

The Bottom Line: Employers' Candidate Wish List

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Looking for that competitive edge – something to make you stand out in a pool of internship applicants?

Demonstrating a strong desire to learn – and a reliable work ethic – may be enough to capture an interviewer's attention. Amidst an endless sea of internship applicants, a candidate with a humble spirit and curious intellect is a breath of fresh air to many employers.

Donna Gutman, Membership Investment Manager at the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, recognizes the importance of curiosity. "An intern at the Chamber has the opportunity to learn a great deal about networking, advocacy, and education opportunities – all the components of economic development. It's an eco-system filled with business relationships, innovation, and entrepreneurship. An intern who remains reclusive and isolated misses the opportunity of a lifetime", says Gutman.

In addition to an inquisitive nature and eagerness to work, employers seek candidates with strong communication skills, the ability to work well with others, creativity and enthusiasm. Research/analytical skills and advanced computer skills also generate interest with managers. On the other end, uncommunicative behavior and the inability to ask questions are red flags to many organizations.

The interview process is an employer's chance to determine if you have the knowledge and skills appropriate for the position you're applying for, and if

Top 10 Qualities/Skills Employers Seek*

1. Communication skills
2. Strong work ethic
3. Teamwork skills (works well with others)
4. Initiative
5. Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
6. Problem-solving skills
7. Analytical skills
8. Flexibility/adaptability
9. Computer skills
10. Technical skills

**According to the NACE Job Outlook 2008*

you are someone they would like to work with. Be prepared to demonstrate your desire to learn as well as your credentials. Be personable and enthusiastic, but don't get personal. Your personality and compatibility with the organization's culture may be your best selling point.

Once you land that coveted internship, remember that the work you do as an intern may well be used to judge your potential for full-time employment with that organization. Unengaged or unmotivated team members don't stand a chance. So, make the most of your internship opportunity. "Dress for success, learn the office politics, be punctual, and resist the temptation to surf the internet", says Gutman.

Searching for an internship? Gain academic credit for your work experience through the University Internship Program (UIP). For more information, please visit:

<http://careercenter.depaul.edu/student/job/uiip.aspx>. ©