

## Labor Market Realities

Keep the following trends in mind as you search for your next job and consider your career development journey. They will give you perspective and help you make realistic decisions about your future. They can also help with your SWOT analysis described in the next section of this Guide.

“If you are expecting your boss or your company to take care of your needs and chart your career for you, you’ll almost certainly be disappointed. You, in fact, were hired to take care of their needs.”

Andrea Sutcliffe,  
First-Job Survival Guide



**Lifelong employability** — Strive to be employable—to have the skills that employers value—so you can find work easily even if you get laid off. Don’t expect to have lifelong employment, especially with one company.

**Diversity** — Appreciate and work with cultural differences. Employers value this skill because the labor market has more women, older people and people of different races and ethnic groups than ever before.

**Computer skills** — Develop strong computer skills and update them regularly. Every industry prefers workers who have these skills.

**Math, Science, and English** — Develop strong math, science, and communication skills. Employers always need people with these skills.

**Customer service** — Always demonstrate a positive, helpful attitude toward customers, supervisors, and coworkers. Employers value good customer service skills because gaining and maintaining customers is crucial, especially in a weak economy.

**Economic awareness** — Pay attention to the local, national, and global market. Jobs are created and destroyed because of technological advances, the economy, and corporate restructuring. Prepare for it.

**Post high school education** — Obtain an education beyond a high school diploma. It’s the number one way to achieve and maintain a middle class lifestyle or, in many cases, to be self-supporting. With an advanced education you will remain employable.

**Continuous learning** — Constantly upgrade your skills. Employers want to know what you’ve learned recently, not what degree you earned ten years ago.

**Education costs** — Find employers who will train you. Since the price of college and technical education will continue to rise faster than inflation, academic help is valuable.

(more)

## Labor Market Realities (continued)

- Flattened wages** — Be aware that many organizations are willing to replace long-term employees with younger, less-expensive workers. This practice has kept wages flat.
- Doing what you love** — Focus on work that fulfills and interests you when you begin long-term employment planning. Since job security doesn't exist, you might as well enjoy what you do while you can do it!
- Not just 9-5** — Be aware of the pressure to work long hours. Flex-time, telecommuting, and cell phones have blurred the lines between work and home. Americans work more hours than people in any other industrialized country.
- Employer as client** — Embrace the new relationship employees have with employers, such as the one that resembles a professional athlete's free agency. For instance, "I'll provide my knowledge, skills, and abilities in exchange for wages and benefits as long as it suits both of us. The relationship ends when one of us wants out or the contract expires."
- High turnover** — Expect to have many jobs and to work in several different occupational areas over a lifetime of work. The old career ladders no longer apply in most occupations, which means you have to make your own decisions about what sort of career path (and therefore training) you need.
- Contingency workforce** — Realize that you may become part of the temporary or contract workforce, now the norm at many companies. That means you'll have lots of flexibility but few benefits and absolutely no security.
- Global competition** — Prepare yourself to compete with people worldwide for certain jobs. With the Internet, companies can hire people overseas to do the work for them but remain in their homelands. It's a small, small world!

## What Do Employers Want from Employees?

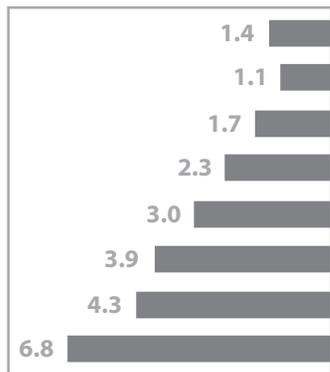
- Analytical Thinking** — The ability to generate and weigh a number of alternative solutions and to make a sound decision regarding a plan of action.
- Researching** — The ability to search for needed data and to use references to obtain appropriate information.
- Organizing** — The ability to arrange systems and routines to maintain order.
- Speaking** — The ability to express oneself fluently and intelligently.
- Writing** — The ability to use proper spelling and grammar to express ideas.
- Human Relations and Interpersonal Skills** — The ability to relate well to persons from varied backgrounds.
- Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning** — An understanding of the basic concepts and principles of mathematical and scientific processes.
- Ethical Applications** — The ability to apply moral standards and appreciate values in the work setting.
- Technology Competency** — The ability to apply basic principles of technology, including keyboarding and data manipulation.
- Career Planning** — The cultivation of a personal sense of direction and desire for improvement, including a willingness to learn.

Source: Virginia Labor Commission

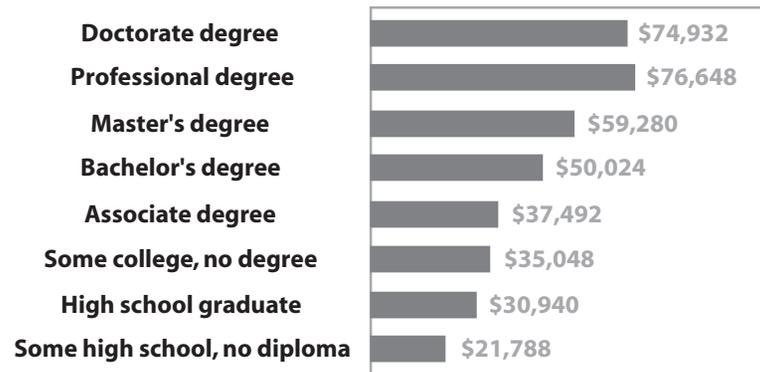
**Labor Market Realities** (continued)

**Education and Training Tends to Pay More and Provide Greater Employment Stability**

Unemployment Rate 2006



Median Earnings 2006



**Note:** Data are 2006 annual averages for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salaried workers.  
**Source:** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

For more information on education and training requirements, and on earnings for occupations in California, visit <http://www.CACareerZone.org>. To get an idea about the lifestyle these earnings will support in California, visit <http://www.CaliforniaRealityCheck.com>.

“The shortest route to the good life involves building the confidence that you can live happily within your means while doing work you truly love.”  
 Po Bronson, “What Should I do With My Life? The True Story of People Who Answered the Ultimate Question.” Random House, January 2003.