



## Personality Is the Overlooked Hiring Advantage Canadian Employers Say Can Overcome Skills Gaps

*Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey reveals employers connect personality with hiring, performance and advancement.*

**TORONTO, Aug. 26, 2026** — Personality may be the new hiring advantage, with 91% of Canadian hiring managers saying it matters as much as skills, and 84% saying it can outweigh a candidate's skills gap, according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

Its influence extends beyond the hiring decision, with 71% of hiring managers and 65% of job seekers saying personality is at least very important to thriving at a company. That includes 23% of hiring managers and 21% of job seekers who consider it absolutely essential to long-term success.



### First Impressions Carry Lasting Weight

Employers often rely on moments outside prepared interview questions to assess whether a candidate's personality fits their company culture. Informal interactions, including small talk before or after an interview, email tone and how candidates interact with administrative staff, are common methods, cited by 51% of hiring managers.

Those early exchanges can be decisive, as 85% of hiring managers say they can tell from the first conversation whether a candidate will succeed at their company, including 24% who strongly agree. That pressure is not lost on job seekers, with 59% worrying about how their personality comes across during an interview.

Nearly all job seekers, 94%, say companies have evaluated their personality during the hiring process, most commonly through:

- Situational questions: 58%

- Behavioral interview questions: 52%
- Reference checks: 52%
- Informal interactions: 47%
- Personality assessments: 37%

### **Employers and Candidates Agree on What Matters**

Regardless of how personality is assessed, hiring managers and job seekers largely agree on the traits employers value most:

- Reliability: 71% of hiring managers and 70% of job seekers
- Honesty: 67% of hiring managers and 56% of job seekers
- Adaptability: 57% of hiring managers and 60% of job seekers
- Respectfulness: 53% of hiring managers and 45% of job seekers
- Flexibility: 52% of both groups

Job seekers also report possessing these traits at similar rates, led by reliability at 73%, honesty at 69% and adaptability at 66%.

These perceptions vary by generation. Gen X and baby boomers are more likely than Gen Z and millennials to see themselves as having these traits. Baby boomers are also more likely to believe companies value each trait on the list.

Hiring managers place similar emphasis on the workplace behaviors behind these traits. More than half consider dependability absolutely essential (52%) while 49% say the same of work ethic and 46% of willingness to learn.

### **Personality Can Shape a Career After the Hire**

Those traits continue to carry weight once an employee is on the job, as almost all hiring managers (94%) and job seekers (91%) say personality shapes how performance is perceived.

Personality may also affect how quickly employees move forward in their careers. Nearly all hiring managers (98%) believe a positive or approachable personality can directly accelerate career advancement, a view shared by 92% of job seekers.

“Every employee has an effect on the workplace beyond the responsibilities listed in a job description,” said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president and chairman of Express Employment International. “The right personality can build trust, make change easier to navigate and raise the standard for how a team works together. That is why employers see personality as more than a hiring advantage. It is representative of the business culture.”

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## **Survey Methodology**

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 15 to June 1, 2026, among 508 Canadian hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 19 to June 8, 2026, among 508 Canadian adults ages 18 and older who are employed but looking for a new job or not employed and looking for work.

For full survey methodology, please contact Ana Curic at [Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com](mailto:Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com).

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If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email [Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com](mailto:Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com).

## **About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.**

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

## **About Express Employment Professionals**

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