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## Retailing Employability Skills Needed by Employers

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was ascertain to find out retailing employability skills needed by employers. Two aspect were specifically looked into, 1) the skill needed by retailer employer and 2) the demand for diploma or degree in retailing programme by industries. A set of questionnaire was used in this study. A simple interview with retailer employers also was used as a method of this study. A total of 44 employer participated in this study. Data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed using the statistical package for social study (SPSS) version 22. From the findings it can conclude that industry needs 10 skills from retail management students and found that the industry really need the graduate student from retailing management.

**Keywords:** Retailing Skill, Employability Skill, Retailing Employability, Retailer Employer

### Introduction

Employability skills are not job specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer. (Sherer & Eadie, 1987) "Too many young graduates leave universities without the skills, attitudes, and understanding that are necessary to successfully enter the world of work. The unemployment rates among graduates are the highest in the country. Often jobs are readily available, but these graduates lack what is needed to get and keep jobs. It seems reasonable to expect schools to teach students what they need to succeed in the world of work." (McCoy & J, 1991)

From the employers' perspective, 'employability' seems to refer to 'work readiness', that is, possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment (Geof Mason, 2009). Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job (Robinson, 2000). Employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industries, businesses, job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior most position.

### Problem Statement

An employer is an organization, institution government entity, agency, company, professional, services firm, nonprofit association, small business, store or individual who employs or puts to work

a person who is called an employee. According to Rick Holden (2002), most employers are looking for graduates who are proactive, can use higher level skills including 'analysis critique, synthesis and multi layered communication to facilitate innovative teamwork in catalyzing the transformation of their organization. Different employers need graduates who have different capabilities. All value the analytical and reflective qualities that lie at the heart of a quality learning experience. But there is a growing emphasis by employers on the need for graduates to demonstrate a range of competences which will equip them to work in a global environment, in differ countries, in multi-cultural teams, be innovative and enterprising and have strong language skills. Businesses have diverse and multiple need for higher learning.

An obvious way to build competitive advantage through employee is to attract more graduates into the retailing industry. Recruiting future retail professionals from the existing pool of graduates has become a major goal of many retail businesses. However, the attraction of prospective employees remains a key retailing issue (Broadbridge, 2003; Rahim, 2012).

Some higher learning institution including Polytechnic had offer the program which is introduces various aspects of professional retailing. This program is the right course for aspirants who would like to become retail professionals at supervisory levels and those who own or manage a retail business. Several of subjects offered in this course that can help employability skills among retail management students like fundamental of retailing, retail operation, customer service and etc. Besides study theory in the class students also have practical that can increase their knowledge and experience in field of retailing. For subject in retail buying and retail operation students learn about how to setup a store and how to negotiate with supplier in order to get low price. With this subject it can help student employability skills.

This research carried out was to find out the skill that needed by retailer employer and to find out the demand of Retail Management program by industries.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What are the skill that employer need to student of retail management?
- 2) Is program Retailing Management needed by industries?

### **Research Objectives**

- 1) To identify the skill that employer need to student of retail management.
- 2) To determine the demand of Retailing Management program by industries.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Employability Skills**

According Knight (2003) define employability as a set of achievements including skills, understandings and personal attributes which is make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

Having employability skills can help you get a job. They can also help you stay in a job and work your way to the top. If you score a job interview, chances are you'll be asked questions about your job specific skills and your employability skills.

Employers currently looking for a graduates skills in the application, it is because of all graduates have a wide range of skills on the courses they have taken. Among the skills employers want are always like communication, team work, leadership, initiative, problem solving, flexibility and passion. In addition, the Employment can also help workers adapt to the changes and improve the working abilities that are tailored to the needs of the work environment. Further, many employers will focus more specifically on workers who lack employability skills in terms of affective.

The relative chances of getting and maintaining different kinds of employment while most people view employability in absolute terms, focusing on the need for individuals to obtain credentials, knowledge and social status, the concept of employability can be seen as subjective and dependent on contextual factors. (Philip Brown 2011).

Employability also means that those possessing the capability to acquire the skills to do the required work may not necessarily be able to do the work immediately and without further training. (Cox, 2006).

### **Employer Expectation**

A study conducted by the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) (2007a; 2007b) found that in general, employers need employees who have the skills to communicate with the characteristics of a good personal and knowledgeable in the field of ICT. General skills required by employers are language skills, general knowledge and current, the ability to serve customers, general knowledge in ICT and work experience or exposure. The study found that even graduates feel that they have acquired the skills necessary ICT and language while studying in institutions of higher learning, the lecturer thought otherwise. The lecturers felt that the performance and abilities of their students is slowly declining in terms of communication skills, confidence, thinking and problem solving skills as well as motivation and attendance in college. There are serious problems to demonstrate the readiness of graduates to work. To address this problem, employers have suggested that a period of industry training to graduate lengthened.

The employer expectation toward graduate skills is high. Employers are seeking for the graduates that are well balance in both academic achievement and soft skill. According to Nurita (2004) in Malaysia, many employers are looking for graduates who have good academic achievement and excellent soft skill such as communication skills, problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and the ability to be flexible. Quek (1999) affirms that the major advantage employers seek in today's competitive world is the skills possessed by the graduates to create success in their business and work place. Rather than only good in academic, many of the employers would like to hire employee that good in everything that can help them contribute to the company. In order for the candidate to be employed by the company they have to bringing not only their good achievement but also an additional knowledge and skills.

Farooq (2011) measured job mismatch in Pakistan from three dimension: level of education, field of education, and skills. Jabeen (2001) studied the mismatch between graduating university students' expectations regarding skills that qualify them to be employed by applying non-parametric techniques, the study found significant differences between employers' expectations and students' perceptions about needed skills.

Nowadays the employers are like to hire graduate that good in both. Thus, today fresh graduate have to be excellent in term of their academic and soft skill, so it can increase their opportunity to be hire. This is because the graduate students have to compete with other graduate or candidates that are looking for the job. According to Rajni (2011) new comers at workplace need to be adaptive enough to build their mindset with learning trends of the industry, willing to work in team as a team player, have the ability to look at the bigger picture, and not only stick to the responsibilities given by the organization but have the adoption to take initiatives in a proactive manner. According to Ume-Amen (2014) employer are seeking for the candidates who have the capability to own the job itself and display a role beyond the expectations of the organization.

According to Richard Remedios (2012), communicative skills involve effective communication in both the national language and English language in different contexts and with different people.

According to Kevin Lowden et al. (2011: 24) stated that employers expect graduate to have the technical and discipline competences from their degree but require graduates to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and often managerial abilities or potential. Employability skills focus on graduate's abilities to adapt and use their personnel and academic skills to create more tangible educational outcomes that associate graduate employability with employment. It also refers the readiness of new graduates to contribute to their originations in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude, as well as pragmatic industry understanding.

### **Retailing Management Student's Skills**

Retailing Management student have appropriate retailing knowledge and skills. Except of the theory, the retail management student are also having real practice in retail stimulation store. The student would learn the skills though theory and practical include soft skills, customer service, managing the merchandise and planning process, retail pricing and store layout, design, and visual merchandising.

According to the Messenger (1997), students provide an increasing if transient workforce for retail. This segment additionally provides an opportunity for retailers to raise skills levels and increase retention by converting students into permanent positions. Furthermore, retailers are missing a valuable source of graduate management recruits. The number of retail degrees in the UK has steadily risen over the past ten years, providing graduates with the retail knowledge and future management and leadership skills desperately needed in the retail environment. Furthermore, retail graduates can be fast tracked through training programmers and offer enhanced graduate retention. In comparison, the recruitment of non-retail graduates into management positions relies on strong training and development programmers otherwise managers lack the 'holistic insight' into the industry resulting in poor performance and contributing to staff turnover.

Lastly, specific retail and technical skills identified were visual merchandising and display which were considered vital for fashion related sectors such as clothing, home and interiors and in helping to create a brand image visual merchandising and window dressing is our key advantage. We switched our advertising budget to this and now have to buy in this merchandising skill.



### **Research Methodology**

Questionnaire was provided by JPP (Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik), it is addressed to survey on the interest of respondent (employer) to the programme offered, job demand and graduates marketability of Diploma in Retail Management.

Questionnaire has four part as follows:

- I. Section A - company profile /
- II. Section B - company expectations and programme relevancy
- III. Section C - needed of graduate capabilities
- IV. Section D - program needed by industry

Respondent population for this research was 44 person from 13 Retail Company of Malaysia, which was represent as retail employer. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.22) used.

### **Finding and Analysis**

Alpha Cronbach value of this research is 0.9, shown that, it is excellent Daren George (2003). A total of 13 retail industries were selected as respondents. Respondants that had been selected as respondents are Econsave & Carry, Guardian, 99 Speedmart, 7-Eleven Malaysia, TM Point Sdn Bhd, AEON Big, Al-Ikhsan Sports, Factory Outlet Store, Toy R Us, MST Golf Plaza, AEON JUSCO, TF Value Mart , and the Sport Planet Warehouse. Respondents including Executive Trainee, Manager, Head of Department, Supervisor, Department Manager, Retail Manager, Management Trainee, Retail Executive, Assistant Manager, Store Assistant, Assistant Manager, Human Resources Manager, Head of Division, Group Head and Director Business.

From the findings, it shows that 45.5% are international businesses, 52.3% local businesses and 2.3% are medium-sized industries. There are several courses related with retailing was highly demanded from industry. The courses are literacy on computer especially on Excel and Oracle, the basis of retail, customer service and retail sales, math for retail, retail promotion and retailing global issues.

From this study, found that for business school, Diploma in Retail Management (DRM) in highly needed from industry. Findings from this questions is Diploma in Retail Management is 56.5%, Diploma In Accountancy is 8.7%, Diploma in Marketing is 15.9% and Diploma in Business Study is 18.8%.

Interviews were also held with human resource officials from MST Golf, SportDirect.com, MPH Sdn Bhd and Mydin Holding Berhad. From these interviews it appears that these companies are in desperate need of DRM-graduate employees, exceeding 400 employees a year. Additionally, these companies give privileges to graduates of DRM in terms of initial salary ladder and career development.

From this research we can conclude that industry needs 10 skills from Retail Management student such as:

- 1) Fundamental principles of retailing, marketing, management, soft skills and other.

- 2) Technical skill to design a store layout and visual merchandising.
- 3) Communicative skills
- 4) Decision-making skills
- 5) Social responsibility and humanistic value skills.
- 6) Life-long learning and professional development skills.
- 7) Entrepreneurial skills.
- 8) Professional code of ethics skills.
- 9) Team work and leadership skills.
- 10) Work independently skills.

### Conclusion

This finding is similar with research from Nurita (2004) state that in Malaysia, many employers are looking for graduates who have good academic achievement and excellent soft skill such as communication skills, problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and the ability to be flexible and according to National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) (2007a; 2007b) employers need employees who have the skills to communicate with the characteristics of a good personal and knowledgeable in the field of ICT. General skills required by employers are language skills, general knowledge and current, the ability to serve customers, general knowledge in ICT and work experience or exposure.

From this research we found that the industry really need the graduate student from Retail Management compare to other courses. It similar with Kevin Lowden et al. (2011: 24) stated that employers expect graduate to have the technical and discipline competencies from their degree and require graduates to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and often managerial abilities or potential.

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