Robert Half Canada

Does Alma Mater Matter? Not So Much, Say CIOs

Robert Half Technology Shares Tips for Highlighting What Matters Most on the Hunt for a Job

TORONTO, Aug. 20, 2014 /CNW/ - As students head back to class this fall, they should try to obtain real-world experience, in addition to their diplomas, if they want to make the grade with employers, a Robert Half Technology suggests. **Fifty-one per cent** of CIOs said they prioritize skills and experience over college degrees when making hiring decisions. Another **32 per cent** said they place a little weight on the prestige of a job applicant's university when evaluating job applicants; only **10 per cent** are heavily influenced by an impressive alma mater

The survey is based on more than 270 interviews with CIOs from a random sample of Canadian companies. Robert Half Technology is a leading provider of IT professionals on a project and full-time basis.

CIOs were asked, **"When evaluating a candidate for an IT position, what value do you place on the prestige of their college or university?"**

I place a little weight on university prestige	32%
I place a lot of weight on university prestige	10%
University prestige doesn't matter to me	6%
I place more weight on skills and experience than on whether or not a candidate attended college/university	**51%**
Don't know	1%
Total	100%

"When recruiting top talent, IT employers prioritize a candidate's ability to demonstrate the practical application of skills over education," said Deborah Bottineau, Senior Regional Manager of Robert Half Technology. "Although a quality education establishes a foundation, applicants who have real-world IT experience are better able to transition into a role with less ramp-up time."

Robert Half Technology offers these four suggestions for showcasing real-word experience on the job hunt:

- **Explain your learning process.** What resources have you used to build your skills? For example, if you are a developer, are you active in any developer communities, or have you taken part in hackathons?
- **Show off your projects.** Have you designed an app? A website? A software product? Come to the interview prepared to share examples of your own work.
- **Discuss experience earned in the 'real world.'** A potential employer should hear about any relevant internships, volunteer opportunities, and part-time or project work you have completed. Explain not only what you did in those roles but also how you made a difference.
- **Shine a spotlight on your soft skills.** Many employers are looking for technology professionals who can bring both technical and nontechnical skills to the job. Calling attention to communication, project management, problem-solving and similar skills could set you apart from other candidates.

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