

# Why are Indian graduates unemployable?

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## Divya Nair/Rediff.com

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Only 19 per cent engineering graduates in India are employable.

Only 5 per cent graduates from other streams are fit for employment, says a recent survey on graduate employability in India.

## What is driving this unhealthy trend? Who is to be blamed? We find out...

More than three million Indians graduate out of colleges every year. Of these 20 to 25 per cent are engineers.

According to a recent survey by Aspiring Minds, an assessment and grading firm, only 19 per cent engineers are fit for employment.

The unemployment figures among Indian graduates have been dwindling down the years and engineering graduates are not the only ones affected by it.

We spoke to **Himanshu Aggrawal**, CEO and co-founder of Aspiring Minds to find out the possible reasons that encourage the trend.

A graduate in computer science and engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Aggrawal works closely with young graduates from across the country helping them address the skill gap and advance in their careers.

Read on to find out what he thinks about the issue of unemployability in India

## Why are Indian engineering graduates becoming increasingly unemployable? What reasons do you attribute for this declining trend?

- Unlike in the past where engineering was considered a professional vocation, in recent times, engineering has become just another stream to pursue graduation.
- The poor quality of teachers in two-tier engineering colleges combined with an outdated curriculum is further adding to the problems of graduates.
- But that is just one part of the problem; there is also a silent revolution that is taking place in terms of the kind of jobs engineering graduates are seeking.
- If you were to talk to engineering graduates who have recently completed college, you'll realise that most of them want to explore working in non-technical sectors too.
- They don't want to become software engineers; they want to explore more avenues -- become analysts, technical sales, pursue marketing and accounting, to name a few.
- Needless to say, there is a lot of competition to meet these specifics.

## Is the situation better with graduates from other streams? Where are they going wrong? Please elaborate

Unfortunately not. If the employability rate among engineering graduates is 19 per cent, the figure is dismal for graduates from commerce, science and arts -- 5 to 6 per cent.

There are three reasons to this:

## **Higher education in our country is resistant to change**

The quality and curriculum of teaching is way below the expectations of the industry.

### **Lack of seriousness**

In the last one decade, the minimum college attendance rate is often neglected or overlooked.

The purpose and system of college education has undergone a major change -- youngsters just want a degree at the end of it, they are not interested in the process.

### **Lack of preparedness**

While it is easy to put all the blame on the curriculum, in the wake of cut-throat competition, institutes need to pro-actively address the issue of employability.

They need to sensitivise students by encouraging them to take up additional skilling courses depending on their domain of interest -- communication, coding, accounting etc.

## **What should graduates do in order to become employable?**

- Graduates need to understand that higher education alone doesn't make you job ready.
- It is silly to wait till your final year to decide what you want to do in life.
- Do not expect your institute to find a job for you.
- Start early -- when you're in your first year, search for internship opportunities you can consider during the holidays or weekends.

Towards the end of your graduation, you'll have a good profile with relevant work experience.

## **According to you, what are the skills/talent employers look for while hiring fresh graduates?**

Most employers first test you for analytical reasoning skills, critical understanding of situation and basic communication skills.

Even for engineering roles, which do not require you to travel out of office or meet clients, English writing and speaking skills are a must.

Job responsibilities, these days, are becoming very flexible, thus demanding candidates to have multiple skills -- often that are not directly related to the job role.

For example, for a technical sales support job, the candidate will have to be well read, up-to-date with what the competition is offering, have good communication skills and if the need arises, be able to fix issues.

## **Is there an attitudinal mismatch between employer expectations vs graduate expectations?**

There are quite a few, but I think, even employers must be able to adapt to and at times even accommodate the ways of the new generation.

However, some of the pressing problems facing fresh job seekers are these:

- They start late -- most graduates don't even invest time in a well written CV until they complete their education.
- They are very biased -- the current generation is more worried about what their friends think than find out what is best for them. They are insecure and afraid to try something that interests them and in the quest to try something safe, end up following the herd. Needless to say, they don't stand out - because sooner or later, they'll find out, that's not what they're cut out for.
- They are impatient and assumptious -- they feel they'll eventually get away with everything, including

finding a job.

- They spend very little time in improving themselves, which either stagnates them or leaves them disappointed.

### **Do you think the Indian education system needs an overhaul?**

Definitely. There is an urgent need to adapt an industry-relevant curriculum and proactively tie up with institutes that groom students for job-readiness.

An alternate parallel approach is required to tackle the issue of employment and skill building outside the curriculum.

There will always be some amount of on-job training that will be required, but basic skilling can be done while they are still in school or college.

Industry-relevant core skills can be identified and imparted as part of the academic process.

### **Your advice to parents -- how can they be part of the change?**

Despite the exposure, a lot of Indian parents continue to feel that art and creative jobs don't pay too well.

Some of them still feel that a banking or public sector job is secure. That is no longer the case.

The industry has changed, so have the demands and remuneration of the jobs on offer.

As parents, it is important to allow your child to think and explore their interests while they are still in school and college so that by the time they are graduates, they have a fair idea of what they want to do with their lives.