Job Outlook: Verbal Communication Skills Most Sought by Employers

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New college graduates looking to crack the still-tight job market need to hone their verbal communication skills, say employers taking part in NACE's *Job Outlook 2011* survey.

Survey respondents indicate that verbal communication skills topped the list of "soft" skills they seek in new college graduates looking to join their organizations, followed by strong work ethic, teamwork skills, analytical skills, and initiative. (See Figure 1.)

Interestingly, when asked how satisfied they were that new college graduates could deliver on key skills, employer response was mixed. They reported being "very satisfied" with the teamwork and analytical skills of new college graduates, but verbal communication skills, initiative, and a strong work ethic all fell below that level, with ratings hovering between "somewhat" and "very satisfied."

Even if candidates *can* deliver on those top five skills, employers have a fairly substantial list of other skills they deem as important and other attributes they seek. In fact, employers rated nine other skills/qualities as "very important"' to "extremely important," and most cited GPA requirements and a preference for new graduates with internship or other relevant work experience. For more, see NACE's *Job Outlook 2011* report.

Figure 1: Employers Rank Top 5 Candidate Skills/Qualities

1. Verbal Communication Skills
2. Strong Work Ethic
3. Teamwork Skills
4. Analytical Skills
5. Initiative

Source: *Job Outlook 2011*, National Association of Colleges and Employers.

NACE conducted the NACE Job Outlook 2011 *survey from mid-August through October 15, 2010. A total of 172 surveys were returned for a 20.7 percent response rate.*