

What Do Employers Want?

The Candidate Skills and Qualities Employers Want

While students may think that choosing the “right” major is key to getting a good job, the reality is long-term professional success will depend far more on acquiring the right skills for a rapidly changing workplace. Students often ask us what ARE these skills and qualities that employers are looking for in new hires. Often times they are quite surprised to discover that they already possess many of them! Skills gained through class projects, internships, volunteer work, on-campus and/or summer jobs, as well as through participation in student organizations and intramural sports translate perfectly to the skills recruiters are looking for in college grads. When it comes to the importance of candidate skills and qualities, employers are looking for team players who can solve problems, organize their work, and communicate effectively, according to results of a new survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Employers responding to NACE’s *Job Outlook 2014* survey rated “ability to work in a team structure,” “ability to make decisions and solve problems,” “ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work,” and “ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization” as the most important candidate skills/qualities. (See Figure 1.) These are followed by candidates’ “ability to obtain and process information” and “ability to analyze quantitative data.”

However, possessing the skills and qualities that employers seek is only half the battle. They want to hear evidence of the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace in the

college students they’re recruiting. It is one thing to have the skillset but it’s quite another to be able to effectively communicate how the skills they possess can contribute and add value to an organization. Employers report that UCSB students are average at best at communicating their skills and qualities verbally. Meeting with one of our talented career counselors to learn how to do this effectively can make all the difference in landing a job.

Figure 1: Employers rate the importance of candidate skills/qualities

Skill/Quality	Weighted average rating*
Ability to work in a team structure	4.55
Ability to make decisions and solve problems	4.50
Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work	4.48
Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization	4.48
Ability to obtain and process information	4.37
Ability to analyze quantitative data	4.25
Technical knowledge related to the job	4.01
Proficiency with computer software programs	3.94
Ability to create and/or edit written reports	3.62
Ability to sell or influence others	3.54

*5-point scale, where 1=Not at all important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; and 5=Extremely important

Source: *Job Outlook 2014*, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Starting Salaries Rise for the Class of 2013

As the job market for new college graduates improves, starting salaries are improving, too. The average starting salary for a new college graduate earning a bachelor’s degree is \$45,327—up 2.4 percent over the average starting salary earned by members of the Class of 2012, according to the September 2013 NACE Salary Survey. Overall, salary increases are evident in all disciplines except computer science. Here’s how that plays out for new grads:

Average Salaries by Discipline			
	2013 Average Salary	2012 Average Salary	Percent Change
Business	\$55,635	\$51,541	7.9%
Communications	\$43,835	\$42,286	3.7%
Computer Science	\$58,547	\$60,038	-2.5%
Education	\$40,337	\$39,080	3.2%
Engineering	\$62,062	\$60,639	2.3%
Humanities & Social Sciences	\$37,791	\$36,824	2.6%
Math & Sciences	\$42,731	\$42,355	0.9%
Overall	\$45,327	\$44,259	2.4%

Source: September 2013 Salary Survey, National Association of Colleges and Employers, copyright holder.

The Importance of Networking

As you know, networking and making professional connections is important for career advancement. For some, networking comes easy, while for others it can be quite daunting. However, it’s imperative that your student gets out there, introduces themselves to others, and builds a professional network because it is one of the most important steps they can take to explore career options and lay the foundation for a successful job search. Reid Hoffman, co-founder and chairman of LinkedIn, put it best: “Build your professional network before you need it, so it’s of value when you do”. When you consider the fact that more than 60% of jobs are secured through personal or professional contacts, you’ll agree that it’s critical for students to invest in their network early and not wait until after graduation.

Today, there are more ways than ever for your student to take advantage of opportunities to network with potential employers and other recruiting professionals who can be key resources down the line. We live in the era of social networking, where interacting online has become a common way to interact with family and friends. But social networking holds equal promise for establishing important professional connections as well. More and more people are finding that social networking makes it easier to not only discover new career opportunities and connect with other professionals, but to establish a professional online presence. I’m sure you’re familiar with the online social networking scene and you might even have a profile on one or more networks yourself. While there are literally thousands of different social networking sites, LinkedIn has become an essential personal branding tool. This professional network site has morphed from simply an online résumé and networking site to a comprehensive personal branding resource.

Students can think of their LinkedIn profiles as interactive business cards. It’s a summary of their professional experience, interests, and capabilities designed to attract the attention of important people who are searching for them online -recruiters, networking contacts, and grad school admissions officers. Here are 8 ways students can create a powerful LinkedIn profile:

1. Display an appropriate photo

Remember LinkedIn is not Facebook. If you choose to post a photograph (and I recommend that you do), select a professional, high-quality headshot of you alone. Party photos or photos with friends don’t fit in the professional environment of LinkedIn. Better yet, stop by our LinkedIn Photo Booth to get a professional headshot taken for FREE at any one of our quarterly career fairs.

2. Create an informative headline

The headline is critical as it gives people a short, memorable way to understand who you are in a professional context. Think of it as the slogan for your professional brand. There are many ways to use the headline in your LinkedIn profile but I would recommend identifying your current status and indicating the industry you’re looking to get into.

Example: English major at UC Santa Barbara seeking public relations opportunities in the Los Angeles area. Graduating June 2014.



3. Write a professional summary statement

Your summary statement should resemble the first few paragraphs of your best-written cover letter- concise and confident about your goals and qualifications. This is a place to sell yourself within a few paragraphs. Respect the reader’s time when writing your profile by keeping it brief and to the point. Bullet points are great, too.

4. Show off your education

This is a great opportunity to beef up your profile by adding your major, minor, and any relevant courses you’ve taken in the industry you’re interested in. It’s also appropriate to include study abroad programs and summer institutes. Don’t be shy – your LinkedIn profile is an appropriate place to show off your strong GPA and any honors or awards you’ve received as well.

5. Add experiences that show your passions, work ethic, and leadership abilities

Even though you may have never had a professional job doesn’t mean you don’t have useful experiences to add in your online résumé. Along with on-campus and part-time jobs, think about any clubs or organizations you’ve been involved in, especially the ones you’ve held leadership roles in. List your role, what you did, and why you joined the organization.

6. Share your work

Enhance your profile by adding examples of your writing, design work, or other accomplishments. You can share examples of your work by including URLs that direct people to your About.me website, blog, or Twitter feed. You can even share a PowerPoint of a presentation you gave or store a downloadable version of your résumé. Companies like to see well-rounded individuals who give back to their communities, so make sure to list all the important volunteer work you’ve done as well.

7. List your skills that fit the job you’re looking for

There is a “Skills and Expertise” section on LinkedIn that allows you to add the subjects and skills you’re competent in. Don’t make the mistake of just writing keywords without doing research. You need to add the relevant skills that will attract the right kinds of recruiters filling jobs that you want.

8. Update your status regularly

Like Facebook, LinkedIn provides the opportunity to share what you’re currently up to. A great way to stay on other people’s radars and enhance your professional image is to update your status at least once a week. Tell people about professional events or student organization meetings you’re attending, major projects you’ve completed, or books and news articles you’ve read. Essentially, anything that you would share with someone at a networking event.

With a dynamic LinkedIn profile, your student can explore jobs, internships, and career paths, research companies, create a network of professionals, build a professional online brand, and find their career passion. Career Services offers a number of resources to help. Your student can pick up one of several “How to” handouts, attend a hands-on LinkedIn workshop, and get their profile critiqued by a career counselor. [Here are some terrific resource videos to help students understand the benefits of LinkedIn.](#)

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



For many of you, I’m sure you enjoyed having your student home for a few weeks over the holidays. Hopefully this gave you an opportunity to ask about how they are doing at UCSB and inquire about their classes, clubs, and internships. While I know your questions are usually asked in the spirit of caring and wanting them to be successful, it’s important to remember that your student may be experiencing some anxiety around all the decisions they will need to make regarding their futures.

Career is here to help ease that anxiety. We’ve got a jam-packed calendar of events and workshops lined up for winter quarter. Let’s begin with the highlights:

Winter Career Fair- Thursday, January 30, 2014

This big recruiting event is open to all students regardless of grade level or major. We’ve got an impressive list of employers already registered which include: Oracle, Enterprise Holdings, SanDisk, Verizon Wireless, Citrix Systems, Fisher Investments, Intel, Macy’s, Microsoft, UC Center Sacramento, Northrop Grumman, and many more. [See our Winter Fair page for a full list.](#)

We’ll also have several workshops and events in advance designed to help students prepare for making the most of this opportunity.

Focus On Internships- All Quarter Long

Experience is the one the most important things employers look for on a résumé. Without it, securing a job after graduation can be challenging. In our Focus on Internships series, we’ll provide tips and strategies for landing an internship while introducing a wide variety of internship opportunities available to students. This quarter, we’ll host internship panels in teaching, finance, professional communication, non-profits, law, science education, art/theater, and management & leadership. Students will also get an opportunity to learn about international internships through the Education Abroad Program and the UCDC Program. [See all winter quarter workshops and events.](#)

As always, we’re offering a lot of great opportunities to help your students plan for his/her future. But remember, career planning does not just happen in the final year of college. Encouraging your student to plan ahead and take advantage of all the resources offered here at Career Services can make all the difference in helping your student achieve success in their post-UCSB pursuits. We’re here to support your student as they embark on 2014.

Warmest regards,
Ignacio Gallardo
Director
Career Services