

Success at Work: UC San Diego Study Reveals Top Three Factors for Job Seekers

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Three key factors enable job applicants to get the edge in hiring and predict the success of the employee, according to a study published in a new book: *Closing America's Job Gap* by Mary Walshok, Tapan Munroe and Henry DeVries (W Business Books, January 2011).

"Over the past 12 years, significant research has been conducted on employer preferences, also known as the Voice of the Employer studies," says Walshok, a sociologist who has done research for the U.S. Department of Labor and the dean of continuing education at the University of California San Diego (<http://extension.ucsd.edu>). "Employers consistently look for evidence of three key factors in each applicant. Surprisingly, many job seekers are unable to produce direct evidence of these three factors."

According to *Closing America's Job Gap*, the top three desirable factors for jobseekers are:

Factor #1: Employers want proof that a prospect had the necessary knowledge, training, and experience to perform the job or, at least, to *learn* how to perform it. Preferably, the prospect has both. What was important was not only the training and experience, but the demonstrated ability to learn! The employer would examine the resume, attitude and approach of the prospects.

"Of greater importance to the employer was certification of the ability to do the job, or certification of the knowledge and skills that would allow the prospect to learn how to do the job," says Walshok. "A track record of success in similar jobs was preferred, but the key was to be able to point to evidence, proof, of abilities to perform and learn. The employers perceived that the nimbleness of their organization and the rapidly changing marketplace required them to have employees who could adapt and change with the marketplace. Direct experience, while relevant, was not as important as the demonstrated ability to adapt and perform in new circumstances."

Factor #2: The employers wanted evidence that the prospective employee would be dependable at work -- they would be available for work every day. Surprisingly, few prospects recorded or mentioned their attendance record at school, at work, or in the training/certification program they had just completed. There were instances when a prospect was selected after a lengthy interviewing process, but had a minor attendance problem during the company orientation. Despite the time and energy invested in finding the employee, many companies perceive even minor attendance problems as early indicators of future problems and fire the lackadaisical new hire. They would not spend any more time, effort, or money on someone who was too casual about showing up for work.

According to *Closing America's Job Gap*, illness and other concerns can cause attendance issues. Employers want to know that the work they have assigned will be taken care of and the strategies they have attempted to implement will not suffer. Employers know and understand the costs of poor attendance, both direct (lost labor, lost production) and indirect (effects on other staff of picking up the load). Employers want to combat this trend by hiring prospects with great attendance records.

Factor #3: Similarly, the employers wanted to know that the prospect would come to work and meetings on time. Punctuality was another key element of evaluation. The employers believed that attendance was not good enough; the prospect had to have a track record of being on time. Habitual lateness, even just for meetings, was viewed as disrespectful. Many meetings are now virtual meetings, with remote attendees. The need to be on time becomes more critical with virtual meetings. Tying up several employees waiting for another becomes increasingly expensive and decreases workflow productivity. Employers desire evidence of not only attendance, but of punctuality as well.

"As research has indicated, poor punctuality may be a reflection of what we expect others to do," says Walshok. "If others are likely to be late, then being a few minutes late may not cost us any waiting time, but the employer may think about what it costs the business. Employers in the U.S. expect and want their employees to be on time, despite what other cultures and traditions may dictate. Chronic lateness has been shown to cost employers billions of dollars."

For information about the book, go to www.closingamericasjobgap.com

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