

THE EXPERIENCE GAP IN HIRING NEW GRADUATES: EXPECTING TOO MUCH FOR ENTRY LEVEL POSITIONS

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[dx.doi.org/10.18374/JABE-20-3.13](https://doi.org/10.18374/JABE-20-3.13)

ABSTRACT

College graduates are faced with many challenges during their job search. This is often due to their lack of real-world experience in their field of study. College graduates are willing and able to accept entry-level positions; however, they are often shut down if the experience requirement is not met. This paper will address this issue as well as the need for hiring managers to evaluate the requirements and expectations for the specific entry-level job. Both the graduate and the hiring manager sides will be discussed and potential solutions provided.

Keywords: Hiring Graduates, Experience Gap, Entry Level Positions, Recruitment, Job Search, Careers

1. INTRODUCTION

Almost a million associate's degrees, two million bachelor's degrees and over 800,000 master's degrees are expected to be awarded during the 2020-2021 academic year (Hussar, Zhang, Hein, Wang, Roberts, Cui, Smith, Bullock Mann, Barmer & Dilig, 2020). These college graduates will find that starting their careers is an unexpected challenge. After completing their studies, they anticipate joining the workforce utilizing their degree, but it is not that simple. Issues begin to surface when it is time to apply for that job after college, such as not having the required number of years of experience. There are times when experience is truly needed for the job and hiring managers have to look beyond college graduates who believe that they are qualified for the job. However, hiring managers must face the challenge of knowing what is actually required for the job in order to avoid eliminating promising candidates (Maurer, 2018). This experience gap, together with many other issues, make it difficult for graduates to find full time work and for hiring managers to find good talent. In this article, the problem is approached from both the graduate's and hiring managers' sides. Whether a hiring manager's expectations are too high, or a recent graduate's expectations are too high, there are ways to bridge this gap.

The paper starts by briefly describing the gap in expectations regarding experience. Concurrent problems that lead to the gap are proposed. Next, the problem is addressed from the graduate side. Their expectations are examined. Ways to bridge the gap and better prepare themselves for the job search are explored. This is followed by a look at the hiring manager's perspective. In this section, as in the previous section, expectations are examined and solutions explored. The paper moves to acknowledge and incorporate several peripheral issues that can affect the dynamics of the hiring process. It concludes by summarizing the advice to graduates and hiring manager, and proposing new areas for research.

2. THE GAP(S)

There is a gap in expectations between recent graduates and hiring managers. Graduates expect to be hireable directly out of college, while employers expect candidates to have experience. However, this gap may be an aggregation of several other gaps. Is there a real gap in experience? Does the talent pool lack the qualifications for the job? Recent graduates may actually lack experience needed to perform on the job. However if this is always the case, nobody would ever be hired. There may be a gap in preparation. Sometimes graduates are not as prepared as they could be to enter their first full time career related position. There are actions that graduates can take to minimize this gap. A third gap is a gap between the