

# WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

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## Site of the Month

### ARE OUR GRADUATES READY TO WORK?

Recent discussion in the media has been on young employees having different job expectations than older employees, leaving many employers baffled. An employer during an interview with NewsHour Special Correspondent Judy Woodworth questioned why young workers thought they could work in places for a couple months and then get an unpaid vacation, and that they don't care if they get paid.<sup>1</sup>

These differences, as suggested by various theorists, may be due to parents spoiling their children; children having expectations of entitlement, being often acknowledged as special by parents and teachers; and being savvy in technology. Spoiled children, however, as some have suggested, may lead to spoiled workers. Ms. Woodworth in an interview with a young worker was told that: "We feel like we are entitled to have creative jobs that are very interesting, that are high-paced, that we're our own bosses." Woodworth questioned whether they might lose that youthful sense of entitlement when faced with the realities of the workplace.

Having worked for almost 30 years and not being one of the spoiled Y generation, I wondered if, indeed, they are more skilled/knowledgeable than my generation, and therefore, were entitled to realizing their workplace expectations. Yes, the younger generation is technology savvy, but how would they measure up on other skills that are important to success in the workplace, such as basic knowledge skills?

A study conducted by four organizations shows that the future work force is not prepared for the demands of the workplace as perceived by 431 employers across the U.S. Industry respondents were asked to assess the skill sets that recently hired workers (high school graduates, two-year college or technical graduates, and four-year college graduates) need to succeed in the workplace. Overall, the new job entrants were "woefully ill-prepared for the demands of today's (and tomorrow's) workplace." The following highlights findings for the four-year college-graduate job entrants.

For entry-level jobs, 23.9 percent of the employers rated the preparation of recent college graduates for work as excellent, 64.5 as adequate, and 8.7 as deficient. The table on the next page shows the percentage of employers who rated the graduates on basic knowledge/skills. Graduates were perceived to be most deficient in foreign languages and writing in English.

**Rating Percentages for New Job Entrant Four-Year College Graduates on Basic Knowledge Skills by Employers**

<i>Basic Knowledge Skill</i>	<i>Deficient</i>	<i>Adequate</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Foreign Languages	40.7	53.1	6.2
Writing in English	26.2	58.4	15.5
Government/Economics	17.4	74.5	8.1
History/Geography	17.0	77.8	5.2
Science	12.6	72.8	14.6
Mathematics	12.0	69.8	18.3
Humanities/Arts	7.6	83.2	9.2
Reading Comprehension	5.1	69.0	25.9
English Language	4.4	69.5	26.2

The highest percentage of employers, 46.3, ranked the new job entrants excellent on information technology application, although not shown in the above table. This group of job entrants may have a chance to realize their job expectations. The rest of the Y generation may need to hone their basic skills before achieving their expectations.

The report, “Are They Really Ready to Work,” is available online at: [http://21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL\\_REPORT\\_PDF09-29-06.pdf](http://21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf).

*References*

<sup>1</sup>“Generation Next Changes the Face of the Workplace,” [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/july-dec06/geny\\_12-14.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/july-dec06/geny_12-14.html), as of 9/13/07.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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