Introduction

The current economic situation that many of our students find themselves in leads us as instructors and mentors to see what we can do to better our students’ careers while they are attending Red Deer College. To start, we wanted to see what it is our students are doing and what they believe the employer of today is looking for. As well, we wanted to talk to some key industry employers with regard to what they are looking for in the employee of today.

These are our findings.

What are the skills that are predominantly missing in the workforce of today?

- Soft Skills (work ethic, reliability, leadership, clear communication)
- Trade Skills (diverse knowledge, fabrication ability)
- Diverse Skills (organizational skills, ability to follow direction, flexibility)

What do you look for in a potential employee?

- Experience / Education (includes safety and trade-related certifications)
- Ability to put a face to the name
- Clean, well-organized resume, targeted specifically to the company
- The ability to pass a pre-screen test

Cost associated with hiring a new employee: $500-$2000

What would be your recommendation to employee hopefuls?

- Get as much training/certifications to be more employable
- Research potential employers and ask well-thought-out questions
- Be safety minded
- Be prepared

Comments:

- Trades need to be more represented and respected at a high school level
- Safety infractions are the number one reason new employees were released
- A new apprentice has a harder struggle, so make use of pre-employment and other industrial training courses
- Experience a person has is a major factor: “Quality not Quantity”

Summary

With over ⅓ of our students currently unemployed, the need to improve one’s employability is greater than ever. While students see the value in work ethic, it may be the numerous other soft skills that employers are seeking (e.g. communication, reliability, and leadership skills). It appears our students have an understanding of what the employer is looking for, but the lack of ambition to put it into practice. The biggest discrepancy in our findings was the value of safety. Students viewed safety as the least sought-after skill employers would want, while in reality, safety infractions were the number one reason new employees were released. Recent conversations with the Career and Counselling Office has reflected an increase in trades students using the facility within recent months when compared to previous years.