
Five Things New Grads Should Know About Job Hunting
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The class of 2006 is looking at a bright future with promising job prospects and salary increases.

Seventy percent of hiring managers say they plan to recruit recent college graduates this year, up from 62 percent in 2005, according to CareerBuilder.com's "College Hiring 2006" survey. Plus, nearly one-in-five hiring managers expect to hire more recent college graduates in 2006 compared to last year and one-in-four plan to increase starting salaries.

College grads can also expect a bigger payoff this year. Twenty-seven percent of hiring managers anticipate increasing starting salaries for recent college graduates in 2006 and only 5 percent plan to decrease them. How much should new grads expect to earn? Thirty-four percent of hiring managers expect to offer between \$20,000 and \$30,000 and 28 percent expect to offer between \$30,000 and \$40,000. An additional 10 percent will offer between \$40,000 and \$50,000 and 7 percent will offer more than \$50,000.

New grads won't have to pound the pavement for too long. Thirty-six percent of hiring managers say they will do the majority of their hiring of recent college graduates in the second quarter. Thirty-one percent say the majority of their hiring will take place in the third quarter.

With promising job opportunities, favorable salaries and plenty of free time, new grads should have no reason not to look for that first job. Make sure you know these top five things hiring managers look for when sizing up a candidate:

1. Relevant experience

Twenty-three percent of hiring managers say the candidate's ability to relate their experience to the job at hand is the most important factor in the hiring decision. Unfortunately, new graduates often underestimate the experience they have through internships, part-time jobs and extracurricular activities, but 63 percent of hiring managers say they view volunteer activities as relevant experience.

2. Fit within the company culture

Just because you look good on paper doesn't mean you're a shoo-in for the job. To 21 percent of employers, the trait they most want to see in a candidate is the ability to fit in with co-workers and the company. Offering up a blank stare when the interviewer asks why you are the right fit for the job will not go over well. Just be yourself, but mind your i's -- never insult, interrupt or irritate the interviewer. This can also be evaluated by that "unimportant" small talk at the beginning of an interview or non-job-related questions like "What was the last book you read?"

3. Educational background

Nineteen percent of hiring managers place the most emphasis on your educational background: the institution you attended, major, minor and degree earned. Be sure to also include courses taken and completed projects if relevant to the job. With grade point average, it's tricky. A good rule of thumb is to omit it unless it is 3.0 or higher and denote if it's your overall or major GPA.

4. Enthusiasm

Passion for the job is the top characteristic 19 percent of employers look for in a candidate. Employees who are passionate about their jobs tend to be more productive workers. The answer to "Why do you want to work here?" should always focus on the strengths of the company and the challenge of the position, not the perks. A "take or leave it" attitude about the job will leave the employer feeling the same about you.

5. Preparedness

Eight percent of hiring managers say the ideas you bring to the table and the questions you ask carry the most significance. Come in prepared to discuss how your qualifications can specifically contribute to the success of the company. Actually put yourself in that role and explain how you would perform your work and ways to improve it.

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