

SKILLS NEEDED IN THE WORKPLACE: A COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS OF FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF LARGE AND SMALL BUSINESSES IN NEW JERSEY

Diane M. Holtzman, Stockton University
Ellen M. Kraft, Stockton University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine what skills small and large business representatives in New Jersey believe are important for the workplace. There were 120 small businesses and 71 large businesses representatives surveyed. Written communication skills, adapting to change and being flexible, sales presentation experience, networking, and enthusiasm were the top skills identified by respondents from small businesses as important or very important. Attitude/professionalism; work ethic; ethical understanding; respecting and valuing diversity; interpersonal skills; enthusiasm; teamwork skills and adapting to change and being flexible were the top skills identified by large business respondents as important or very important. There were a significantly greater percentage of respondents from mid to large size businesses rating the following skills as important or very important –attitude/professionalism ($p<0.01$); work ethic ($p<0.01$); adapting to change/flexibility ($p<0.05$); respecting and valuing diversity ($p<0.01$); ethical understanding($p<0.01$); enthusiasm ($p<0.10$); interpersonal skills ($p<0.05$); teamwork ($p<0.05$) locating, organizing, and evaluating relevant information ($p<0.05$); thinking creatively to solve problems ($p<0.10$); managing time ($p<0.10$); and speaking/oral communication skills ($p<0.10$). There were a significantly greater percentage of respondents from small businesses rating networking ($p<0.01$), knowledge of global issues/international policy ($p<0.01$), and sales experience as important ($p<0.01$) or very important than respondents from mid to large size businesses. The authors conclude that the differences in ratings of the skills valued by small and large businesses are due to the traits of an entrepreneur and structure required of the human resources of a large business.

JEL: J10, J11, J24

KEYWORDS: Workplace Skills, Small and Large Business Skills, Assessment

INTRODUCTION

There is now a greater importance to identify workplace skills that college graduates need in order to be successful in today's workplace. This is due to the changes in the job market as a result of global competition, increased use of technology, reframing of jobs, and competition for jobs within the United States. These changes influence the competencies and skills that graduates of college business programs need to be successful in the workplace and go beyond the basic knowledge that was acceptable in the past (Bridgeland, Milano, & Rosenblum, 2011; Preparing 21st Century Students..., (n.d.). Concerns for students' workplace preparation gain greater attention in the current environment of accountability; leaders in higher education have to address how well college graduates are being prepared for work in the global economy. Accrediting bodies, parents, students and business leaders are calling for greater accountability on the part of higher education faculty regarding the quality and relevance of curricula,

assessment of student-learning outcomes, and commitment to continuous improvement in course content to offer students the knowledge and skills needed in the workplace (Kuh, 2014).

In order to determine the skills college business graduates need for employment in New Jersey, a survey was conducted of representatives of small, mid-sized, and large businesses in New Jersey to determine the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for success in the workplace. The results of this study provide feedback to help business faculty when they revise course content, provide career guidance, and plan internships for students. In addition, the feedback from business leaders helps guide discussions on assessment of student learning and recommendations for revision to the business curricula in order to a) align the content of the business curricula with the needs of the business community and b) to ensure that graduates receive a background in the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for workplace success. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the relevant literature review, data and methodology used in the study; the results, and concluding comments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Changing global economic forces, innovations in technology, and the growth of cultural diversity in the workplace create a business environment that is different from that of a generation ago. Often the calls for changes in what students learn are influenced by various stakeholders who have an interest in the students' learning outcomes.

Stakeholders of a College Education

An example of a stakeholder influencing the faculty's development and revision of curricula are the accrediting bodies which develop standards that set thresholds and challenges for higher education and call for proof of the activities through tracking continuous improvement (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). In business an example is in The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) report *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Education* (2016), which requires business programs to provide assurances of student learning to the external stakeholders and students, who are consumers of academic programs. As part of the assurances of learning in AACSB, business faculty must develop, monitor, evaluate, and revise the substance and delivery of the curricula, and assess the impact of the curricula on learners. This curriculum management includes input from faculty, administrators, students, alumni, and members of the business community served by the college to align the skills students bring to the workplace with those that businesses need (Hart, 2015; Fischer, 2013).

In addition to accrediting organizations, colleges and universities have many stakeholders: students, faculty, students' parents, employers, public officials, community leaders, and the general public. These stakeholders share a common need to know whether institutions of higher learning are preparing students' adequately for future jobs (Kuh, 2014). Higher education institutions are expected to assure stakeholders that students leave colleges and universities with the skills they need to be productive workers and citizens. However, employers state there is "...a gap between how higher education prepares students for the workforce and how companies want individuals trained to be productive and valuable employees" (Myers, 2015, p. 60). According to the report by the Manpower Group (2015), when employers are asked why they have difficulty filling jobs, more than one in five hiring managers (22%) indicated that lack of experience is behind the talent shortage and 17% state a lack of workplace competencies. Employers also stated that the most frequent soft skills deficits are lack of professionalism and lack of enthusiasm, motivation and learning mindset. Often, faculty and administrators at colleges and universities are asked to prove that students integrate knowledge and skills from across the curricula, apply those skill-sets in real-world environments and are prepared for the workforce.

One example of stakeholders' concerns about students' preparedness for the workplace is presented in the report by Hart Research Associates for The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2015) which states: 80% of the employers responding to their study indicated that it is very important for graduates to demonstrate their ability to apply learning in real-world settings; only 23% of the employers think graduates are very well prepared to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. According to report by RAND (2004), shortages of candidates who are qualified for employment exist in many sectors of the economy and are expected to increase in the future as baby boomers continue to retire.

Another stakeholder in graduates' education and preparation for the workplace are the parents who are providing financial support to young adults enrolled in school as compared to those not enrolled in school. According to the *Better Money Habits Millennial Report* (Bank of America & USA Today, 2015), their November 2014 survey of 1,000 millennials and 1,005 parents of millennial children revealed that 31% of the young adults who were students reported that they received "regular financial help" from their parents compared to 12% of the young adults who are not attending school. Sixty five percent of millennials also reported "receiving a lot or some financial assistance from their parents when they were just starting out" (Bank of America & USA Today, 2015, p.8) compared to 36 percent of their parents who received similar assistance when they were young adults. With the money that parents are spending towards a young adult's education, parents are focusing on the importance of colleges having curriculum that will prepare students for jobs; this is occurring while their children are in middle school and high school (Jaschik, 2013). In a Gallup poll conducted for *Inside Higher Ed*, of 3,269 adults with children in the 5th through 12th grades, 38 percent of parents surveyed chose "to get a good job" as the top reason for their children to have a college education (Jaschik, 2013).

The Future

Students face a twenty-first century world of challenges in the workplace and they need preparation in college for the changes they will encounter. To prepare students to meet these challenges, they must have opportunities to learn, apply and integrate knowledge from across the curriculum and be prepared with the necessary skill sets for the workplace (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2015). Working with employers to determine the skill sets needed in the workplace is essential for curriculum revision and provision of learning opportunities that better prepare our graduates with the skills, competencies, and knowledge for the competitive, global workplace.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to address the following research questions: 1.) According to businesses representatives in New Jersey what knowledge, skills, and competencies are considered most valuable for successful performance in the workplace and 2.) Is there a difference in what knowledge, skills, and competencies are small and mid to large size businesses consider to be essential for successful performance in the workplace?

Development of the Survey

There were 21 skills and competencies selected to be evaluated by businesses as very important, important, limited importance, or not important. Fifteen of the skills had been previously evaluated by employers of Stockton University graduates and alumni of Stockton University in prior study by Holtzman and Kraft (2011). This study selected the skills that 80% of employers in the prior study rated as important or very important. The six new skills that were added to the survey were attitude/professionalism, work ethic, enthusiasm, knowledge of the profession, networking, and sales presentation experience. These skills were

identified based on feedback received from the prior study of qualitative comments from employers and alumni about the skills they desired in employees.

Data Collection

The data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase took place during May 2015. During the first phase the researchers formed a list of businesses to contact through the *NJ Biz Book of Lists*. NJ Biz is a leading New Jersey business journal that covers news and events in the state of New Jersey on its web site and through a print edition with over 15,000 copies circulated each week (NJBiz.com, 2016). The researchers chose businesses in industries that would potentially hire college graduates. With the support of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy and Stockton Polling Institute the surveys were e-mailed to the businesses. There were 124 completed surveys of which 120 surveys came from businesses with less than 1,000 employees. The four surveys that came from businesses with over 1,000 employees were removed from the sample as the researchers wanted all the surveys from the NJ Biz list to be from employers with less than 1,000 employees.

To balance data to represent both small and mid to large size business the researchers hired Research America, a professional data research company, to collect data from hiring managers from mid to large size businesses having over 1000 employees during August 2015. The final sample consisted of 120 samples from the NJ Biz book of lists and 71 samples from Research America. The number of samples collected from Research America was limited by a budget. Table 1 lists the number of employees, frequency, and percent of the businesses in the study sample. The respondents from the businesses with under 1,000 employees were contacted through the *NJ Biz* list. The respondents with businesses have 1,000 or more employees were contacted by Research America. Seventy percent of the businesses in the study had less than 50 employees (47%) or 4,000 or more employees (23%).

Table 1: Size of Businesses Surveyed

Number of Employees	Frequency	Percent
0-49	90	47%
50-99	13	7%
100-499	14	7%
500-999	3	2%
1000-1999	16	8%
2000-2999	6	3%
3000-3999	5	3%
4000 or more	44	23%
Total	191	

Table 1 lists the number of employees, frequency, and percent of the businesses in the study sample. The respondents from the businesses with under 1,000 employees were contacted through the NJ Biz Book of lists. The respondents with businesses having 1,000 or more employees were contacted by Research America.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: According to Businesses Representatives in New Jersey What Knowledge, Skills, and Competencies Are Considered Most Valuable for Successful Performance in the Workplace?

To answer research question number one the researchers ranked the top three skills rated by the employers as very important or important. Table 2 lists the skills in the first column rated as very important or important sorted in descending order. The percentage of employers reporting the skill as important or very important is listed in the second column. The sample size for each skill is listed in the parenthesis next to the percentage rating the skill as important or very important. The top three skills that were identified as important or very important for the total sample of 191 employers were: 1.) written communication skills

(94%) and adapting to change and being flexible (94%), 2.) enthusiasm (92%), and 3.) team work skills, thinking creatively to solve problems, interpersonal skills, and work ethic (91%).

The skills in fourth place were knowledge of profession, thinking critically/analytically, respecting and valuing diversity, and locating, organizing and evaluating relevant information. Hence, half of the skills surveyed were rated as important or very important by 90% of the employers surveyed. Seven other skills – ethical understanding (89%), attitude/ professionalism (89%), managing time (89%) speaking/oral communication skills (89%), working independently (88%), quantitative reasoning skills (87%), and leadership/ motivation skills (86%) were rated as important or very important by 86-89% of the employers surveyed. The majority of the skills surveyed were rated as very important or important by over 85% of the employers surveyed. Knowledge of global issues/international policies and sales presentation experience were rated lower than the other skills with 74% and 72% of the employers considering them to be important or very important.

Table 2: Percent of New Jersey Businesses Reporting a Skill as Important or Very Important

Skill	Percent of Businesses Reporting Skill as Very Important or Important (Total Number of Responses)
Written Communication Skills	94% (187)
Adapting to Change and Being Flexible	94% (184)
Enthusiasm	92% (190)
Teamwork Skills	91% (188)
Thinking Creatively to Solve Problems	91% (188)
Interpersonal Skills	91% (187)
Work Ethic	91% (187)
Knowledge of Profession	90% (184)
Thinking Critically/Analytically	90% (169)
Respecting and Valuing Diversity Issues	90% (184)
Locating, Organizing, Evaluating Relevant Information	90% (185)
Ethical Understanding	89% (185)
Attitude/Professionalism	89% (189)
Managing Time	89% (188)
Speaking/Oral Communication Skills	89% (183)
Working Independently	88% (189)
Quantitative Reasoning Skills	87% (187)
Leadership/Motivation Skills	86% (185)
Networking	83% (187)
Knowledge of Global Issues/International Policy	74% (187)
Sales Presentation Experience	72% (180)

Table 2 lists the skill in the first column. The percentage of employers reporting the skill as important or very important is listed in the second column. The sample size for the skill is in parentheses.

Research Question 2: is There a Difference in What Knowledge, Skills, and Competencies that Small and Mid to Large Size Businesses Representatives Consider to be Essential for Successful Performance in the Workplace?

The top 3 skills for large businesses were: 1.) attitude/professionalism (100%), 2.) work ethic, adapting to change/being flexible, respecting and valuing diversity (tied at 99%) and 3.) ethical understanding, enthusiasm, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills (tied at 97%). The top three skills identified for small businesses were: 1.) written communication skills (92%), 2.) sales presentation experience and adapting to change and being flexible (91%), and 3.) networking and enthusiasm (90%).

Table 3: Comparison of Ranking of Skills Rated as Very Important or Important for Small and Mid to Large Size Businesses

Skill (Large Business)		Skill (Small Business)	
Attitude/Professionalism	100% (70)	Written Communication Skills	92% (119)
Work Ethic	99% (70)	Sales Presentation Experience	91% (115)
Adapting to Change and Being Flexible	99% (69)	Adapting to Change and Being Flexible	91% (117)
Respecting and Valuing Diversity Issues	99% (70)	Networking	90% (116)
Ethical Understanding	97% (70)	Enthusiasm	90% (115)
Enthusiasm	97% (69)	Knowledge of Profession	89% (114)
Interpersonal Skills	97% (70)	Quantitative Reasoning Skills	88% (119)
Teamwork Skills	97% (69)	Teamwork Skills	88% (119)
Locating, Organizing, Evaluating Relevant Information	96% (68)	Thinking Creatively to Solve Problems	88% (119)
Written Communication Skills	96% (69)	Thinking Critically/Analytically	87% (119)
Thinking Creatively to Solve Problems	96% (69)	Interpersonal Skills	87% (118)
Managing Time	94% (68)	Work Ethic	86% (117)
Thinking Critically/Analytically	94% (70)	Working Independently	86% (115)
Speaking/Oral Communication Skills	94% (71)	Leadership/Motivation Skills	86% (115)
Knowledge of Profession	91% (71)	Locating, Organizing, Evaluating Relevant Information	86% (115)
Working Independently	90% (69)	Managing Time	86% (120)
Leadership/Motivation Skills	87% (70)	Speaking/Oral Communication Skills	85% (117)
Quantitative Reasoning Skills	84% (68)	Ethical Understanding	85% (119)
Networking	71% (69)	Knowledge of Global Issues/International Policy	85% (118)
Knowledge of Global Issues/International Policy	54% (67)	Respecting and Valuing Diversity Issues	85% (117)
Sales Presentation Experience	38% (63)	Attitude/Professionalism	83% (115)

The first column lists the skills that employees from mid to large sized businesses rated as important or very important sorted in descending order. The second column lists the percentage of employers from large businesses rating the skill as important or very important. The sample size for the skill is in parentheses. The third column lists the skills that employees from small businesses rated as important or very important sorted in descending order. The fourth column lists the percentage of employers from small businesses rating the skill as important or very important. The sample size for the skill is in parentheses.

The skills of mid to large size businesses and small businesses were compared to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the percentage of respondents who rated them as important or very important. Table 4 lists the 21 skills and the percentage of mid to large size businesses and small businesses that reported that the skill was very important or important for the workplace sorted in descending order on the percentage of respondents from mid to large size business column rating the skill as important or very important. The p-value is calculated by using the method for statistical inference for the difference of two sample proportions with different sample sizes. The p-value is reported in the third column of Table 4. The last column of table 4 tells whether the difference is significant.

There were a significantly greater percentage of respondents from mid to large size businesses rating the following skills as important or very important –attitude/professionalism (p<0.01); work ethic (p<0.01); adapting to change/flexibility (p<0.05); respecting and valuing diversity (p<0.01); ethical understanding(p<0.01); enthusiasm (p<0.10); interpersonal skills (p<0.05); teamwork (p<0.05) locating, organizing, and evaluating relevant information (p<0.05); thinking creatively to solve problems (p<0.10); managing time (p<0.10); and speaking/oral communication skills (p<0.10). There were a significantly greater percentage of respondents from small businesses rating networking (p<0.01), knowledge of global issues/international policy (p<0.01), and sales experience as important (p<0.01) or very important than respondents from mid to large size businesses.

Table 4: Skills Rated as Very Important or Important for the Workplace by Mid to Large Sized Businesses and Small Businesses

Skill	Percent Mid to Large Businesses (Total Number of Responses)	Percent Small Businesses (Total Number of Response)	P-Value
Attitude/Professionalism	100% (70)	83% (115)	0.000***
Work Ethic	99% (70)	86% (117)	0.005***
Adapting to Change and Being Flexible	99% (69)	91% (119)	0.033**
Respecting and Valuing Diversity Issues	99% (70)	85% (119)	0.003***
Ethical Understanding	97% (70)	85% (115)	0.008***
Enthusiasm	97% (69)	90% (117)	0.059*
Interpersonal Skills	97% (70)	87% (118)	0.023**
Teamwork Skills	97% (69)	87% (120)	0.036**
Locating, Organizing, Evaluating Relevant Information	96% (68)	86% (117)	0.030**
Written Communication Skills	96% (69)	92% (119)	0.372
Thinking Creatively to Solve Problems	96% (69)	88% (119)	0.087*
Managing Time	94% (68)	86% (117)	0.078*
Thinking Critically/Analytically	94% (70)	87% (119)	0.136
Speaking/Oral Communication Skills	94% (71)	85% (115)	0.074*
Knowledge of Profession	91% (71)	89% (120)	0.686
Working Independently	90% (69)	86% (114)	0.415
Leadership/Motivation Skills	87% (70)	86% (115)	0.839
Quantitative Reasoning Skills	84% (68)	88% (119)	0.394
Networking	71% (69)	90% (116)	0.000***
Knowledge of Global Issues/International Policy	54% (67)	85% (118)	0.000***
Sales Presentation Experience	38% (63)	91% (115)	0.000***

Table 4 lists the 21 skills and the percentage of mid to large size businesses and small businesses that reported that the skill was very important or important for the workplace sorted in descending order on the percent mid to large size business column. The total number of responses for each skill is in parenthesis. The p-value is calculated by using the method for statistical inference for the difference of two sample proportions with different sample sizes. The p-value is reported in the last column of Table 4. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels respectively.

Analysis of Skills

This study demonstrates the value that businesses place on soft skills. The differences in the skills that small and large businesses value could be attributed to the differences in the skill sets required for an entrepreneur and the structured nature of a large business. Jobs in large businesses have defined job responsibilities (Ingram, 2016). Employees working at large businesses work in teams which requires them to have interpersonal skills and respect diversity. Large companies are more willing to take a risk (The Street, 2013) whereas smaller companies often are resistant to change which may explain why mid to large size businesses place a high value on adapting to change and being flexible.

Newlands (2014) identifies sales ability as the most important skills an entrepreneur must have. Selling is critical to keep customers coming back to the business. Entrepreneurs need to be effective communicators (Newlands, 2014) and be adept at public speaking (Root, 2016 a.). They need to be able to create sales pitches that will sell their product in order to stay in business (Root 2016 a.). Entrepreneurs need to be networking with the public to sustain their business. Hence it makes sense that small business owners would value networking as a skill. The Internet has given small businesses the ability to reach international customers for a low cost (Root, 2016 b.). With the Internet revolution, small businesses are now able to tap into international markets whereas in the past their marketplace was local. Having employees that understand global issues would be beneficial for small businesses as this may be a new market for them whereas large businesses are already established internationally.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The focus of this study was to answer the following questions: 1) according to businesses representatives in New Jersey what knowledge, skills, and competencies are considered most valuable for successful performance in the workplace and 2) is there a difference in what knowledge, skills, and competencies that small and mid to large size businesses consider to be essential for successful performance in the workplace? To answer these questions the researchers developed a survey with 21 skills and competencies to be evaluated by businesses as very important, important, limited importance, or not important. The researchers formed a list of businesses to contact through the *NJ Biz Book of Lists*. With the support of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy and Stockton Polling Institute the surveys were e-mailed to the businesses. There were 124 completed surveys of which 120 surveys came from businesses with less than 1,000 employees. To balance data to represent both small and mid to large size business the researchers hired Research America, a professional data research company, to collect data from hiring managers from mid to large size businesses having over 1000 employees during August 2015. The final sample consisted of 120 samples from the NJ Biz book of lists and 71 samples from Research America.

According to the 191 businesses representatives in our sample the top three skills that were identified as important or very important were: 1.) written communication skills (94%) and adapting to change and being flexible (94%), 2.) enthusiasm (92%), and 3.) team work skills, thinking creatively to solve problems, interpersonal skills, and work ethic (91%). The results of our study also revealed that there is a difference in what knowledge, skills, and competencies that small and mid to large size businesses consider to be essential for successful performance in the workplace. There were significantly greater percentages of respondents from mid to large size businesses that rated the following skills as important or very important –attitude/professionalism ($p<0.01$); work ethic ($p<0.01$); adapting to change/flexibility ($p<0.05$); respecting and valuing diversity ($p<0.01$); ethical understanding($p<0.01$); enthusiasm ($p<0.10$); interpersonal skills ($p<0.05$); teamwork ($p<0.05$) locating, organizing, and evaluating relevant information ($p<0.05$); thinking creatively to solve problems ($p<0.10$); managing time ($p<0.10$); and speaking/oral communication skills ($p<0.10$). There were a significantly greater percentage of respondents from small businesses rating networking ($p<0.01$), knowledge of global issues/international policy ($p<0.01$), and sales experience as important ($p<0.01$) or very important than respondents from mid to large size businesses. The differences in the skills that small and large businesses value could be attributed to the differences in the skill sets required for an entrepreneur and the structured nature of a large business.

This study demonstrates the importance of soft skills as skills that employers value for entry level jobs for college graduates. Soft skills are defined as “desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude” (*Soft Skills*, 2016). The value in soft skills is that they are necessary for success in any profession. Soft skills are critical for developing skills such as leadership, negotiation, mediation, mentoring and managing others (Robels, 2012). There is concern that both high school (Gewertz, 2007) and college graduates do not possess the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace. A report by the U.S. Department of Labor states that colleges and universities are not teaching business graduates the interpersonal skills they need for the workplace (Mangan, 2007). A study of 400 corporate managers by Bronson (2007) revealed that 70% of high school students lacked work ethic and professionalism skills need to succeed in the workplace. These findings, along with this study, demonstrate a need for colleges and universities to be teaching soft skills in the curriculum. In order to effectively teach soft skills, colleges and universities need to identify the soft skills that they want to teach and the courses where they want to teach these skills. Once these skills are identified an outcomes based assessment instrument can be developed (Steadman & Guzik, 2016).

Faculty at colleges and universities need to focus writing requirements on business writing and having students write succinctly. It is recommended that business students be taught interviewing skills,

professionalism, and business etiquette in a separate course. Providing experiential learning experiences such as business etiquette dinner, video- taping mock interviews, or projects such as interviewing a manager would be beneficial in helping students practice their soft skills. Having speakers come to classes to discuss the importance of professionalism and soft skills would let students know the importance of these skills. Research suggests that practicing soft skills reduces the time to learn them (Wilhelm, 2004). Faculty can help students practice soft skills in classes by role playing and facilitating student interaction in class with group activities.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the study. The first is the survey itself. The skills may have been worded in a way for different interpretations. For example, professionalism could be interpreted as the way in which an employee dresses, speaks, or their appearance (Robles, 2012). Others may interpret professionalism as being on time or behaving in a businesslike manner. The researchers believe that the respondents interpreted the word networking to mean building business relationships with others, however, a respondent could interpret networking to mean computer networking. Some of the skills overlap such as managing time being interpreted as being on time which could be considered professionalism or the way in which one speaks being considered oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, or professionalism. Secondly, the survey is a convenience survey. The distribution of the businesses was also constrained by the businesses in New Jersey. For example, there were more government agencies and educational institutions represented in the large businesses category. The representation coming from the different industries may have influenced survey responses regarding skills and competencies needed in the workplace. The number of samples that could be collected was constrained by a budget and the willingness of people on the NJ Biz list to participate in the survey. The data was collected from two different sources- a list from *NJ Biz* and Research America. The respondents from Research America were screened by Research America to be respondents that had input for hiring decisions. The data collected by Research America may have been collected from respondents more knowledgeable about the skills needed for the workplace.

Directions for Future Research

This study focused on skills needed for the New Jersey workplace; given the interconnectedness of our economy and businesses throughout the world, conducting a study in a major region of the world would be a significant contribution to the skills and competencies needed for the workplace.

APPENDIX

This is the survey used to collect the data.

Q5-Q26. Place a check in the column that best represents your answer regarding the importance of the knowledge, skill or competency in your organization for an entry level job requiring a bachelor’s degree

<i>RANDOMIZED</i>	Very Important	Important	Limited Importance	Not Important	Not Applicable
Q5 Thinking Critically/analytically					
Q6 Speaking/Oral Communication					
Q7 Written communication					
Q8 Respecting and Valuing Diversity/Multicultural Issues					
Q9 Ethical Understanding					
Q10 Locating, organizing, evaluating Relevant Information					
Q11 Quantitative Reasoning: Ability to use mathematics or statistics					
Q12 Teamwork Skills					
Q13 Managing Time					
Q14 Thinking creatively to Solve Problems					
Q15 Working Independently					
Q16 Interpersonal Skills					
Q17 Adapting to change and Being Flexible					
Q18 Leadership/Motivation Skills					
Q19 Knowledge of Global Issues/International Perspective					
Q20 Enthusiasm					
Q21 Work Ethic					
Q22 Attitude/Professionalism					
Q23 Networking					
Q24 Sales Presentation Experience					
Q25 Knowledge of the field/profession					

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Diane Holtzman is an Associate Professor of Business Studies at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. She received a CAGS from Virginia Polytechnic University and an Ed.D. from Nova University. Her research includes student learning outcomes assessment, the incorporation of technology in pedagogy, and generational diversity in the workplace and in the classroom. She can be contacted at the School of Business, Stockton University, 101 Vera King Farris Dr. Pomona, NJ 08205. Email: Diane.Holtzman@stockton.edu

Dr. Ellen Kraft is an Associate Professor of Business Studies at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. She received her Ph.D. from Auburn University, M.S.E from West Virginia University, and B.S.I.E. from Lehigh University. She can be contacted at the School of Business, Stockton University, 101 Vera King Farris Dr. Pomona, NJ 08205. E-mail: Ellen.Kraft@stockton.edu