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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ■

New college graduates have many attributes to offer

Spring is here and, much like planting a few bulbs or young trees to enhance your yard at home, you may find this is a good time to enhance your business' landscape. The changing season stimulates ideas and inspires people to make positive adjustments.

For those graduating from college this year, it's a time of new career beginnings, and as the number of college students continues to rise nationwide, it is also a time for businesses to sort through a competitive pool of potential new employees. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the 2012-13 academic year is expected to see 21.6 million students attend United States colleges and universities. Of that total, an estimated 937,000 associate degrees, 1.8 million bachelor's degrees, 756,000 master's degrees and 174,700 doctoral degrees will be awarded.

This group of job candidates is not only highly motivated to impress potential employers, they also possess skills you may not expect. Today's graduating class is diverse in just about every way possible, from age and social status to gender and personality. So what can you expect from the newest addition to the workforce? From my experience, the following attributes are often affiliated with today's graduates:

- They are motivated. Graduates are excited and



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passionate about applying the skills they have acquired and they have a strong desire to share these skills for the betterment of your business.

- They are committed to learning and self-development. Recent graduates are comfortable learning new things, as they are used to changing class settings every semester.

- They are critical thinkers and problem-solvers. College students must overcome challenges through research and data collection, which are used to address issues and identify solutions.

- They are communicators. Graduates have been continuously tasked with developing written and oral presentation skills, which are critical in both teamwork and customer interaction.

- They are team-centric. Most of today's programs require college students to engage in group work and social development leading to openness and shared work processes.

- They are responsible.

Students are continuously working with deadlines and are held accountable for completing their work.

- They are technically competent. Today's graduates are proficient with computers and the latest technologies, which is beneficial for streamlining processes and increasing efficiency.

- They are dedicated. Students who graduate have set a goal and completed the work to achieve the desired result. This achievement of long-term goals will bode well for your organization.

The competitive, growing population of college graduates has also caused several degree programs to increase the emphasis on internships, making real world experience a required part of the learning process. These career-focused internships, paired with the fact that many of today's college students hold part-time or full-time work throughout college, are preparing graduates with a realistic view of professional workplace expectations.

So whether you are hiring a recent graduate for the technical abilities or the less tangible attributes, this confident group of job-seekers offers great ambition and a desire to help your business achieve its goals. Their possible shortcomings in previous on-the-job experience will be overshadowed by a strong desire to succeed.

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