

EMPLOYERS SPEAK



Jose Bray

Partner/"Bike Guy", Joe Mamma Urban Cycles
Ottawa, Ontario



With all the talk these days about essential skills and employability skills, we thought we'd survey the field to hear from employers themselves what they seek in a job candidate. The *Canada Prospects* youth reporting team spoke with three employers—two from Ontario, and one from Alberta—and gathered these insights.

Employer:

Jose Bray, Partner/"Bike Guy", Joe Mamma Urban Cycles,
Ottawa, Ontario

Duties:

Hiring, training, buying and selling product, making repairs
on occasion. Head of Human Resources.

Nature of the business:

Retail store that specializes in urban cycling and clothing,
and also does repairs.

Q: What do you look for in a job candidate?

A: I look for enthusiasm and the drive to gain skills. I hire people based on ethics—how they respond to questions, how they treat me, and how they treat people in the store—and enthusiasm... The first thing I look for in a resume is that it is not done on resume wizard. It just shows laziness and a lack of creativity.

Q: What skills and qualifications do you consider important in a candidate?

A: Preferably that they're proficient with the technical aspect of shop operations—able to do basic repairs, change tires, adjust brakes—and with sales. Previous retail experience is not important. They have to be responsible, honest and disciplined. I also look at their general appearance. Are they presentable? Are they overdressed or underdressed? For instance, it wouldn't make sense for someone to come into an interview here with a suit on... I like to see how people respond in awkward situations too. At the end of an interview I'll ask, 'Why should I hire you?'

Q: What advice can you offer for young people contemplating their career options?

A: Do what you love and do what makes you happy. It's as simple as that. I'm the perfect example of someone who left a job I didn't like to do something I love. Our mechanic is the same way. He started out in high tech and left it to become a bike mechanic.

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YOUTH REPORTER:
Ken Lancaster, 19
Carleton University
Bachelor of Journalism student

I'm not hiring a certificate

At 55, Don Oborowsky, President and CEO of Waiward Steel Fabricators Ltd. has interviewed his share of young job candidates. In his opinion, it's the person that counts more than the education.

"I look for someone who looks like they want to be hired, like they're ready to go to work. Are they dressed well (smart casual) or do they look like they just got out of bed? Are they well mannered, are they respectful or did they toss their cigarette as they crossed the doorstep?

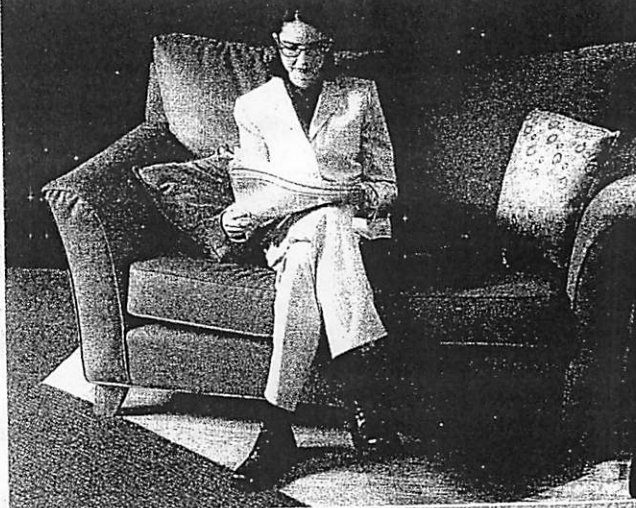
"I like to find out if they carry responsibility at home—do they cut the grass, have they held a part-time job? I like them to make eye contact; body language is important. And I like them to be well spoken—none of this 'like a, like a, right, right'

"I think we've got a fairly large group of kids today that have an attitude, 'I've got this education, you have to hire me.' They don't have a hope. I'm not just hiring a Grade 12 certificate or a university degree, I want to know you as a person, to see if you'll fit in with the rest of my team."

Survey says

Highlights from the 2001-02 Winnipeg Employer Survey, Youth Employment Service (YES)

- Employers identified **reliability** as the most important quality they look for, followed by **positive attitude**
- 53 percent of employers prefer that job seekers mail or fax resumes.
- 90 percent of employers said previous experience is not always necessary.
- 94 percent said they are willing to train.



GLOSSARY

Employability or soft skills: The fundamental skills required by most employers today. The Conference Board of Canada divides them into three groups: teamwork; personal management; and academic skills (which includes communication, thinking and learning skills).

www.calsca.com/conference_board.htm.

Essential skills: The nine skills needed for work, learning and life, as defined by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada: Reading Text, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Continuous Learning, Thinking Skills, and Computer Use. Transferable to virtually any occupation, these skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills, and enable

people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change.

www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca.

People skills: Interpersonal communication and teamwork skills considered highly valuable in most occupations.

Skilled trades: The more than 100 trades and technology careers that require high levels of skill and formalized apprenticeship training. They include: aircraft inspectors, bricklayers, cable television technicians, chefs, pipefitters, oil well drillers and welders.

www.careersintrades.ca

Transferable or horizontal skills:

Those capabilities that can be transferred from one job to the next, from one industry to another. They include: oral and written communication; leadership and management; human relations; research, planning and analysis; and time management.

Vertical or occupational skills:

Occupation-specific technical skills that aren't typically transferable from one job to the next.

Foreign credentials: Qualifications and certifications earned outside of Canada. Subject to credential recognition procedures, which vary by industry and region.

Human resource development:

The act of fostering the growth of a pool of qualified workers in a particular field or sector through training and education.

Labour market information:

Information on employment, wages, standards, qualifications, job openings, working conditions and other factors related to the labour market.

Sector: An industry. A category of economic activity. Examples: tourism, environment, automotive.

HOW

A DAY ON THE JOB

Job shadowing is an excellent way to take a mini test drive of your occupation of interest. Formal and informal programs exist in communities across Canada that offer this type of first-hand look at the realities of a day 'on the job'. Each year, Grade 9 students in various schools across the country participate in *Take Our Kids to Work Day*TM. Most often, the experience is a real eye opener—as it was for a group of students who spent a day at the Toronto office of the Globe and Mail during *Take Our Kids to Work Day*TM 2003. In reporting on his experience, student Liam Blackwell noted, "I didn't know it took so many people to put a newspaper together. It was interesting to see the process." Student Elisabeth Bottomley remarked, "I learned many things, but I think that one of the most thought-provoking was realizing how stress-inducing and high-pressure the environment is—with constant deadlines, conflicts and high expectations."

Learn more by visiting The Learning Partnership website:

www.takeourkidstowork.ca