

newsworthy trends

It's Not Your Father's Workplace Anymore, Says New Survey

(NAPSA)—As the nation's newest graduates job hunt, they may find a few surprises in store for them, especially when it comes to the skills today's employers prize most in their new hires.

A survey by Bayer Corporation in cooperation with the National Science Foundation that examines current workplace issues finds today's workers need special skills to manage continuing change in the workplace. They need to be flexible and adaptable, able to solve unforeseen problems on the job and do their best work in teams.

Indeed, these so-called New Economy skills are increasingly becoming the skills of choice in all kinds of industries, including Old Economy ones. That's according to those polled in *The Bayer Facts of Science Education VII: The State of America's New Workforce*, who include both America's newest employees and the managers who oversee them.

"The fact that these so-called New Economy skills are preferred by today's employers should not surprise anyone on the front lines of science education reform," said Rebecca Lucore, who oversees Bayer Corporation's *Making Science Make Sense* program, a companywide initiative that advances science literacy through hands-on, inquiry-based learning, employee volunteerism and public education.

"Whether you call them New Economy or working smart skills, they're really plain old science literacy skills and they're no longer a nicety in today's global economy,

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In the survey, when asked to choose, new employees and managers consistently eschewed working hard skills for working smart ones. For instance, both young people and managers chose being able to "solve unforeseen problems on the job" over "refer unforeseen problems to others;" "adapt to changes in the work environment" over "cope with a stable work environment;" "do their best work in teams" over "do their best work independent of others;" and, "continue to expand skills as the company changes and/or grows" over "refine and master in more depth the specifics of their present job."

"The survey's findings that today's workplace values problem-solving, critical-thinking and team working reinforces the conclusion that students need to learn science in the kind of experiential, hands-on way that helps develop these skills," said Lucore.

The new employees and managers agree. They believe the most effective way for students to learn science is in a hands-on way.

Moreover, they report science literacy is important for them in their jobs, even if their jobs are not science-based.

"It's pretty clear that today's workplace—whether it's set in a retail, manufacturing, agricultural or professional environment—is no longer our father's," explained Lucore.

Just how well equipped are new employees with these science literacy-cum-working smart-cum New Economy skills?

Today's new graduates preparing to pound the pavement would be wise to take note of what the managers have to say. Which is, they are not nearly as well equipped with these skills as they think they are. Nor did their education prepare them as well for today's workplace as they think it did. In fact, while the young workers consistently give their pre-college education a "B," managers give it a solid "C."

"Managers, who have the advantage of age, understand that there is no substitute for experience," said Lucore. "Humans learn through doing. We make mistakes and go back and do it again, and then we get it right. That's how we learn."

Still, the class of 2001 should not be disheartened by any of this. The survey's message is clear: young workers should maintain their enthusiasm for their jobs and careers, but at the same time constantly work to improve their skills. That's an Old Economy recipe for success.