

Young job seekers experience catch-22, says survey

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By [Christopher Adams](#)

New graduates trying to find a place in the world of work face a catch-22 situation with almost all employers demanding relevant experience in recruits, according to a survey.

Clarian Human Resources' Great New Zealand Employment Survey canvassed 256 employers late last year and found 94 per cent wanted job applicants with some level of industry experience.



New graphic design graduate Kelsey Soar (right) with her mother Michelle Soar.

"[The survey results] are definitely not showing that there's light at the end of the tunnel for recent graduates - that's for sure," said **Clarian's Michelle Marsden**.

She said employers were taking a reasonably cautious approach to recruitment, possibly as a result of the sluggish economic environment.

Marsden said it was crucial that undergraduates made contacts in the fields they wanted to be employed in while still at university, which could include unpaid work experience.

Kelsey Soar, who graduated from Massey University with a Bachelor of Communications in graphic design last year, said she had lost count of the number of jobs she had unsuccessfully applied for since September.

The 23-year-old Milford resident said a lack of junior positions in her field meant she was having to apply for intermediate and senior roles.

In the meantime she was doing some freelance graphic design work for an Australian sports equipment company.

"I'm not sure whether I should stay in New Zealand because there's more jobs over in Sydney at the moment - junior roles - and a few of my mates have actually had to pack up and go over there," said Soar.

She said would have benefited from practical industry experience while at university, but was offered little.

Associate Professor Sarah Leberman, of Massey University's School of Management, said the school had been trialling internship programmes on some courses for the past two years.

"Those internships have enabled [students], during their final year of study, to work with an organisation on a defined project - so they've been able to put theory into practice," Dr Leberman said. "A number [of the students] have said that it helped them get the job they're in now because when they applied they had the real world experience."

She said the university was looking closely at expanding the amount of practical experience it offered its students.

Massey University sports management graduate Chrystal Chandler, 21, said she would never have got her part-time job as an administration executive for the NZ Breakers had she not undertaken a practicum with the basketball team while completing her studies.

"When you go in for job interviews - without that experience - I don't think they even look at you," said Chandler.

AUT said the majority of its students were offered industry experience while completing programmes.

A survey conducted by AUT last year found 82 per cent of students that completed a course in 2009 were either full or part-time employed by June 2010.

The Clarian survey also found some companies were facing difficulties employing workers with the skills they needed because potential recruits were not looking for a new job.

Over 72 per cent of employee respondents who fell into the categories firms indicated were showing a skills shortage - such as engineers, IT specialists and senior managers - indicated they were not planning to leave their positions soon.

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