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Survey: Employers Want 'Soft Skills' From Graduates

By **Jeremy Bauer-Wolf**

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Employers want college graduates who have “soft skills,” such as being a good listener or thinking critically, but they have difficulty finding such candidates, according to **a new report**.

The survey was conducted online in September by Morning Consult for Cengage, an educational technology and services company, among more than 500 hiring managers and 150 more human resources professionals. More than 1,500 current and former college students from two- and four-year institutions were also surveyed.

The companies found that the most in-demand talent among employers was listening skills – 74 percent of employers indicated this was a skill they valued. This was followed by attention to detail (70 percent) and effective communication (69 percent).

About 73 percent of the employers said that finding qualified candidates was somewhat or very difficult. Roughly one-third of the employers (34 percent) indicated colleges and universities have not prepared students for jobs.

The students reported finding jobs was challenging. About 65 percent of the students said getting a job is more difficult for them than for their parents’ generation. About 77 percent also expressed concerns about whether they had the skills needed for a job.

“There is a need for more soft skills training, both in college and on the job, and today’s learners and graduates must continue to hone their skills to stay ahead,” Michael Hansen, chief executive officer of Cengage, said in a statement. “The onus is on everyone – students, colleges, employers and industry partners like Cengage – to make learning more accessible, relevant and affordable.”