

# Survey shows student job outlook, motivation changing

January 26 2011

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(PhysOrg.com) -- It's not your father's job market. That's the message a Maine Business School lecturer and researcher has discovered in surveys over the last few years of his students.

Jobs, careers, motivation and expectations have shifted significantly since the days when people sought jobs for the long term and remained loyal to their employers or even tolerated a stressful work environment, according to Scott Anchors, a lecturer in management and leadership who also is a career and organizational consultant.

Since 2008, Anchors has informally but consistently surveyed more than 400 of his management students about what matters to them in terms of job motivation and expectations. The results, he says, indicate students are pessimistic, even fatalistic, about their employment futures. The reasons are not surprising, he says, given the recession and high unemployment over the last few years.

"Things are definitely changing," he says. "Companies do not offer the security of the past and thus motivation is changing. Additionally, technology and general social changes offer new options and motivations."

Anchors found over three years the percentage of students interested in a stable and secure future dropped from 59 percent to 39 percent, while the percentage of students interested in earning a great deal of money increased during the period from 5 percent to 19.9 percent. Students

expressing increased interest in opportunities to use their special abilities rose from 12 percent to 22.4 percent.

Having a stable and secure future is consistent what some psychologists view as one of the most basic of human needs, says Anchors, a recognized expert in personality assessment.

“As it — safety and security — becomes less frequent, our needs may or will change in what they are or how we meet them,” he says. “Having a great deal of money is a short-term need that might buy the basic one — stability and security — but in the long term, it is not a certainty. The work environment is changing and employees are changing. Freedom in many industries is expanding due to the web; we can work in more places from home, sell and buy worldwide.”

Today’s work world is fast-paced, always changing, responding and requires employees who do lots of things differently then in the past, Anchors says.

The chief priority of one student, Anchors says, was “a stable and secure future is unlikely, so I need to earn a great deal of money as soon as I can.”

Another said he saw his parents’ retirement funds collapse in the recession and wanted to avoid similar vulnerability for himself in the future.

Fourth-year business management major Alex Oliver of South China, Maine says seeing so many friends who recently graduated struggle for jobs has been discouraging.

“It seemed that the typical 3.5 GPA combined with high involvement was not netting the jobs that they expected to have, with the recession

playing a huge role,” he says. “They had a ton of potential, but may never get to fully realize it unless they take more risks. Starting at the bottom of a company and trying to work my way up just did not seem appealing to me after being able to control my own destiny so much over the last four years in college.

“Gaining a stable job is certainly not guaranteed, and may not even let me fulfill my potential, so why bother?” he adds. Oliver, who successfully managed a house-painting business while in college, is thinking about starting a similar business in California, where both risks and potential success can be high.

Anchors says his survey results reveal interesting information and may say something about motivation of today’s students, among other things. “It is a different world. Faster-paced, complex issues, constant change, etc. Today’s employees need to be prepared to enter the work world prepared to be flexible, able and interested in learning, able to think outside the box, and able to read their environment and deal with considerable change,” he concludes.

“In my modest view, success for our students in the future lines up with their curiosity, flexibility, willingness to work with change, teamwork skills, and willingness to identify their skills and use them for organizational and societal purpose,” says Anchors.

Provided by University of Maine

Citation: Survey shows student job outlook, motivation changing (2011, January 26) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-01-survey-student-job-outlook.html>

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