

Employers & Gen Y: The Soft Skills That Get You Hired

Generation Y's Virtual Guide to
Skill Development and Personal Branding in Social Media



Coordinator:



Partners:



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Employers & Gen Y: The Soft Skills That Get You Hired (Intellectual Output 2)

Leading Organization

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Published on

October 2017

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MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR



The project's main goal is to develop and design a virtual guide to employability, skill development and personal branding in social media for Generation Y job seekers. To be able to bring all the process together, we have done a survey in order to detect the desired soft skills that employers seek while recruiting new graduates.

To analyse employer's demand of Gen Y's development needs in terms of soft skills, wide-scale research had been conducted amongst recruiters. The working place of the research varies from NGO's, public and private companies.

After collecting the extensive data from recruiters, required top soft skills of Gen Y have been listed respectively Reliability, Responsibility, Communication Skills, Positive Attitude and Teamwork. These soft skills came out as prime skills that recruiters are looking at new graduates.

It has been shown at the results where the organizations who are more exposed to Gen Y graduates have a clearer understanding of their soft skills and capabilities. However it is also presented in results that there are different perceptions between Employers and Gen Y on what type of soft skills graduates tend to have.

As a conclusion, the majority of employers claim that students have many of the right soft skills. They also believe that with on-the-job training and enough exposure, Gen Y's skill development would correspond to the employer's requirements.

We hope this extensively conducted research will provide the necessary information on required soft skills of Gen Y and improve the gap between Employers and Gen Y's expectations.

Şule YALÇIN

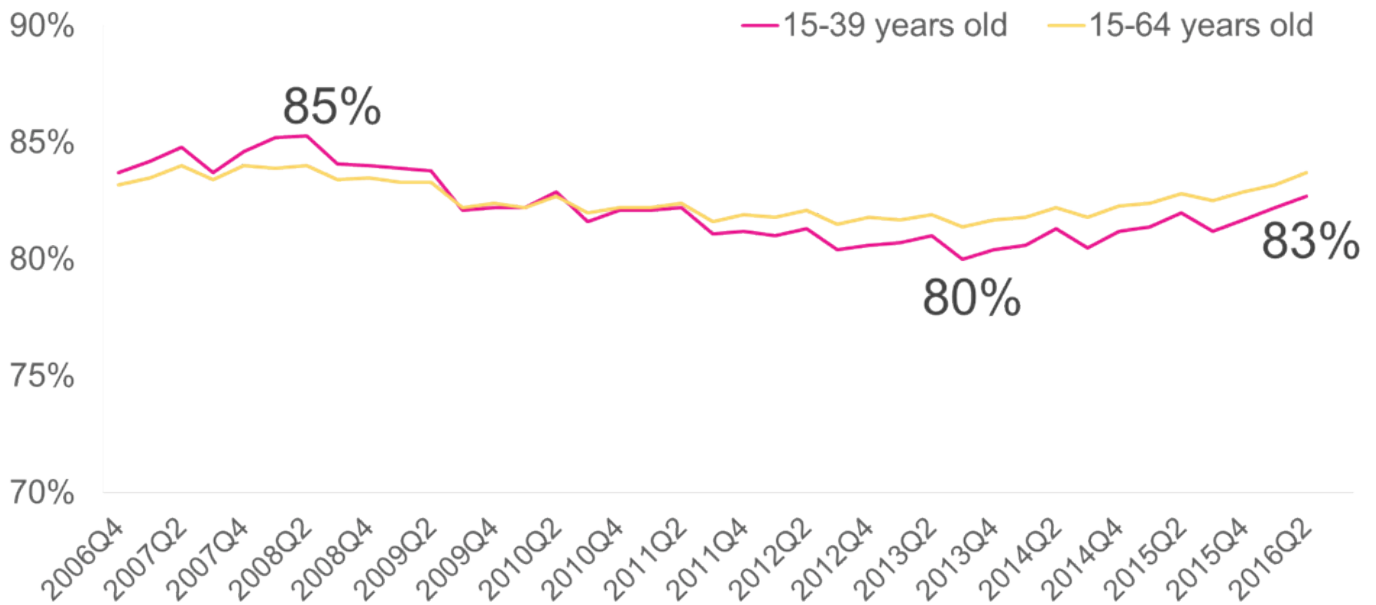
Project Coordinator

Sabancı University

I. Introduction

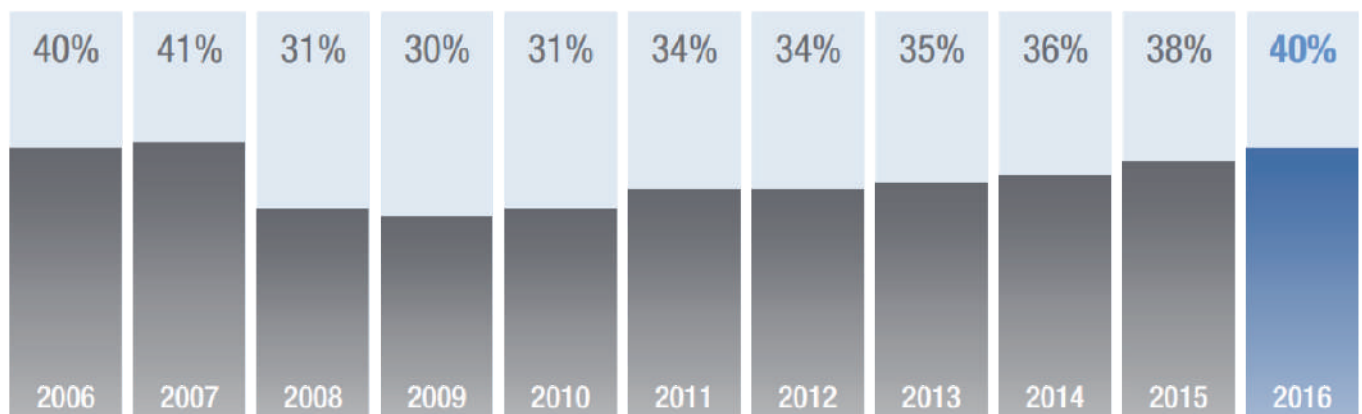
Today, university graduates are equipped with formal training and other practical competencies, but what employers are looking for span beyond the theoretical. Soft skills are what employers are hoping to balance alongside the academic understandings, making traits like leadership, collaboration and teamwork crucial for hires to practice and procure.

FIGURE 1: Employment Rate in Europe - Tertiary Education from 2006-2016 Divided by Quarter



6,013,082 is the number of unemployed Gen Y-ers with a university education in Europe. According to our research, they carry a reputation for being motivated, quick learners with solid teamwork and collaboration skills, yet over 6 million Gen Y graduates in Europe cannot find employment. Meanwhile, 40% of employers reported a talent shortage in 2016, up from 38% in 2015.

FIGURE 2: % of Employers Reporting Talent Shortage Globally



II. Purpose

Identify the top soft skills recruiters/employers look for in graduates. The analysis of the research will facilitate in closing the gaps between Gen Y's strengths and development needs in terms of soft skills.

III. Methodology

Quantitative survey of 1,299 recruiters and managers based on qualitative research performed in a pre-survey. These recruiters worked within the public, private or NGO sectors in: Central Europe (France, Germany, Netherlands, U.K.) Southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain) Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine) Nordics (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden). The questionnaire was programmed in confirmit and was mostly quantitative with qualitative questions for in-depth understanding (1299 responses).

The pre-survey was mostly qualitative. The target group was the same as the main survey and for this we collected 200 responses. The goal of the pre-survey was to code soft skills.

IV. Results

The qualitative research we performed built a broad view of the state of graduates' soft skills as viewed by the recruiters who are assessing their fit.

TABLE 1 : Top Soft Skills Recruiters Look for in Graduates

RANK	SOFT SKILLS	TOTAL %	RANK	SOFT SKILLS	TOTAL %
1	Reliability	88%	12	Stress Management	73%
2	Responsibility	88%	13	Time Management	71%
3	Communication Skills	85%	14	Proactivity	70%
4	Positive Attitude	84%	15	Self Awareness	68%
5	Team Work	84%	16	Empathy	68%
6	Problem Solving	82%	17	Decision Making	68%
7	Work Ethic	82%	18	Creativity	66%
8	Adaptability	80%	19	Innovation	64%
9	Dedication	77%	20	Critical Thinking	62%
10	Integrity	76%	21	Leadership & Management	59%
11	Flexibility	73%			

Our findings show the top skills recruiters look for in graduates are reliability and responsibility. Other top soft skills cited by the recruiters in the survey include communication, positive attitude, teamwork, problem solving, adaptability and work ethic. All top skills listed are the most mentioned top skills from the qualitative survey.

a. Meaning of Reliability:

- Integral to efficiency and trust
- Be available when needed
- Important when working in a team
- Work on sensitive matters, politically or ethically

"We deal with lots of groups, individuals, families. It is important for our staff to be available when needed, so reliability is of the utmost importance." **UK – NGO**

"If you flip the question, it becomes - why should you hire someone unreliable? I would never hire someone I do not trust." **Sweden - Private**

b. Meaning of Responsibility:

- Indispensable
- Owning and accepting mistakes
- Professional growth
- Facilitates decision making

"Responsibility is the basis for making decisions which positively affect the company's future."
Netherlands - Private

"Responsibility must be taken for our own actions, it applies to both professional and personal life."
Finland – Private

c. Meaning of Communication:

- Build relationships
- Client interaction
- Problem solving
- To understand and express thoughts
- Collaboration, team work

“Following the motto - people who talk to each other, can be helped, one should try to communicate to seek solutions.” **Germany - NGO**

“Communication skills are vital for establishing good relationships within the organization and the external environment.” **Poland – NGO**

d. Meaning of Positive Attitude:

- ➔ Effective at overcoming crisis
- ➔ Build relationships
- ➔ Team motivation

“It takes a positive attitude to work in teams, to motivate and create good results together.” **Netherlands - Private**

“A positive attitude is infectious. Work can sometimes be stressful and difficult. We need positive people who look forward and manage work.” **UK - Private**

e. Meaning of Teamwork:

- ➔ Work on projects
- ➔ Capitalize strength of each team member



→ Camaraderie

→ Efficiency and effective

“The ability to work in a team is a key competence for many positions.” Poland - Private

“The public sector has an ever decreasing budget to operate on and has fewer staff to deliver the same services. Therefore teamwork is vital to support one another during fluctuations in the workload.” Uk – Public

f. Meaning of Problem Solving:

→ To deal with the unforeseen

→ Expedite and streamline work

“I believe a person who is mentally agile can find solutions to various types of everyday issues and problems at work.” Spain - Private

“Those oriented towards solving problems demonstrate a greater tendency towards learning new things” Romania - NGO

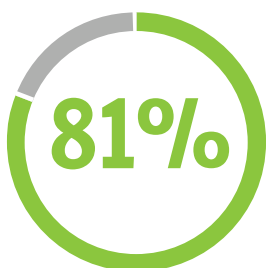
g. Meaning of Adaptability:

→ Develop new competences

→ Effective response to change

“To be able to work on different projects and for the good of the company, employees must be able to adapt easily, especially in an industry dealing with advance technology.” Romania - Private

“As employment changes, co-workers come and go, and a change in technology directs us at all levels, it is necessary to respond effectively to change.” UK - Private



81% of recruiters feel that graduates are equipped with soft skills essential to enter the labor market

h. Meaning of Work Ethic:

→ Core Value

→ Reflection of the work, team, employer

“The organization is made up of people, and the results depend on the people forming it.” Romania - Public

“Having a good work ethic ensures a high level of work output in terms of quality and volume. It also means that despite the workload pressures and time constraints, a good service is delivered, which reflects positively on the organization.” UK – Public

On Exposure: Overall, recruiters believe graduates have the soft skills needed to enter the

FIGURE 3: % of Graduates with Demanded Soft Skills per Employer Size*

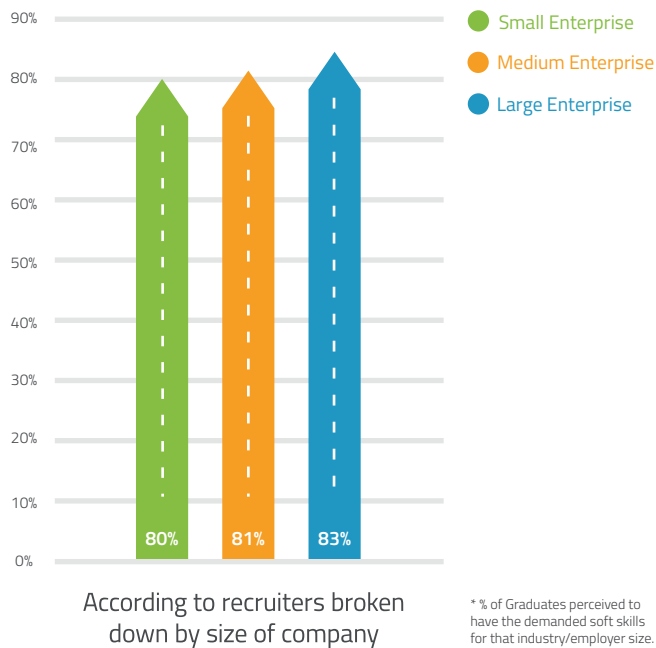
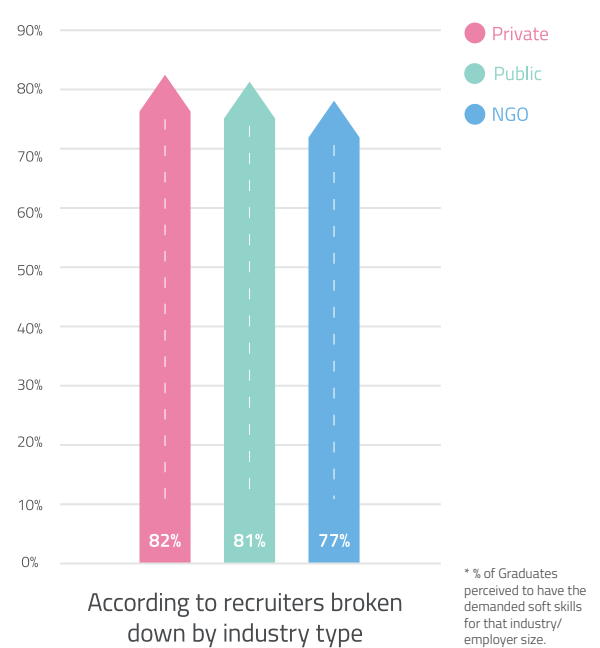


FIGURE 4: % of Graduates with Demanded Soft Skills per Industry*



labor market. This is seen most in large and medium-sized enterprises.

Trust in graduates comes down to a few factors, but one, overarching idea: Exposure. Those organizations who are more exposed to Gen Y graduates have a clearer understanding of and greater trust in their soft skills and capabilities. For example, larger organizations having the propensity to need a greater number of new hires. The sheer volume of hiring potentially leads to higher acceptance of graduates.

Proximity to universities has played a crucial role in an organization’s acceptance and interest in hiring graduates. Employers who are closer in proximity to universities are more accustomed to the talent that comes from them. Proximity brings exposure from both sides and with it recruitment of graduates.

When results are segmented according to the participating recruiter’s industry, we see that private and public sectors are more confident in hiring Gen Y graduates’ soft skills. Recruiters of non-governmental organizations (NGO) are less likely to think graduates have the soft skills that are necessary for their company.

Perceptions:

The Benefits of Recruiting Graduates

Over half (51%) of participating recruiters felt the biggest advantage to hiring graduates was their theoretical knowledge. Close behind, 50% of recruiters felt graduates were motivated. Interestingly, over a third of recruiters (36%) believed graduates were adaptable and eager to learn.

ADVANTAGES OF RECRUITING GRADUATES	TOTAL %
Theoretical Knowledge	51%
Motivation	50%
Analytical	37%
Adaptability	36%
No Advantage	6%

DISADVANTAGES OF RECRUITING GRADUATES	TOTAL %
Minimal Work Experience	56%
Too High Salary Expectations	50%
Lack Long Term Commitment	32%
Lack of Knowledge	32%
No Disadvantage	10%

The Disadvantages of Recruiting Graduates

Minimal experience as the top disadvantage to hiring graduates is probably the most predictable of all. However, some of the disadvantages, while understandable, were less obvious.

The soft skills recruiters perceive graduates to be lacking include:

- ➔ Empathy
- ➔ Responsibility
- ➔ Communication skills
- ➔ Flexibility
- ➔ Time management

Some of the soft skill disadvantages recruiters believe Gen Y graduates have can be directly connected to the top disadvantage: lack of professional experience. For example, time management and responsibility is often assessed by job history. Once job seekers gain experi-

RECRUITING PROFESSIONALS V/S GRADUATES

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; color: green; margin-right: 10px;">POSITIVE</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience Knowledge in the field of work Less time invested in training Stress Management Enhanced Communication Skills </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; color: orange; margin-right: 10px;">NEGATIVE</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of latest knowledge, technical knowhow or fresh outlook Less motivational drive and adaptability at workplace </div>
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ence, they obtain the image of being responsible, reliable and efficient time managers. Without proof of performance, they cannot be sure of Gen Y graduates' skills or abilities. Therefore, it is not that graduates innately lack those skill sets, but it is difficult to prove that they possess them.

Because professional experience provides proof of performance, many recruiters believe recruiting professionals over graduates will lead to less training investments, better industry and field knowledge as well as stress management. The benefit to welcoming a professional over a graduate is that the professional has been able to deliver those sought after skills in the past to other employers. On the other hand, as mentioned in the beginning of this report, graduates are considered to be more adaptable to change, intrinsically motivated and have better technological knowhow than their more experienced coworkers. Their time within the university may not have garnered them the same experience as someone who has worked in the field, but it has granted theoretical understanding and technical training.

Expectation vs. reality

There is overlap in the soft skills employers deem necessary for their hires and the soft skill advantage they perceive Gen Y graduates to possess. For instance, graduates are believed to be team players with an eagerness to learn while employers are highly interested in hiring talent with communication skills. Similarly, a perceived advantage to Gen Y graduates is their internal motivation, which could be considered in line to employers' desires for responsibility in hires. It is comparisons such as these and the aforementioned aspects that lead us to believe increased exposure may play catalyst to higher graduate hiring rates.

What employers look for



*Positive Attitude
Team Work
Adaptability
Dedication*



What grads are perceived to have



*Reliability
Problem Solving
Work Ethic
Integrity*



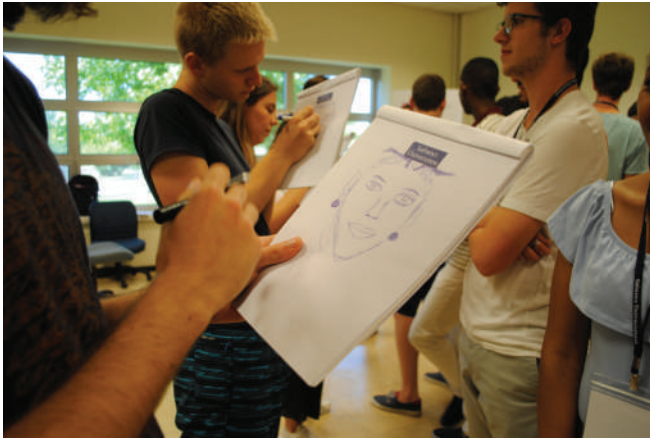
Neutral



*Responsibility
Communication Skills*



What they are perceived to not have



Note to Employers: *As the research shows, most employers feel that students have many of the right soft skills. With on-the-job training and exposure, Gen Y can further develop and adapt their experiences and technical training to match industry and organizational needs. Consider how the advantages of recruiting graduates can fill voids within teams or business challenges.*

V. Conclusion

Turning Perception & Desire to Reality

Promote Positive Traits & Address Misconceptions



Educators: Address employer concerns, disprove misconceptions and begin facilitating conversations around graduate capabilities and strengths.



Graduates: Understand the hesitation of employers. Recruiters and their organization are looking for talent with specific qualities. Take the time to understand what skills employers desire and allow them to influence your scholarly decisions, interview preparation and career choices.

Proactively Connect with Companies who don't Typically Recruit Graduates



Educators: Work closely with employers, especially those outside of your current network or area. Many of the employers who aren't ready for graduate hires simply haven't been exposed to their skill sets simply because of their distance from universities. Your guidance will begin increasing the employability of your students and alumni.

Focus on Development of Desired Skills



Educators: Develop programs that help hone and demonstrate skills like reliability, responsibility and communication. When working with employers, explain how your curriculum is in line with needs of the market and how the university addresses training for professional settings.

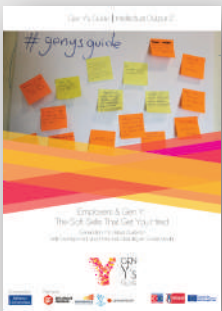
Understanding Gen Y | Publications



Understanding Gen Y Training



A Scientific Study:
Current Status Analysis of Cross Sectoral
Recruitment and Job Searching Trends in Europe



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Understanding Gen Y | Intellectual Output 2

REPORT

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