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SMALL BUSINESS

Why I Hire English Majors

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I love English majors. I love how smart they are. I love their intellectual curiosity. And I love their bold choice for a major. Most of all, I love to hire them.

A recent article by the great David Brooks in the *New York Times* about the changing nature of the Humanities in higher education just reinforced why, when given my druthers, English majors are my employee of choice.

And the reason is not that I am a writer; I more consider myself an entrepreneur than anything else. I run a small business and the people I hire do a variety of tasks -- SEO, project management, social media, and so forth.

For my money (literally and figuratively), for my needs, and I suggest the needs of most small businesses, English majors are easily the top choice when it comes to getting the type of teammate who can make us all better, as they say in basketball.

Let's consider what you want when you hire an employee or independent contractor:

Smarts: My sweet daughter Sydney is a junior English major (though I haven't hired her -- yet!) When I speak with her now, when I hear about her assignments and what she has to read, I cannot help but be impressed. She is a much smarter girl than the one who left here two years ago.

I think what I appreciate most about English majors is that they are taught to think critically, and that is exactly what I want in my business. Busy with a start-up, a new book to finish, speeches, and running my regular business to boot, what I need is to be able to give someone an assignment and have them do it. Period.

That is exactly what I get from the English majors. They know how to think, to think for themselves, and how to analyze a problem. Business majors are fine, but they are preoccupied with theory, proving themselves, and doing it "right." But the English majors are used to getting a tough assignment, figuring it out, and getting it done, (usually) on time.

Boldness: Now, this may not be true for all small business people, but it is for me. I like working with people who are bold, confident, and who are willing to speak up. People who see problems and suggest solutions, who are not intimidated by calculated risk taking.

Hello, English major.

Not only do these folks have to be bold simply to make such a choice of majors at a time when everyone is advising them to think about making themselves as practical as possible in this shrinking, global job market, but the nature of their gig is that they have to be bold. Reading Chaucer, making sense of it, writing a term paper on it, and then being able to defend it, takes far more bravery than, say, analyzing the fall of the Soviet Union.

Writing ability: Whether it is a blog, an email to a client, an e-newsletter post, or an analysis of a problem, English majors win, hands down.

Easy to work with: This is an underrated trait that I think many people applying for a job don't get or appreciate. People like working with people they like. I find that, usually, English majors are interesting, well spoken, can take a position and defend it with logic and reason, are (obviously) well read, and are, well, pleasant to be around.

That's whom I want to hire.

Follow Steve Strauss on Twitter: www.twitter.com/SteveStrauss