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BUSINESS

At Work: Recent College Grads Lack Professionalism

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Recent College Grads Lack Professionalism

Entry-level workers are an entitled, unprofessional bunch.

1 That's the bleak assessment derived from new research by the Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania, which offers an annual survey of whether employees are up to the job.

2 The researchers surveyed about 400 human-resources professionals about their experiences recruiting and hiring recent college graduates in a variety of industries and roles. More than a third report that the level of professionalism among new hires has decreased in the last five years. Nearly 45% said that employees' work ethic has worsened.

3 Young employees often appeared arrogant, either during job interviews or on the job, according to those surveyed, with 52% of respondents reporting that more new employees are arriving at the office with an air of entitlement.

4 Managers noted several characteristics of professionalism: appropriate appearance, punctuality, regular attendance, honesty, attentiveness and sticking with a task through completion. Many entry-level workers lacked these traits, according to the study.

5 Researchers say new hires may be taking workplace cues from peers and friends, rather than more-experienced workers.

"Acceptable behavior among peers is not necessarily acceptable among coworkers and superiors," says Deborah Ricker, who oversees the Center for Professional Excellence.

6 The study also found that new hires are using technology inappropriately on the job, such as texting co-workers instead of sending email or talking face-to-face. More than half of survey respondents noting that these workers are also spending too much time on social networks like Twitter and Facebook during work hours.

—Rachel Emma Silverman