

learningforlife



CHARACTER AND EMPLOYMENT

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A series of reflections from young people about what character they believe you should possess to be a successful employee.

Samsam Farah, Hamilton College

People should not just look at your qualifications when choosing who they want for a job. It is important to know how a person really is. I think it's most important that you know what a person is like on the inside. People should act with dignity and respect. If they are trustworthy and kind to others and treat everyone equally, without discrimination or prejudice, that's the sort of person that should get the job.

Arjun, Student at a London University

These days employers are not looking for academic qualities. They're more interested in what you do outside, if you're involved anywhere else. They're looking at your communication skills, your interaction with people, more or less how you fit into a team and work with a team. When I went to my first interview the interviewer seemed very interested in what I had to say about my voluntary work

Krishna, Graduate Employee at a Leading London Firm

I think my firm goes for graduates because there's an assumption that people are better from academic backgrounds. But they don't want just people with brains, they want other people with other abilities and skills. But primarily they want people with degrees and who've studied to a higher level. My skills come from interfacing and meeting with clients or with strangers, kind of guy. I'm not the technically gifted person. You want guys with you who are really clever and have these technical abilities. They also look for people who have travelled, because they've learnt more and learned a bit more about life, a bit more about yourself

Alexander, Third Year Student at a London University

I personally don't think that your employers are going to want you to be very, very clever. People are chosen because of their personality and character.

Natasha Temperton, Trinity Academy

My school, Trinity Academy is centered around seven core values which, in turn, enable students and staff to experience the opportunity and environment to work hard and to achieve their personal best. It is a sensitive environment which creates discipline and ensures everyone is valued equally. The core values help to encourage personal, moral and spiritual developments, within a Christian framework.

The opportunities created by the values relate not only to school life, but further on in an individual's life, when pursuing a profession. The values are increasingly prominent and important when preparing for employment, and all individually help contribute to a person's character.

The core value of Accountability is recognizing that having the freedom to express ourselves means we must also accept responsibility for our words, thoughts and actions. Practicing this value whilst at Trinity Academy helps prepare a person for employment as it encourages someone to speak truthfully about one's ability. This may have consequences later on when having to prove these stated capabilities and exaggeration of skills is, therefore, discouraged.

Compassion is a second core value and involves caring for those who are in difficulty and who are hurting, recognizing that the world does not exist for them alone. This is an important value when preparing for employment as it is vital to an employer that you demonstrate the ability to work as a team as well as take a leadership role. Being compassionate and understanding the emotional state of another person, makes it easier for an employer to perceive you as a leader, and as a positive role model to others.

A third core value preparing a person for employment is Courage. This value includes aiming to do what is right, whatever the cost; standing up for the weak, whatever the danger; facing our fears and finding ways of defeating them. When preparing to enter employment, Courage is an important value to consider, because when being interviewed for a certain job, you must show bravery, will and fortitude, to present yourself as confident in your own abilities and assured of your skills.

Determination is knowing that hard work and the refusal to give up are essential if we are to achieve anything worthwhile. If you are determined to attain a certain job, and refuse to accept anything but the best for yourself, then you always set your standards high. Being determined prepares a person for employment because it ensures they enter their desired field of employment, because they will not settle for anything other than this.

Honourable Purpose is another core value and ensures a person aims to be positive in everything, doing what is good and aiming to benefit others as well as themselves. By being positive when approaching a possible career, the employer can see how the employee will contribute to and improve the organisation and all the people in it.

The core value of Humility ensures people seek to do their personal best without bragging, and to encourage others to achieve their best without being critical or jealous of their efforts. This is useful when preparing for employment because it shows an employer that you are determined to reach your potential but at the same time, be considerate of others, and their feelings.

The final value is Integrity. This is when a person can be trusted to be honest and truthful, to say what they mean and to do what they say. When applying for a job, integrity will be at the top of the list of traits they will be looking for, and by proving you have integrity, the employer can hire you without fear, because they know you are truthful.

In conclusion, the core values enable a person to enter the world of work with the correct frame of mind and ensure they embark on their journey of employment with the skills demonstrated by the values.

Nadine Odongo, Hamilton College

When I go for a job interview, I know that I will be up against lots of others trying to get into the same place. My grades are not going to be great but I know myself and what I am into. I think I can still offer a lot because I am honest and have good manners. Even if you have good qualifications, how far can you go if you are rude or selfish and don't care?

Nadeem Shah, Hamilton College

Qualifications are important but you also need to have the right attitude and be able to show that you're going to be passionate and hardworking. You have to have social skills like being good at listening to others and being polite even if you don't agree with someone, good manners can make all the difference when going for a job.

Tom Kimber, Kings College Cambridge

What is it about someone that makes them employable? What is it that secures one competent individual a job and another equally competent individual not? It is sometimes put down to "training", or inadequacy thereof. This seems unlikely: the fact that one is qualified to do and is capable of doing one's job is surely "taken as read" by the fact that one is applying for it! Perhaps it was "politics", even "discrimination" or that common excuse "the interviewer(s) didn't like me". Certainly these factors do exist (even interviewers are only human), but one is forced to ask: why do they particularly come to bear in a negative way for one person and not the other?

Let me respond with another question: why do employers feel it necessary to *interview* people for jobs? They need to find out as best they can not only what their potential employee has accomplished, but more importantly what kind of person their potential employee is. In my experience, what always constitutes the greatest challenge and causes the greatest difficulties for a new employee is not the work they are required to perform: it is their ability to interact with others to the best advantage and more specifically their *personal attitude and behaviour* in the workplace which is the proof of the proverbial pudding. If this were not the case, and qualifications and training alone made one suitable for a job, there would be no need for an interview!

The attitudes and principles needed in the workplace, usually rather vaguely referred to under the umbrella-term "professionalism", can, I think, be better viewed as three separate elements: wisdom, benevolence and pride in competence. So what do I mean by these terms? A brief, personal view of each:

Wisdom: intelligence combined with the ability to learn from one's experiences;

Benevolence: wanting what is best for everybody around one and doing likewise;

Pride in competence: taking what one does seriously enough to do it to the best of one's ability.

These principles can, I think, be said to be underpinned by several "sub-principles":

Honesty (with others and with oneself);

Commitment: the willingness to devote oneself entirely to whatever task or cause one has in hand (partly to do with one's moral strength and discipline and partly to do with concentrational capacity!);

Humility: subordination to one's superiors, attention to detail in specific tasks, recognising and acknowledging one's own fallibility, etc.

Flexibility: being capable of doing and/or willing to i) do more than one's fair share of work ii) do a different kind of work if circumstances require it, within reason iii) be diplomatic in one's dealings with people, especially regarding the art of compromise;

Common sense;

Fairness: dealing with people in an appropriate way by maintaining one's perspective at all times.

Note: these principles are not (generally) taught in schools, or at least not at a conscious level. Pupils are made to work, but are not necessarily required to *care*. This, I think, is a problem.

Joanna Rodall, Hamilton College

You need to have a good, pleasant attitude, you need to be well presented. You need to know what's going on in the world because these days' people from all over the world could be working with you. I think it's more important that a person is responsible and always treats other people with respect than what qualifications they have.

Meera, Graduate Apprentice at a Leading Communications Company.

They do say a degree is valuable, don't let go of the chance, but how much does it help you? My buddy said to me that rather than the degree you do it's the capability that you've got.

Ewen, Student at a University in the South East

Employers don't want someone with a First who's been stuck in a library for 3 years. I think they want someone who's adaptable, who can do the academic side yeah, someone who's adaptable, committed, honest, hardworking and organised.

Chris, Graduate Employee at a Leading London Corporation

A lot of our intake are quite sociable and up for a laugh, so I think our company go for people with acquired experience. A lot of the people in the year above are more knowledgeable and technological. But they want people who can go out there and get away from our lap tops and just say hello. You've got to have banter. You've also got to be intelligent because if you fail by 10% in the exams you get fired. You've got to work hard, it's a pretty tough business, so you have to work hard at them and if you do work hard at them then you'll Pass.

