

Finding Good Employees – Varsity Sports In Canada ‘A Conundrum’

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**Recruitment
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Here I am 18 years old and finishing my first year at McGill University. I am having literally the ‘time of my life,’ yet I remain confused by the world around me.

My personal conundrum today is understanding what appears to be a simple math equation which could be answered by any grade school student.

Employers advertise they are striving for success in business and reaching out to identify the best candidates to work in their organizations.

Best Attributes

They have teams of human resources professionals and consultants looking for the best attributes in candidates. Large companies spend millions of dollars a year in a effort to find people who will contribute to their organizations, people who:

- strive to improve
- loves to participate
- have a positive attitude
- are coachable
- are self-motivated

Most organizations are looking for diverse candidates that have the ability to work in pressure situations, handle deadlines, have proven leadership and teamwork experience, and are performance driven.

Mathematically speaking, these candidates should be very easy to locate at every university in Canada. Yet, many employers can’t seem to do the math.

Every fall thousands of these candidates show up as freshmen at universities across Canada nervously excited to become an active participant in the school community and in school life, to become a great student. And, importantly to them; ‘to become a varsity athlete!’

My inspiration for this conundrum is a fellow teammate. She is a fourth year student who speaks five languages and maintains a near perfect GPA. She began looking for an unpaid internship last fall. She is an inspiration to many of her peers, yet can’t get in the door of most companies because she believes she lack the contacts in the local business community!

My teammates and I get up at 5:30 a.m. and foggily make our way to the practice field where we train for two hours before breakfast. We then head to class and make like regular students. During the day, we occasionally hear other students complain vigorously they can’t be bothered to get up for their early class at 9 a.m.! We often find ourselves back on the practice field in the afternoon or getting together to plan and execute a fund-raising event and/or deal with the administration of the team.

Though I can only speak from my own experience, I do have many friends at other universities in Canada playing varsity sports and the feedback is consistent. McGill varsity athletes are trained, educated, and prepared with the ability to make an immediate impact in the workforce due to their experiences during college. Varsity athletes have proven their time management skills, faced adversity, met timely deadlines, been in leadership roles, and worked in a team environment. These prepare them for the transition into the workplace.

Mental Toughness

McGill varsity athletes possess a mental toughness that is developed during competition. Balancing sports and college, an athlete develops the ability to handle stressful situations, cope with hours of study, and handle multiple deadlines. In the McGill University Martlets' case, due to the travel and extracurricular activities, we are required to finish projects and course requirements in half the time a normal student has. We also compete with other top talent, which challenges the mind to always be sharper, stronger, and better prepared in order to develop mental toughness.

McGill athletes possess self-confidence which is closely related to success in competition. This confidence makes athletes prepared to take more risks and gives them higher expectations for success both for themselves and their teammates. Athletes possess a 'can-do' attitude and a sense of belief in themselves and their abilities.

Filled with positive energy and leadership, varsity athletes possess an optimistic and positive nature. Their optimistic personalities cause them to look at the glass as 'half full, rather than half empty.' These qualities also allow them to remain positive when faced with difficulties and helps them rebound more quickly when failures are experienced.

Companies looking to develop relationships with these students should be looking for ways to get involved and provide financial and other support to these mostly unfunded teams and they can start with the McGill Martlets field hockey team!

Laura A.M. Slipp is a first-year field hockey player and arts student at McGill University. She is the daughter of Mark Slipp, of MCC Partners.