

Jobs Are Changing: Human Resource Managers Require Job Applicants to Have Soft Skills As Employable Assets

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Advancements in technology have significantly impacted the way businesses operate, which has revealed a growing gap in the soft skills gained by students in business schools and those required by the marketplace. It has become apparent that business school graduates require more than the content knowledge specific to their disciplines to be good candidates when screened by Human Resource (HR) managers. The goal of this paper was to gain insights into the level of broader-skill instructions included in a business program from the perspective of students. This study included the development and administration of a survey that reported on each student's indirect assessment of being instructed on various job skills. The results suggested that, although major-specific skills were learned, business schools may not be giving enough attention to broader work skills, especially in the areas of emotional intelligence and multi-disciplinary backgrounds. Based on these results, recommendations and a proposed model for program improvements/considerations are presented that institutions can use to ensure graduates possess the work skills required by modern industry.

Keywords: business education, job skills, soft skills, program development

INTRODUCTION

Joan and Walter, who were recent graduate students, were now on the job market and happen to be in the same restaurant at the same time.

Joan: "Walter, I was going to give you a call, what an opportunity for us to be in the same place at the same time."

Walter: "Yes Joan, I had it on my calendar to call you. Let's find a table, this one is available. I wanted to ask if you had any luck with finding a job?"

Joan: "Walter, it has not been good thus far. How about you?"

Walter: "Same for me. The interview starts off really good, and then it goes downhill when I am asked questions that are outside my job specialty."

Joan: “I know, I was asked about my emotional intelligence experience and encounters, and stumbled for responses. What is going on?”

This type of encounter has become common as students graduate from college and enter the workforce. Although the costs of higher education have continued to increase, the value that students receive and job preparedness have at times been questioned. Whereas both Joan and Walter felt well prepared regarding the technical aspects of their majors, they did not know how to respond to questions about broader work skills such as emotional intelligence. Liz Bernier, a Human Resource (HR) reporter, has pointed out that the skills employers want are changing at a rapid pace. It could be said that the soft or non-cognitive skills are now the skills that HR managers look for when hiring potential employees (Bernier, 2016). As the functions of new employees has evolved to include more interpersonal and cross-disciplinary roles, higher educational programs need to evolve to better meet the needs of modern industry.

OPINIONS IN THE LITERATURE

These changes in desired job skills have been caused by the rapid pace of technological advances, shifting organizational structures and workplace cultures, and the need for multidisciplinary backgrounds. Employees are expected to fit into group norms and the organization’s culture. Senior management expects employees to become potential leaders and team developers; they must practice the group norms that provide guidelines for how to react constructively to the behavior of coworkers. Norms are consistent components of organizational culture. This culture consists of values and beliefs of the organization that guide employee’s actions. Therefore, employee attitudes and soft skills play an important role in influencing one’s ability to be successful in the workplace (Du Brin, 2017).

Graduating seniors are excited to embark on a career path with the confidence that their earned degrees will be an added attraction to HR managers. However, there is a component of education that is rarely thought about and is often outside the discipline-specific technical knowledge obtained to earn a degree. Employment positions in growing industries are competitive and technical job skills may not be enough for success in the interviewing process because HR managers will also be inquiring about each job applicant’s soft skills. When HR managers need to fill a position, they are aware of the applicant’s technical skills. However, the soft skills of an applicant have become the separating factor between an average applicant and a great prospective employee. Whereas an organization can train employees the specific technical skills required for a given job, the necessary soft skills are exceptionally more difficult to teach (Brooks, 2019). Brooks (2019) suggests that HR managers consider the following skills in the hiring process: communication, time management, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, emotional intelligence, digital literacy, and initiative.

It is becoming clear that, if a graduating senior is seeking to attend graduate school or planning on proceeding right into the world of work, employer surveys continually emphasize the need for key skills such as the right attitude. A positive attitude relates to punctuality, flexibility, verbal communication, and the ability to behave as a professional. Ensuring that business school graduates possess these traits is critical as many employers indicated that they had not hired younger applicants because they lacked the right attitude (UCAS, 2020).

Bortz (n.d.) indicates that any graduate who is curious as to what skills are needed to get a job should look beyond the technical skills of PowerPoint, Excel, or PhotoShop; employers often care more about soft skills. He interviewed Kathy Robinson, a former entry-level recruiter and the founder of the career coaching firm Turning Point, who suggested that employers can teach hard skills and are more concerned about whether a job applicant has the right attitude along with other soft skills. Bortz (n.d.) highlights a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) that found nearly every HR professional who took part in the SHRM survey (97%) agreed that dependability and reliability are very important skills of employees. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the surveyed employers ranked integrity as important. A noticeable high of 84% of surveyed employers reported that the soft skill of respect was

extremely important. SHRM concluded that 83% of surveyed HR managers indicated that teamwork is a top priority to facilitate the ability to work effectively with others. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the HR managers who participated in the SHRM survey indicated that an employee must understand and anticipate a customer's needs (Bortz, n.d.; Society for Human Resource Management, 2016).

Graduates and those employed who are looking to transition to a new job need to be aware that soft skills are in demand, although it is natural for those seeking work to focus solely on the advancement of their technical or hard skills. These job seekers must be mindful that, as advancing technology is blended into the work environment, soft skills are becoming more important than ever. Interestingly most skills (hard and soft) need updating over time, while there are certain core soft skills that remain relevant as they are flexible in nature and applicable to a variety of jobs. Hard technical skill needs are changing at a rapid pace and companies are struggling to find talent due to the impact of automation, whereby soft skills are of greatest value and the most difficult for employers to find (Bizcommunity, 2019).

On the one hand, employers do expect potential employees to have certain skills and, these skills are well documented. On the other hand, skills that potential employees believe employers want are not as well known. Griffin et al. (2014) conducted a survey among college students and employers that found communication, strong work ethic, ability to work in a team, initiative, and dedication as important soft skills for employers.

Ahmad and Pesch (2017) conducted a survey of undergraduate and MBA students to assess their understanding of skills that employers considered most important for recent graduates. The survey revealed that traditional MBA students must become aware that HR professionals and employers felt the following skills to be most important: honesty, strong work ethic, interpersonal skills, relating with others when part of a team, professionalism, etiquette, creativity, and analytical skills. In addition, both graduate and undergraduate students must be flexible and detail oriented.

The job roles to be carried out within a company and the skills needed are influenced by the job requirements of the employer. A study conducted by Raybould and Sheedy (2005) indicated some consensus of opinion on the importance of transferable and employability skills, especially for management positions. This is an indication that employers are looking for vital soft skills in their employees. These soft skills are evaluated as vital rather than degree-specific knowledge. HR managers value good evidence of an ability to cope with uncertainty, deal with pressure, and conduct action planning activities. In addition, communication and technology skills coincide with networking and team building, exploring and creating opportunities, building self-confidence, management skills, and a willingness to learn.

It has become evident that employers have raised some concern that the level of preparedness of business school graduates falls short and lacks the required skills needed for job success (Ahmad and Pesch, 2017). HR managers seem to continually point out that college graduates lack the needed soft skills or competencies required for optimal job performance. There is a soft skill gap that the HR managers need to close in order for graduates to maintain on-the-job success, or to even attain employment in the first place.

Ironically, although enough of those in higher education agree there is a problem, very little has been done to close this critical gap in job preparedness skills. It is now evident that soft skills are becoming as valuable as hard skills in the evolving needs of industry. It seems that the soft skills are especially important within the global marketplace. Research is beginning to indicate that college graduates believe they are highly qualified in their soft skills. Regardless of what graduates think of their soft skills qualifications, the gap between what employer wants are, and what these graduates actually bring to the workplace, the gap remains (Stewart et al., 2020).

METHOD

As previously discussed in this paper, there appears to be a disconnect in the types of skills possessed by recent graduates of business programs and those skills required by the marketplace. This research

effort included the development and administration of a survey aimed at gauging the student's indirect assessment of a broad range of industry-desired job skills. The surveys asked the question of:

Have you had a course that provided Comprehensive Instruction on how to apply any of the following topics?

1. *Problem Solving*
2. *Critical Thinking*
3. *Time Maintenance*
4. *Leadership*
5. *Team Building*
6. *Emotional Intelligence*
7. *Human Relations*
8. *Human Resource Management*
9. *Multidisciplinary Background*
10. *Collaboration*

Each question was to be answered either “yes”, “partially”, or “no instruction.” Students also had the opportunity to provide additional supporting details such as their concentration of study and which course(s) they may have received the respective instruction. This survey was administered to undergraduate students studying in a business school at a private comprehensive institution located in the northern region of the United States of America.

A total of 104 undergraduate students responded to this survey. The results were grouped into the following disciplinary categories: Accounting (9 students); Management (30 students); Marketing (13 students); Management & Marketing (dual concentration; 9 students); Finance / Economics / Real Estate (20 students); Business (Undeclared; 15 students); and Non-Business (8 students).

It should be noted that some of these major discipline categories consisted of focused concentrations. The 30 Management students included the following five concentrations: Management (21 students); Small Business Management & Entrepreneurship (5 students); Leadership & Organizational Development (2 students); Management & Decision Sciences (1 student); and Management & Psychology (1 student). The 13 Marketing students included the following two concentrations: Marketing (12 students) and International Business (1 student). The nine Management & Marketing students included one who also was pursuing a Minor in Musical Theater. The 20 Finance / Economics / Real Estate students included the following five concentrations: Finance (15 students); Real Estate (1 student); Real Estate & Finance (2 students); Economics (1 student); and Finance & Economics (1 student). The eight Non-Business students included the following five concentrations: Health Science (1 student); History (1 student); Music Industry (2 students); Psychology (1 student); and Communications (3 students). This program breakdown information was collected to help gain additional insights into the background of each respondent.

RESULTS

The 104 survey responses were separated by concentration (Accounting; Management; Marketing; Management & Marketing; Finance / Economics / Real Estate; Business (Undeclared); and Non-Business) and analyzed based on the response (Yes; Partially; No Instruction) to each of the ten questions. These questions reported on each student's indirect assessment of being instructed on the following job skills: Problem Solving; Critical Thinking; Time Maintenance; Leadership; Team Building; Emotional Intelligence; Human Relations; Human Resource Management; Multidisciplinary Background; and Collaboration. The results of this analysis are included in **Table 1**. For each response, the results are reported as both a percentage of student responses and the number of student responses in parentheses.

**TABLE 1
STUDENT SURVEY OF JOB SKILLS RESULTS**

Concentration	Response	Problem Solving	Critical Thinking	Time Maintenance	Leadership	Team Building	Emotional Intelligence	Human Relations	Human Resource Management	Multidisciplinary Background	Collaboration
Accounting	Yes	66.7% (6)	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)
	Partially	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)
	No Instruction	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	66.7% (6)	66.7% (6)	77.8% (7)	55.6% (5)	66.7% (6)	77.8% (7)	55.6% (5)
Management	Yes	83.3% (25)	83.3% (25)	53.3% (16)	80.0% (24)	66.7% (20)	20.7% (6)	63.3% (19)	70.0% (21)	20.0% (6)	70.0% (21)
	Partially	16.7% (5)	16.7% (5)	43.3% (13)	20.0% (6)	26.7% (8)	51.7% (15)	26.7% (8)	23.3% (7)	53.3% (16)	26.7% (8)
	No Instruction	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	6.7% (2)	27.6% (8)	10.0% (3)	6.7% (2)	26.7% (8)	3.3% (1)
Marketing	Yes	53.8% (7)	76.9% (10)	53.8% (7)	53.8% (7)	53.8% (7)	15.4% (2)	30.8% (4)	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	58.3% (7)
	Partially	30.8% (4)	23.1% (3)	38.5% (5)	38.5% (5)	46.2% (6)	30.8% (4)	61.5% (8)	41.7% (5)	25.0% (3)	33.3% (4)
	No Instruction	15.4% (2)	0.0% (0)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	53.8% (7)	7.7% (1)	41.7% (5)	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)
Management & Marketing	Yes	88.9% (8)	88.9% (8)	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)
	Partially	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	55.6% (6)	44.4% (4)	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
	No Instruction	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)
Finance / Economics / Real Estate	Yes	75.0% (15)	70.0% (14)	30.0% (6)	30.0% (6)	40.0% (8)	25.0% (5)	20.0% (4)	15.8% (3)	5.3% (1)	47.4% (9)
	Partially	20.0% (4)	30.0% (6)	30.0% (6)	35.0% (7)	30.0% (6)	10.0% (2)	55.0% (11)	36.8% (7)	21.1% (4)	21.1% (4)
	No Instruction	5.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	40.0% (8)	35.0% (7)	30.0% (6)	65.0% (13)	25.0% (5)	47.4% (9)	73.7% (14)	31.6% (6)
Business (Undeclared)	Yes	66.7% (10)	60.0% (9)	40.0% (6)	60.0% (9)	46.7% (7)	26.7% (4)	66.7% (10)	50.0% (7)	28.6% (4)	42.9% (6)
	Partially	26.7% (4)	33.3% (5)	46.7% (7)	13.3% (2)	46.7% (7)	40.0% (6)	33.3% (5)	35.7% (5)	42.9% (6)	57.1% (8)
	No Instruction	6.7% (1)	6.7% (1)	13.3% (2)	26.7% (4)	6.7% (1)	33.3% (5)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (2)	28.6% (4)	0.0% (0)
Non-Business	Yes	62.5% (5)	100.0% (8)	50.0% (4)	50.0% (4)	75.0% (6)	50.0% (4)	37.5% (3)	25.0% (2)	37.5% (3)	75.0% (6)
	Partially	37.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	37.5% (3)	25.0% (2)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	50.0% (4)	25.0% (2)	25.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
	No Instruction	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (2)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)	37.5% (3)	25.0% (2)

Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

The analysis of these survey results suggested that the majority of students believed that they were adequately instructed in the areas of Problem Solving and Critical Thinking. For Problem Solving, the majority of students responded either “Yes” (73.1%) or “Partially” (21.2%). Only 5.8% (six out of 104 students) responded that they did not receive any instruction on “Problem Solving.” For Critical Thinking, the majority of students responded either “Yes” (76.9%) or “Partially” (21.2%). Only 1.9% (two out of 104 students) responded that they did not receive any instruction on Critical Thinking. The results for Problem Solving and Critical Thinking were consistent across each concentration category.

Time Maintenance

The majority of Management (53.3% “Yes”; 96.7% “Yes” or “Partially”), Marketing (53.8% “Yes”; 92.3% “Yes” or “Partially”), Management & Marketing (44.4% “Yes”; 77.7% “Yes” or “Partially”), and Non-Business (50.0% “Yes”; 86.5% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Time Maintenance.” However, a total of 66.7% of Accounting students indicated “No Instruction”, 70.0% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate responders indicated either “No Instruction” (40.0%) or “Partially” (30.0%), and 60.0% of the Business (Undeclared) responders indicated either “Partially” (46.7%) or “No Instruction” (13.3%) regarding instruction on “Time Maintenance.”

Leadership

The majority of Management (80.0% “Yes”; 100.0% “Yes” or “Partially”), Marketing (53.8% “Yes”; 92.3% “Yes” or “Partially”), Management & Marketing (55.6% “Yes”; 88.9% “Yes” or “Partially”), Business (Undeclared) (60.0% “Yes”; 73.3% “Yes” or “Partially”), and Non-Business (50.0% “Yes”; 75.5% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Leadership.” However, a total of 66.7% of Accounting students responded that they did not receive any instruction on “Leadership”, and 70.0% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate responders indicated either “No Instruction” (35.0%) or “Partially” (35.0%) regarding instruction on “Leadership.”

Team Building

The majority of Management (66.7% “Yes”; 93.4% “Yes” or “Partially”), Marketing (53.8% “Yes”; 100.0% “Yes” or “Partially”), Management & Marketing (44.4% “Yes”; 77.7% “Yes” or “Partially”), Finance / Economics / Real Estate (40.0% “Yes”; 70.0% “Yes” or “Partially”), Business (Undeclared) (46.7% “Yes”; 93.4% “Yes” or “Partially”), and Non-Business (75.0% “Yes”; 87.5% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Team Building.” However, 77.8% of the Accounting responders indicated either “No Instruction” (66.7%) or “Partially” (11.1%) regarding instruction on “Team Building.”

Emotional Intelligence

There were major gaps with respect to student perceived educational learning regarding “Emotional Intelligence.” Although the majority of Non-Business (50.0% “Yes”; 87.5% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Emotional Intelligence”, the results were less favorable for all other responders. A total of 88.9% of the Accounting responders (77.8% “No Instruction”; 11.1% “Partially”), 79.3% of the Management responders (51.7% “Partially”; 27.6% “No Instruction”), 84.6% of the Marketing responders (53.8% “No Instruction”; 30.8% “Partially”), 100.0% of the Management & Marketing responders (55.6% “Partially”; 44.4% “No Instruction”), 75.0% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate responders (65.0% “No Instruction”; 10.0% “Partially”), and 73.3% of the Business (Undeclared) responders (40.0% “Partially”; 33.3% “No Instruction”) indicated either “Partially” or “No Instruction” regarding instruction on “Emotional Intelligence.”

Human Relations

There were some gaps with respect to student perceived educational learning regarding “Human Relations.” The majority of Management (63.3% “Yes”; 90.0% “Yes” or “Partially”) and Business (Undeclared) (66.7% “Yes”; 100.0% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Human Relations.” However, 88.9% of the Accounting responders (55.6% “No Instruction”; 13.3% “Partially”), 69.2% of the Marketing responders (61.5% “Partially”; 7.7% “No Instruction”), 66.7% of the Management & Marketing responders (55.6% “Partially”; 11.1% “No Instruction”), 80.0% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate responders (55.0% “Partially”; 25.0% “No Instruction”), and 62.5% of the Non-Business responders (50.0% “Partially”; 12.5% “No Instruction”) indicated either “Partially” or “No Instruction” regarding instruction on “Human Relations.”

Human Resource Management

There were some gaps with respect to student perceived educational learning regarding “Human Resource Management.” The majority of Management (70.0% “Yes”; 93.3% “Yes” or “Partially”) and Business (Undeclared) (50.0% “Yes”; 85.7% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Human Resource Management.” However, 77.8% of the Accounting responders (66.7% “No Instruction”; 11.1% “Partially”), 83.4% of the Marketing responders (41.7% “Partially”; 41.7% “No Instruction”), 66.6% of the Management & Marketing responders (44.4% “Partially”; 22.2% “No Instruction”), 84.2% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate (47.4% “No Instruction”; 36.8% “Partially”), 75.0% of the Non-Business responders (50.0% “No Instruction”; 25.0% “Partially”) indicated either “Partially” or “No Instruction” regarding instruction on “Human Resource Management.”

Multidisciplinary Background

There were major gaps with respect to student perceived educational learning regarding “Multidisciplinary Background.” The majority of Marketing (41.7% “Yes”; 66.7% “Yes” or “Partially”) and Non-Business (37.5% “Yes”; 62.5% “Yes” or “Partially”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Multidisciplinary Background.” However, 88.9%

of the Accounting responders (77.8% “No Instruction”; 11.1% “Partially”), 80.0% of the Management responders (53.3% “Partially”; 26.7% “No Instruction”), 88.9% of the Management & Marketing responders (66.7% “Partially”; 22.2% “No Instruction”), 94.8% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate responders (73.7% “No Instruction”; 21.1% “Partially”), and 71.5% of the Business (Undeclared) responders (42.9% “Partially”; 28.6% “No Instruction”) indicated either “Partially” or “No Instruction” regarding instruction on “Multidisciplinary Background.”

Collaboration

There were some gaps with respect to student perceived educational learning regarding “Collaboration.” The majority of Management (70.07% “Yes”; 96.7% “Yes” or “Partially”), Marketing (58.3% “Yes”; 91.6% “Yes” or “Partially”), Management & Marketing (55.6% “Yes”; 88.9% “Yes” or “Partially”), Business (Undeclared) (42.9% “Yes”; 100.0% “Yes” or “Partially”), and Non-Business (75.0% “Yes”) majors responded either “Yes” or “Partially” with respect to receiving any instruction on “Collaboration.” However, the results were less favorable for the remaining respondents. A total of 55.6% of the Accounting responders indicated “No Instruction” (the remaining 44.5% indicated “Yes”) regarding instruction on “Collaboration.” A total of 52.7% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate responders indicated either “No Instruction” (31.6%) or “Partially” (21.1%) regarding instruction on “Collaboration.” A total of 57.1% of the Business (Undeclared) responders indicated “Partially” regarding instruction on “Collaboration.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of these survey results revealed areas of program success as well as opportunities for improvement. These results can be used to help institutions make program modifications that will better prepare graduates for success in the marketplace.

All concentrations reported successful achievement of the Problem Solving and Critical Thinking job skills. Although the manner in which these particular job skills were addressed may differ depending on the major discipline, each program has successfully included these areas in its curriculum. The Management, Management & Marketing, and Business (Undeclared) concentrations indicated that each of the ten job skills were successfully assessed with the majority of all responses categorized as either “Yes”, “Partially”, or a combination of “Yes” and “Partially.” The Management program provides the deepest instruction of soft skills topics within the business school, so this result is consistent with its program goals. The Non-Business majors performed well in most of the job skills areas except for Human Resource Management and Multidisciplinary Background. These students are from liberal arts disciplines and are exposed to a broad range of subjects that translate well to marketable job skills. It makes sense that Human Resource Management skills would be lacking in these Non-Business students as this area is very specific to the Management concentration.

The most revealing discipline-specific gaps occurred withing the Accounting, Marketing, and Finance / Economics / Real Estate concentrations. The Accounting students reported “No Instruction” as the majority of responses for the areas of Time Maintenance, Leadership, Team Building, Emotional Intelligence, Human Relations, Human Resource Management, Multidisciplinary Background, and Collaboration. This result could be a due to the rigidity of the Accounting program requirements, which do not have as much credit flexibility and need to meet the needs of state Certified Public Accountant (CPA) licensure prerequisites.

The Marketing students reported “No Instruction” as the majority of responses for Emotional Intelligence, Human Resource Management, and Multidisciplinary Background. The Finance / Economics / Real Estate students reported “No Instruction” as the majority of responses for Time Maintenance, Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Human Resource Management, and Multidisciplinary Background. Although a desired job skill in the marketplace, similar to the Non-Business students, a course in Human Resource Management is not required for Marketing or Finance / Economics / Real Estate students.

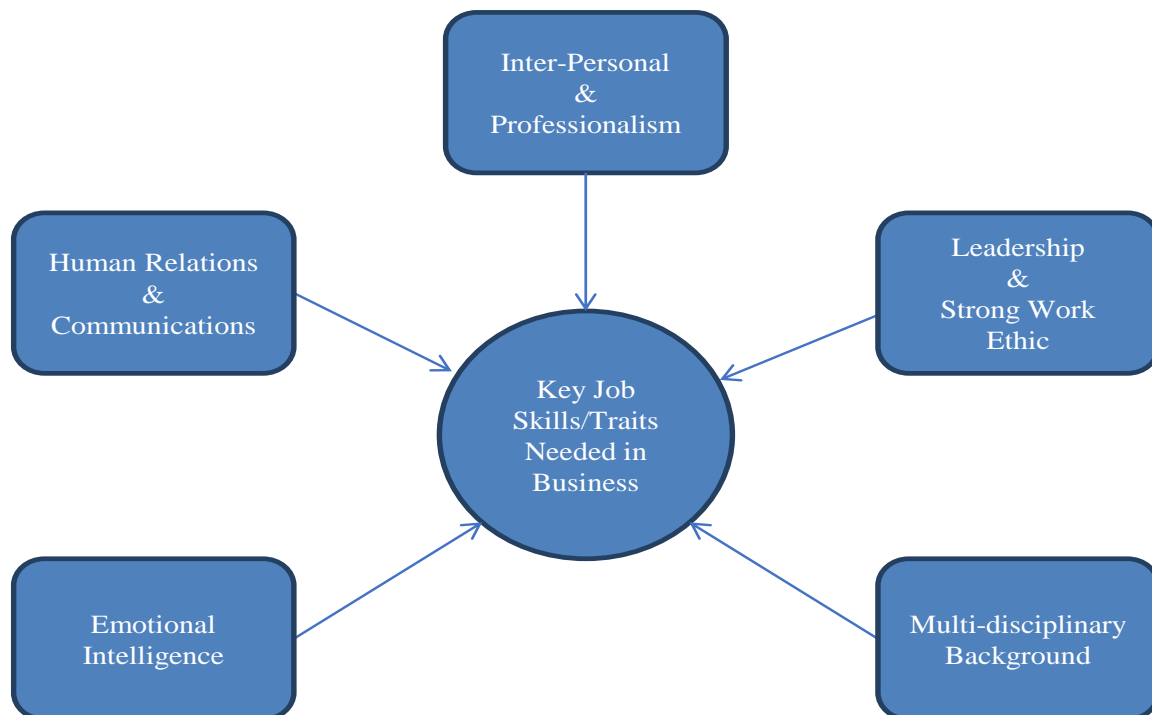
The most significant job skills gaps were in the areas of Emotional Intelligence and Multidisciplinary Background. The Emotional Intelligence survey results indicated that 77.8% of the Accounting, 53.8% of the Marketing, and 65.0% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate students had “No Instruction” as the majority of the responses. Non-Business was the only major that had “Yes” as the majority of the responses at 50.0%. The Multidisciplinary Background survey results indicated that 77.8% of the Accounting and 73.7% of the Finance / Economics / Real Estate students had “No Instruction” as the majority of the responses. Marketing was the only major that had “Yes” as the majority of the responses at 41.7%. Because it is important that graduates possess emotional intelligence and are able to work on multidisciplinary projects, this gap should be addressed in the existing business program. If new courses are not able to be integrated into a program, then faculty should better infuse these critical job skills into existing courses where appropriate.

Based on the results of this survey study and the evolving needs of industry, business schools should consider the following to improve student job preparedness skills:

- Encourage that free electives be used to take courses such as Human Resource Management, Human Relations, Human Growth & Development, Leadership, and Team Development.
- Develop and promote minors in HR Management, Leadership, Team Building & Leadership, and Human Relations in Organizations.
- Provide opportunities for independent study courses rich in soft skills such as Emotional Intelligence, Collaborations, and Labor Relations & Negotiations.
- Accept an internship in any behavioral focused job.
- Explore the basic skills needed for Conflict Resolution.
- Integrate as many of the broad job skills explored in this paper into existing required courses.

A summary of key basic job skills and traits required to satisfy the needs of modern business is included in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1
KEY JOB SKILLS/TRAITS NEEDED IN BUSINESS**



This research effort helped to identify gaps between job skills desired by industry and the student perceptions of achievement across a wide range of business disciplines. Future research studies could be conducted with more extensive sampling across multiple business schools to test the statistical significance of these results and better gauge whether this is an institution-specific finding or common within higher education. This study also was performed from the student's perspective. Follow-up research could involve developing a survey for employers to get their impressions of entry-level employees and determine if they are consistent with the student results.

The ultimate goal is to generate information that can be used throughout higher education to continually improve academic programs that better meet the evolving needs of industry.

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