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Career advice for people who prefer texting over talking

By Debra Auerbach, CareerBuilder Writer

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"Hi QT. Hope ur hvn a GR8 day! RU coming out 2nite? TML so we can goss. TTYL!"

While you might be scratching your head trying to decode that sentence, it's an example of what a typical text message might look like between two teenagers. Texting has become the main form of communication for many teens, and text "shorthand" is often used to save time while texting. According to a study by the Pew Internet Research Center, U.S. teens are talking on landlines and cell phones less, using more smartphones, and are averaging 60 texts a day.

And while studies do show that as people get older, their texting habits may decrease, they're still doing it all throughout college. Many are so hooked that they can't even get through a class without sending an SMS -- a University of New Hampshire study found that 65 percent of college students surveyed are sending around one text message per class.

Helping to ease the communication transition

Since texting has yet to become the norm, or even an acceptable practice, during the job-search process, some college students nearing graduation may need a little help adapting their communication skills for the business world.

Recognizing this communication-gap issue, and knowing that those new to the working world will be faced with fierce competition for jobs, college-to-workforce transition trainings are gaining in popularity.

Lynne Sarikas, executive director of the MBA Career Center at Northeastern University, says that their students can take courses on anything from business etiquette to dressing for success. Students also have the opportunity to meet with employers to talk about common workplace expectations when it comes to communication styles, work ethic and on-the-job behavior.

"Employers still highly value communications skills -- both oral and written -- and expect students to perform in that environment," Sarikas says. "One of the critical aspects in addressing the gap is to manage expectations. It would be wrong to chide students for inappropriate behavior if they are never told what constitutes appropriate behavior."

Elizabeth Venturini, founder of the college career strategy organization Scholasticus, also saw the need to help young adults who have moved toward less real conversation and more technology-driven communication. She recently rolled out a workshop called Charm School for the College-Bound to educate students on the importance and essential skills of business etiquette.

"Etiquette matters more than ever in today's technology-charged society," Venturini says. "In an age when it is second nature for so many young people to text than talk, knowing business etiquette is critical as they prepare for college and future employment."

Venturini shares the following four tips to help new job seekers brush up on their business etiquette:

- 1. Connecting while chatting: One word answers may work well for texting, but when connecting with people of influence, complete sentences that kick "awesome" to the curb and say something of value pack a powerful punch.
2. Take your eyes off the screen: Off and away is the answer for how to carry your cell phone when you are meeting someone who has the power to take your future up, up and away.
3. A real smile, face to face, beats an emoticon every day of the week: Look people right in the eye and make a genuine connection with a smile that speaks volumes about your confidence.
4. Stand up and show up: When meeting someone for the first time, stand up and take notice of the person who can open the door to a world of new career opportunities. It's a quiet and compelling demonstration of respect.

"Now more than ever, students realize they will no longer just be applying for college or a job after graduation -- they will be competing for them. Knowing good manners and basic business etiquette can give students the winning edge in an increasingly competitive job market."

Debra Auerbach is a writer and blogger for CareerBuilder.com and its job blog, The Work Buzz. She researches and writes about job search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues.

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