to what degree they feel that creativity belongs in the workplace. This question utilized a Likert scale, with 0 being not at all and 10 being all of the time. 10% of participants chose 70% of the time, 50% of the participants chose 80% of the time, while 40% of participants chose 100% of the time.

The results of this question raise many concerns. When participants were asked which qualities they considered to be highly valuable when interviewing potential employees (Figure 6), only 10% of participants selected creative as a top skill. Observing the results from Figure 7, all participants thought that creativity would be useful in their place of work at least 70% of the time, where half found that creativity would be useful 80% of the time and 40% felt that creativity would be useful 100% of the time. There is a large disconnect between the results of Figure 6 and Figure 7.

When asked, why or why not, referring to participant's feelings on if creativity belongs in the workplace, all responses reflected positively on their feelings towards creativity. This question was mandatory for all participants. The responses were:

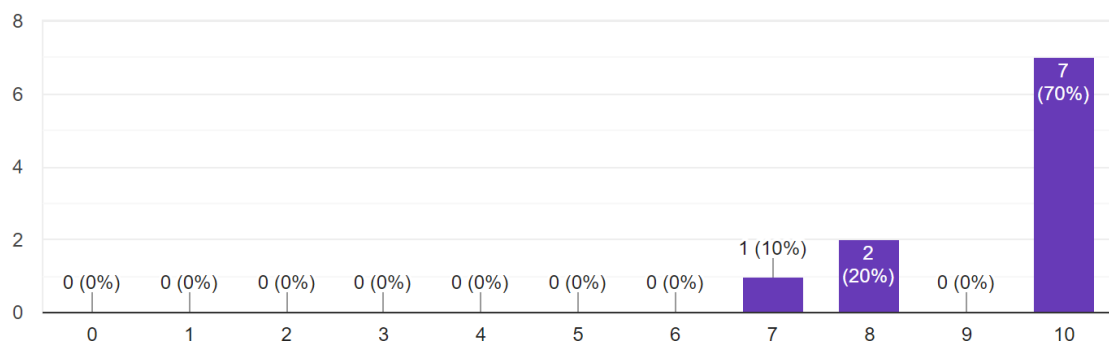
- “Creativity helps to find novel solutions to problems that most organizations face. If all employees had the same thought process, there would rarely be progress that leads to change.”
- “Because if we did not have creativity and the desire to try things differently, we would not evolve as human beings and we’d continue to do things because “that’s how it’s always been done.”
- “Candidates who are creative think outside the box and are likely really great problem solvers”
- “Depends on the workplace. Innovation is always helpful in getting things done.”
- “Creativity belongs in the workplace in most scenarios because it can be a driving force in bringing new and positive ideas to the workforce.”
- “Our entire business model is based on the idea that creativity matters. When you’re stagnant, you’re irrelevant.”
- “Without creativity, you will not have significant growth.”
- “Aspects of every role can be creative- from management to maintenance staff. People can always come up with faster or more cost-effective ways to do things based on past experiences.”
- “Creativity gives employees a sense of purpose and can increase productivity and teamwork.”

- “It is important to be creative to keep the workplace innovative. Being creative can simply just be open minded to others being creative.”

The above responses highlight the general good will towards creativity from this sample of participants. The submitted answers point to certain qualities participants felt that creativity holds. Innovation is among this list, as well as relevancy, positivity, problem solving, efficiency and change. All of these terms represent specific necessities for a successful business. A successful business must be innovative and relevant, while being able to make change and solve problems in an efficient and positive way. It is very possible that human resource professionals highly value aspects of creativity, but do not recognize them as creative functions.

Creative Problem Solving (CPS) involves clarifying a problem or challenge, ideating on solutions allow for all types of ideas while deferring judgement. CPS also includes developing possible solutions to the problem or challenge and then discovering ways to implement said solutions. To what degree do you feel that creative problem solving is a valuable skill for employees to have? (0 being not valuable at all, 10 being extremely valuable).

10 responses



*Figure 8*

The above figure represents the responses to the question “To what degree do you feel that creative problem solving is a valuable skill for employees to have? (0 being not valuable at all, 10 being extremely valuable).”. This question utilized a Likert scale with the values of 0-10.

Participants were required to respond to this question. Of the ten responses 10% of participants answered with a score of seven, while 20% of participants responded with score of eight. The overwhelming majority, 70% of individuals, responded with a score of ten, or extremely valuable. These scores reveal that human resource professionals highly value creative problem solving.

When asked about valuing creative problem solving, specifically why or why not, the participants gave a variety of responses:

- “It is important for coworkers and management to be creative when problem solving so the business and its employees can grow. Being creative and open minded can give a company the skills needed to succeed and grow.”
- “Every problem faced in a workplace is unique, and the ability to creatively solve problems is paramount in dealing with those unique issues.”
- “I believe it’s a valuable skill for employees because having that skill gives a fresh perspective of ideas for workplace goals or projects.”
- “Very valuable skill to have, especially if you aren’t closely managed- being able to come up with a way to solve problems in an “outside of the box” fashion is how progress can be made.”
- “Creative problem solving creates an environment that employees can help contribute to the bottom line, will feel more a part of the solution and organization.”
- “CPS is a valuable skill because you don’t have to micromanage employees. Giving the employee a chance at solving problems and making reasonable decisions will greatly help the workplace environment as well.”
- “Creativity allows you to be innovative and innovation allows for change and growth.”

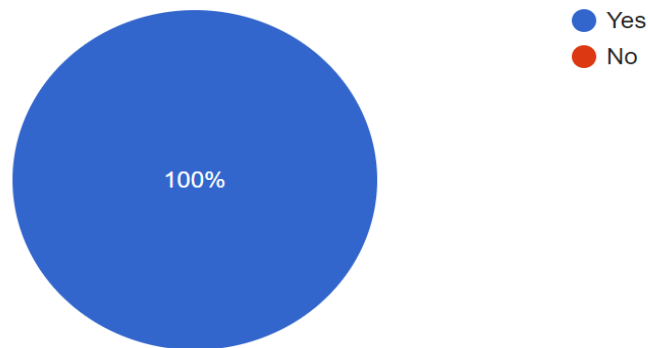


- “Standard solutions are not always the best solutions to problems. Sometimes out of the box solutions can be extremely beneficial to organizational problems.
- “It helps us think of solution.”
- “I believe an employee that is able to think out of the box is a valuable employee because they are able to use creative problem solving to bring about positive change.”

These responses highlight the need for Creative Problem Solving in the workplace regardless of the field. Participants highly valued Creative Problem solving for its ability to help with formulating solutions, find alternatives, or enact change. The promise of progress and the ability for employees to be autonomous works favorably for Creative Problem Solving. Responses also detailed the value of having the ability to think at a different tempo or from a different angle, considering the uniqueness to individual problems.

A candidate with an educational background in creativity will have received creativity training in the form of workshops, a Master’s certificate or a Master’s of Science Degree in Creativity. Students who receive these qualifications have been taught the science, practical applications and history of creativity. Would you consider hiring a candidate with an educational background in creativity?

10 responses



*Figure 9*

Figure 9 above represents the responses from participants after being asked “Would you consider hiring a candidate with an educational background in creativity?”. An educational background in creativity was defined as a successful completion of training workshops, a Master’s certificate or Master’s degree of Science in Creativity. It was explained that students who receive these qualifications have been taught the science, practical applications and history of creativity. 100% of the participants responded that yes, they would consider hiring a candidate with an educational background in creativity.

Participants were then asked why they would or would not consider hiring a candidate with an educational background in creativity. The responses are detailed below:

- “I am open to candidates with many backgrounds but being creative and open minded always stand out to me. Candidates that have a creativity background typically are eager to learn and open for change and growth opportunities.”
- “We generally focus on real-life experience and trends within education to make hiring decisions.”
- “They may be able to bring something different to the table compared to other candidates.”
- “Classroom education is always useful, but I would just as quickly hire someone without that education and life experience.”
- “Creative thinkers are open to learning. Coming in with an open mind and then would be able to offer suggestions for improvement once the role is learned.”
- “Yes, someone with this background can help create a better workplace environment.”

- “I would because they are going to offer a skill set that someone who does not see things differently than the average person does.”
- “Degrees such as these are multifaceted and provide a wide array of knowledge that can be applied in many capacities. An applicant with this type of education background would likely be able to adapt to many different situations.”
- “Creativity is important for innovation.”
- “An employee with an education background in creativity would be a positive asset due to their ability to be innovative and problem solve in unique ways.”

Much like the responses to the other short answer questions within the survey, participants offered high regard for creativity, Creative Problem Solving and the creative professional. Here we see words like innovation, positivity, open, different, adaptable and unique. Every participant answered that they would consider hiring a creativity professional, truly highlighting the growing value of creative professionals in the surrounding area, across a variety of fields.

## SECTION V: KEY LEARNINGS

The primary intention of this project was to gain a better understanding of the current climate for creativity professionals. The project focused specifically on the opinions and thoughts of creativity professionals in a variety of fields. It was the hypothesis of this writer that there may have been a lack of understanding of the creativity profession, or that those with an educational background in creativity may not be considered for hire in specific fields.

My primary key learning from this project is that creativity is important in all professions. The results of the professionals surveyed showed that creativity, creative problem solving and a creative education is important to them. This is evidenced by the results shown when asking professionals to define creativity, to what degree they feel that creativity and Creative Problem Solving belongs in the workplace, and the responses to if the professionals would consider hiring a candidate with an educational background in creativity.

Additionally, I was surprised to see that only 10% of the professionals chose creativity as a top skill, but their responses to all other questions held creativity at a very high regard. Interestingly, the top three qualities chosen by the participants for potential hires was responsible, a team player and innovative. 100% of the participants chose being a team player as one of their top skills. Many of the qualities chosen for this question were based on qualities of a creative individual. Creative professionals themselves are known to be flexible, team players, innovative, determined, and responsible (Puccio et al., 2010; Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

I feel that it was helpful to define creativity, Creative Problem Solving and a creative education for the professionals. I do feel that the results reflected so favorably for creativity in the later portion of the survey because of the education the professionals received.

The original intention was to utilize Survey Monkey as the survey platform. This was not possible because of question and function limitations when using their free service. The survey was then transcribed to Google Survey. This worked very well. Google Survey provides a clear and easy to use platform when creating surveys. With regard to dissemination, Google provides an easy and secure and trusted link for participants to follow. When viewing results, Google automatically formulates charts, graphs, and lists for the survey owner, depending on the question. The survey owner can view the results in a summary, including all answers and responses, by individual question or by individual participant.

The utilization of a Likert scale also worked favorably. Participants were able to express their opinion in a more precise data through quantitative data. With that being said, the inclusion of qualitative data allowed for more depth of responses, deepening the understanding of the work climate.

Knowing the climate for creativity professionals is imperative. Much of this work was self-fulfilling as a trained creativity professional. After personally attending many interviews where I felt that the interviewer didn't understand creativity and the skills that a creativity professional possesses, I very much wished to understand on a greater scale what human resource professionals are looking for when interviewing.

### **Potential Changes**

There are several things that I would have done differently. I think that outreach to potential survey participants should have started earlier. I also feel that the initial outreach should have included a quick guide to creativity. I feel that this is necessary in order to provide a time of incubation for the professionals on their feelings and thoughts of creativity. When outreaching to

individual companies, I feel that further research was needed in order to address the participant by name during the initial and subsequent emails for the project. Individuals may have been more likely to respond if an email was addressed to them by name.

### **Project Limitations**

There are several limitations to this project due to the relatively small sample, along with a limited group of fields and age groups. Further research is needed to understand the surrounding area's professional climate for creativity professionals. The project may also have faced limitations due to the COVID19 pandemic. Further exploration is needed for research on an individual basis to understand if specific professionals, age groups of those with a certain amount of experience hold specific attitudes towards creativity.

## **SECTION VI: CONCLUSIONS**

### **New Knowledge**

I have learned much about creativity and change leadership during this process. I have gained a deeper understanding of creativity and its place in the workforce. From being a student of creativity, I had an understanding of the value of creativity in the workplace for its practical application. What I didn't have was the understand of how human resource professionals viewed creativity from an education level. I had made assumptions that many human resource professionals may not understand the value of an education in creativity, or the attributes of a creative individual. Fortunately, the data has proven otherwise. I have learned that professional's value some of the top skills of a change leader, being a team player and being responsible. Through my reading I learned of the ever-growing need for creativity in the workforce, and even now, with our community facing a pandemic, the need for creative thinking continues to grow.

### **Future Work**

What I see myself doing next is further reviewing literature in the field as well as in the field of human resources. I would like to compare the literature to find commonalities as well as any extreme differences. I will look for differences in teachings and methods as well as similarities that may shape the current work climate for creative professionals.

If future work is to be done on this topic, further research is needed. Research must include a larger sample and a more robust evaluation system. The research should not utilize a sample of convenience and should instead make an effort to do a random sampling of the community from each different employment sector.

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## APPENDIX A

### Master's Project Survey

**Your Gender:** Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_ Other/ Prefer not to Say: \_\_\_\_

**Your Age Range:**

18-24 years \_\_\_\_

53-59 years \_\_\_\_

25- 31 years \_\_\_\_

60-65 years \_\_\_\_

32-38 years \_\_\_\_

Above 65 years \_\_\_\_

39-45 years \_\_\_\_

Prefer not to say \_\_\_\_

46- 52 years \_\_\_\_

**Years of Experience Working in Human Resources, in ANY Capacity:**

Less than five years \_\_\_\_

21-30 years \_\_\_\_

5-10 years \_\_\_\_

More than 30 years \_\_\_\_

11-20 years \_\_\_\_

**Years of Experience Acting as Recruiter:**

Less than five years \_\_\_\_

21-30 years \_\_\_\_

5-10 years \_\_\_\_

More than 30 years \_\_\_\_

11-20 years \_\_\_\_

**Creativity is defined as something that is both novel and useful. Using one sentence, what is your personal definition of creativity?**

**Field of Work (Select All that Apply):**

Education \_\_\_\_\_

Retail \_\_\_\_\_

Business/ Finance \_\_\_\_\_

Food Service \_\_\_\_\_

Technology \_\_\_\_\_

Entertainment \_\_\_\_\_

Engineering \_\_\_\_\_

Not for Profit \_\_\_\_\_

Medicine \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**When identifying new candidates, where do you most frequently find interview candidates? (Select ALL that Apply):**

Newspaper Job Postings \_\_\_\_\_

Professional Websites (LinkedIn) \_\_\_\_\_

You Company Website \_\_\_\_\_

Hand Delivered Resumes \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Referrals \_\_\_\_\_

Direct Online Communication \_\_\_\_\_

Online Job Application Sites \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Please select the top *THREE* qualities below that you find to be *HIGHLY* valuable when interviewing a potential hire (Select *ALL* that Apply):**

Well organized \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible \_\_\_\_\_

Timely \_\_\_\_\_

Determined \_\_\_\_\_

Creative \_\_\_\_\_

Well Written \_\_\_\_\_

Flexible \_\_\_\_\_

Highly Educated \_\_\_\_\_

A Team Player \_\_\_\_\_

Innovative \_\_\_\_\_

**To what degree do you believe that creativity belongs in the workplace? (0 being not at all, 10 being all of the time)**

0 ----- 10

**Why or why not?**

**Creative Problem Solving (CPS) involves clarifying a problem or challenge, ideating on solutions allow for all types of ideas while deferring judgement. CPS also includes developing possible solutions to the problem or challenge and then discovering ways to implement said solutions.**

**To what degree do you feel that creative problem solving is a valuable skill for employees to have?**

0 ----- 10

**Why or why not?**

**A candidate with an educational background in creativity will have received creativity training in the form of workshops, a Master's certificate or a Master's of Science Degree in Creativity. Students who receive these qualifications have been taught the science, practical applications and history of creativity.**

**Would you consider hiring a candidate with an educational background in creativity?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

**Why or why not?**

Sample Email

Dear ...

I hope that this email and the enclosed link finds you well. My name is Emily Leminger (Cook, if I am using LinkedIn, as my married name is reflected on my profile) and I am a current graduate student at SUNY Buffalo State, completing my Master's Project within the Creative Studies Program. The Creative Studies program teaches a wide variety of leadership and creativity skills, including creative problem solving and creativity training, along with instructional content in change leadership. While receiving my education, I have taken a keen interest into the human resource field, with a focus on creativity in the workplace, specifically within Buffalo and the surrounding are. I am writing to you with the hopes that yourself, and/or the recruiters and HR professionals within your office would take the time to fill out this short and anonymous survey for my project. Once completed and approved, the data I receive will be analyzed and published within my project, available within the Buffalo State Creativity Archives. The survey asks a small amount of demographic questions, and asks about recruiter attitudes regarding general employability, as well as creativity. The survey is completely anonymous and is included within this message. The link below will take you to Survey Monkey where you will be asked to complete a series of questions.

If there are any questions or concerns, I am available via phone at 716-997-0472 or email at

[lemingea01@mail.buffalostate.edu](mailto:lemingea01@mail.buffalostate.edu)

Sincerely,

Emily Leminger

(Cook)

## Organizations to Survey:

### **Medical:**

General Physicians PC: Personal Connection

Neighborhood Health Center: LinkedIn

Landmark Health: Personal Connection

Dent Neurologic Institute:

ekaufman@dentinstitutute.org

Winning Smiles:

32007@nadentalgroup.com

GBAUHN: LinkedIn

### **Hospitality:**

Millennium Hotels: LinkedIn

Delaware North: LinkedIn

### **Education:**

EduKids Early Childhood Centers: LinkedIn

West Seneca Central Schools:

bjohnson@wscschools.org

### **Food:**

Sodexo: LinkedIn

General Mills: LinkedIn

Rich Products: LinkedIn

Perry's Ice Cream: LinkedIn

SPOT Coffee: [talk2us@spotcoffee.com](mailto:talk2us@spotcoffee.com)

Perks Buffalo: [events@perksbuffalo.com](mailto:events@perksbuffalo.com)

### **Business:**

Benderson Development: LinkedIn

New Era Cap: LinkedIn

AdPro Sports: [info@adprosports.com](mailto:info@adprosports.com)

Carmina Wood Morris: [pstraitiff@cwm-ae.com](mailto:pstraitiff@cwm-ae.com)

CP Staffing:

[ComputerPeople@cpstaffing.com](mailto:ComputerPeople@cpstaffing.com)

Performance Management Partners:

[ebarber@performancepros.net](mailto:ebarber@performancepros.net)

Turner Construction Co: [tgerlach@NO-](mailto:tgerlach@NO-)

[SPAM.com](mailto:SPAM.com)

The Martin Group: LinkedIn

Green Clean Team- Personal Connection

**Technology:**

I Evolve: [jobs@i-evolve.com](mailto:jobs@i-evolve.com)

**Finance:**

Ogorek Wealth Management:

[prosper@ogorek.com](mailto:prosper@ogorek.com)

BankOnBuffalo: LinkedIn

**Entertainment**

Shea's Buffalo: [wpatti@sheas.org](mailto:wpatti@sheas.org)

The Kavinoky Theatre: [odonnell@dyc.edu](mailto:odonnell@dyc.edu)



## Figures

What is your gender?

10 responses

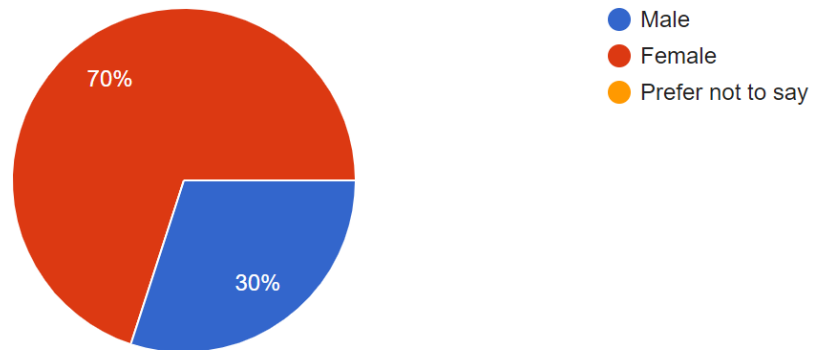


Figure 1

What is your age range?

10 responses

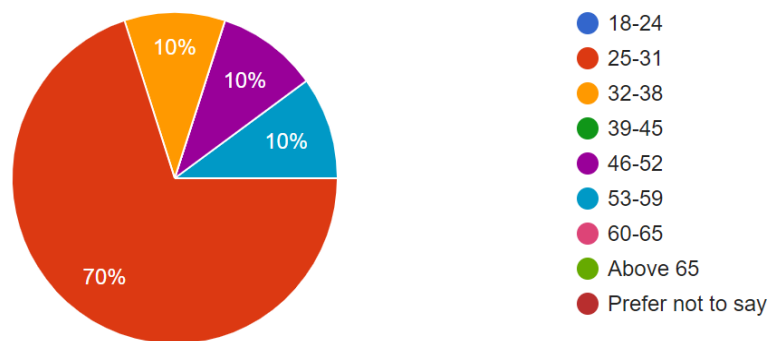


Figure 2

## Years of Experience Working in Human Resources, in ANY Capacity:

10 responses

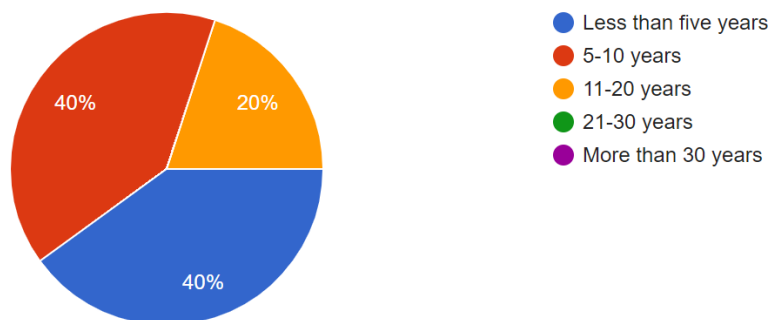


Figure 3

## Field of Work (Select All that Apply):

10 responses

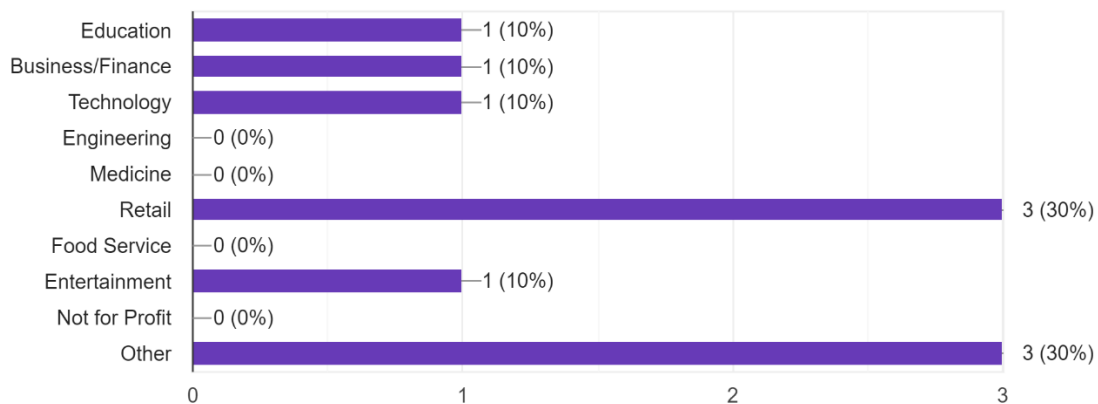


Figure 4

When identifying new candidates, where do you most frequently find interview candidates?  
(Select ALL that Apply):

10 responses

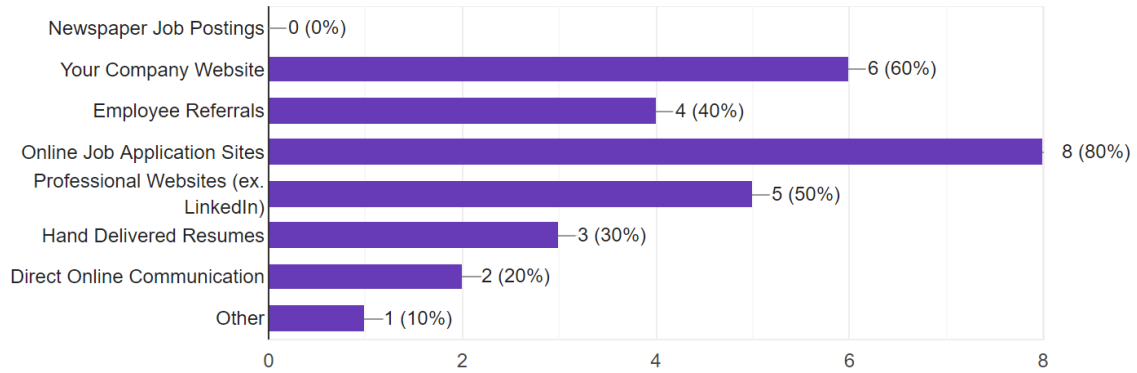


Figure 5

Please select the top THREE qualities below that you find to be HIGHLY valuable when interviewing a potential hire:

10 responses

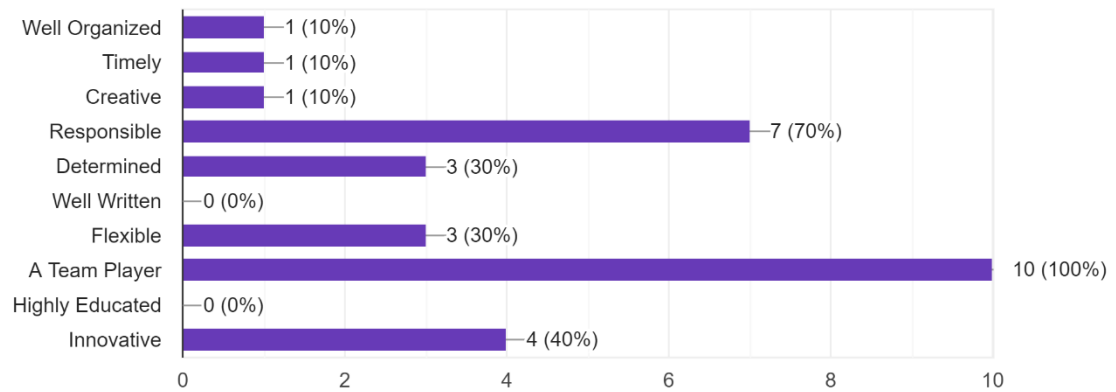


Figure 6

To what degree do you believe that creativity belongs in the workplace? (0 being not at all, 10 being all of the time)

10 responses

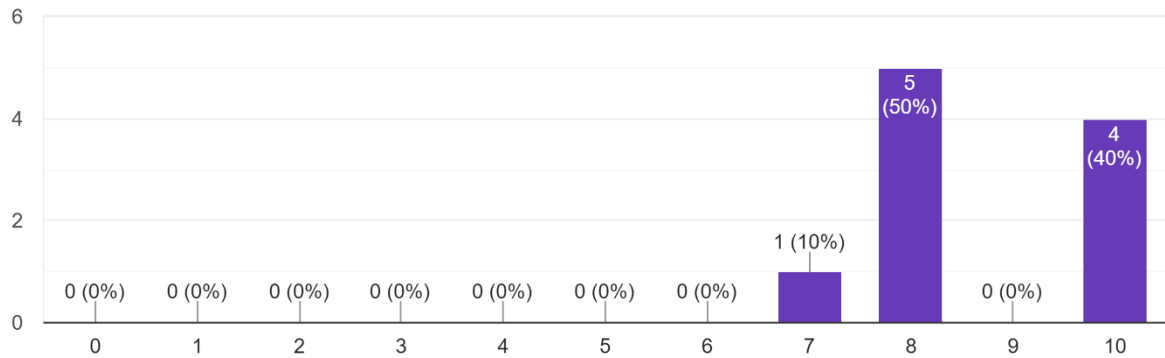


Figure 7

Creative Problem Solving (CPS) involves clarifying a problem or challenge, ideating on solutions allow for all types of ideas while deferring judgement. CPS also includes developing possible solutions to the problem or challenge and then discovering ways to implement said solutions. To what degree do you feel that creative problem solving is a valuable skill for employees to have? (0 being not valuable at all, 10 being extremely valuable).

10 responses

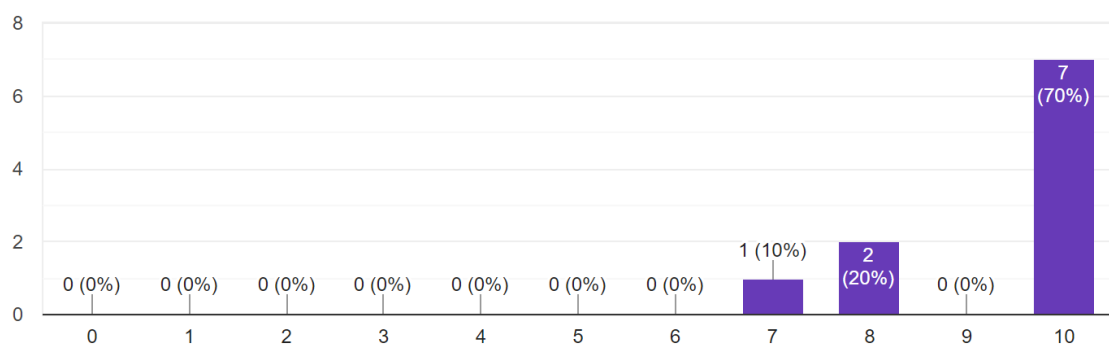


Figure 8



