

Josh,

I'm glad you sent this message. It is an important question to ask. I've given some thought to my response, and have polled some of my co-workers to get a broader perspective for you. What follows is a list of things we have observed for which new hires are often not prepared. Many things on the list are not skills but characteristics. I would not suggest that we as a marketing department accept responsibility for making sure our graduates know all of these things, but I did at least want to share a comprehensive list. Here goes:

1. The ability to multi-task. Expectations need to be set that a successful career as a marketing professional will require one to multi-task on a whole new level. Many new hires are single-task oriented. They want to start a task and finish it before moving to another. That is unrealistic.
2. The ability to communicate. Certainly this encompasses effective oral, written and presentation skills. But it also goes into the realm of style, which may be generational. I see a lot of new hires that think by sending an e-mail or text message, a communication task is complete. Digital forms of communication are certainly convenient, but I need the people I hire to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all the communication methods at their disposal, and to make wise choices about which kind to use based on the situation.
3. How to effectively defend a project or idea. New hires are often naive about the work they are given to do, always assuming it is important and justified. When asked to justify or defend it, they often wither. They need to understand that internal competition for resources will demand that they continually justify and defend their existence and work. And, they need to know how to do this without burning bridges.
4. Understand office politics. Graduates must be realistic about the work environments they enter. Every office has politics, and many new hires learn about them the hard way. I'm sure that many graduates idealistically hope that they will begin their careers in apolitical environments, but the truth is that their new coworkers, supervisors and executives have personal and professional agendas. There are things at stake, not all of them visible. I don't want us to churn out a bunch of cynics, but I do want our graduates to be wise that every environment has some degree of politics.
5. Your performance will be measured. I think many graduates look forward to working because there are no more exams or homework. The reality is that everyday is a test, and the stakes couldn't be higher. When I hire a new employee, I begin the indoctrination immediately - we will measure your performance, the consequences of failing to perform can be serious, and what matters are results not activities. I've found that many graduates believe that because they are "busy" that they are being productive. I want our graduates to understand the difference between being busy and producing results.
6. Scope of expertise. When hiring, I assume that an OSU marketing grad has been exposed to the marketing academic training I need. What I want as an employer is a broader scope. Marketing professionals have to do so many things that are peripherally related to marketing: Graphic design, public relations, etc. I don't need to have a marketing graduate also be a graphic designer, but they will work with designers and perhaps even manage them, so they need to know a little about the craft. The same is true for advertising, web design, public relations and other related disciplines.
7. Professionalism. This category covers many things, not the least of which is attire. Some graduates who are used to attending class in flip-flops, sweatpants and a T-shirt simply don't know what is expected of them, or why it is important to look professional. But it goes much farther than attire, extending to proper office decorum. Is it okay to text message your friends during work? What about asking a coworker out? Can I have a beer at lunch? Some of our new

hires at SNB are surprised to learn that we don't let them surf anywhere they want on the internet. I think some of our graduates could save themselves some embarrassment or even avoid some career-limiting moves by knowing more than they often do. Professionalism extends to showing up to work on time. I realize there is an adjustment for a student whose earliest obligation may have been a 10:30 AM class to start showing up to work at 8:00 AM, ready to perform. If they can't handle an 8-5 work schedule, then we should coach them to look for employment where there is flexibility.

8. Ethics. I confess that I don't know what opportunities our graduates have to learn Business Ethics while we have them on campus. I'm all for having that taught, but our teaching needs to go beyond what is right and wrong. We need to prepare our students for the kinds of ethical dilemmas they are likely to face as a marketing professional.

9 Fiscal responsibility. Professional marketers are almost always budget-constrained. To succeed, we must know how to prepare a business case, then effectively manage the budget and resources we are granted. Business cycles almost always affect the marketing department, so learning how to do more with less and negotiating are survival skills for a marketing professional.

I hope some of this is helpful. I would be glad to discuss this topic further with anybody who has an interest.

Thanks,

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