



## Is post-secondary education crucial to your career?

There are many good reasons to get an education, but does not having one disqualify you from success?

Many jobs have minimum educational qualifications, which may rule you out. Also, as more recruiters and employers turn to electronic screening by using keyword searches, not having certain words on your resume, such as certificates, diplomas, or degrees, will automatically screen you out. (How odd to be deleted from the running by a computer algorithm – a topic for another article perhaps!)

Completing a post-secondary education is impressive in that it communicates a commitment to your chosen field of expertise, time management and organization, and the ability to stick it out through the tough times. And, the resourcefulness and pride that you earn in achieving a certificate, diploma or degree can impact how you communicate to others about your achieved knowledge.

However, the education won't magically open doors. Even employers who want degrees don't want to hire those with a presumption of entitlement or those who come across as arrogant.

On the other side of this argument there are the many working folk who have little or no post-secondary education, or totally unrelated education, and go on to climb their career ladder steadily but surely, and achieve far more than those who advocate a post-secondary education might care to admit. Must one be gifted or a genius to follow this path? Perhaps. Or do you need "luck" to succeed without further education? Sometimes perhaps.

### What is the secret?

- Truly good communication skills go a long way to promotability and success. Knowing how to articulate what you do, how you do it, and what it means to the employer is crucial to success. (recommended resource: StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath)
- Relationship building, relating to others, "playing nice in the sandbox" is equally critical. The bully who forces his or her opinion on a team may get away with such behavior in the short run, but in the long run, no. Reputation gets around, and with the internet, more quickly now than ever. (recommended resource: The 11 Laws of Likeability by Michelle Tillis Liederman)
- Attitude is critical: think you are unemployable, and you're right. Think no one wants you and you are right. It's not a matter of pink-glasses positive thinking; it's a matter of not over-focusing on obstacles. (recommended resource: interview training)

Communication, relationship building and attitude are soft skills, whereas education is more about the hard skills, knowledge-based skills. Soft skills are equally important. Human Resources prefers a good hire - a self-started, good communicator, team player, a can-do type who presents minimum risk and maximum output.

Back to the question: Is post-secondary education crucial? Sometimes yes (engineers must be credentialed), sometimes no (some IT Directors are self-taught). It all depends. But don't rely on education alone to get you to the top.