

The Employability Enigma

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Introduction

The first three to four days of the campus placement season gives a lot of importance to Academic performance of students as seen by the CGPA scores or the percentages scored.

However, after these three days it is a known fact that in many Institutions only a third of the students get offers. What happens to the remaining two thirds - are they really employable or not.

This enigma gets even more compounded when in that circle often you see that a typically bright student does not get a deserving job and many a time someone who is considered as an average performer walks away with a prized job.

What differentiators are employers looking for when pure CGPA and percentages no more matter. Whether it is through a technical test, aptitude test, personality test, Group Discussion, Interview or any selection process that they employ what makes employers reject someone and pick on the other.

The Problem

To understand the above problem better, a survey was done on 56 Managers cutting across various businesses of IT to understand as to what are the specific behavioral characteristics that they look for from a fresh recruit. PAPI parameters were used to score on a 10 point scale and the results are as in Table A.

The four key parameters that have emerged from this survey that have a high average and a low standard deviation are:

- 1. Need to finish a task**
- 2. Need to belong to groups**
- 3. Need to achieve**
- 4. Hardworking**

While this has brought out that what the Industry is looking for is a highly productive team player, another survey

Needs	Mean	SD
Need to Influence others	4.16	2.02
Need for rules & supervision	6.20	1.97
Need for change	6.95	1.74
Need to finish a task	8.84	1.17
Need to be noticed	5.93	1.78
Need to belong to groups	8.07	1.49
Need to relate closely to people	7.70	1.57
Need to be forceful	5.63	1.83
Need to achieve	8.45	1.29
Need to be supportive	5.73	2.05

Roles	Mean	SD
Leadership role	4.91	2.24
Organized type	7.38	1.77
Integrative planner	6.88	1.62
Attention to detail	7.71	1.61
Conceptual thinker	6.77	1.82
Social harmonizer	6.93	2.13
Ease in decision making	5.79	2.30
Work pace	7.84	1.47
Emotional restraint	6.54	2.00
Hardworking	8.50	1.33

Source: Field Investigation

was done among the Academia to understand their perspective of what they felt that Industries were looking for. This survey which was conducted across Placement Officers ratified the above four parameters and added a new dimension of Higher Level of Thinking Skills as another attribute that was being looked for in Students.

As a comparison, if we relate this to the survey done by National Central Regional Education Lab (NCREL) in the US which looked at what 21st Century Learners should focus on for survival in the Global Digital Community, there



is a direct correlation of their findings to our study. Below is the framework that they presented which gives the three quadrants beyond Academics as Higher Thinking Skills, Teaming and Productivity as the key parameters for overall Academic Achievement.

The above sets directions for three key stakeholders in the Industry Academia landscape, namely students, Academia and the Industry.

As part of their education, students need to focus on developing the above three areas and more importantly demonstrate them socially so that they are extremely successful. Academia need to create the environment and the thrust to develop these dimensions among the aspiring students. Industry should not hesitate to invest in nurturing these skills among the fresh recruits in the Learning arena.

Summing up

Incorporating new learning paradigms that would promote employable skills as an integral part of the curricula can be the solution to the Employability Enigma. This will result in a win-win for all stake holders and would help them reap the benefits of the investments that each of them make.

References

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