

Take Action Today to Change Your Tomorrow

Many new graduates think they need just one thing once they leave college, a degree. But employers place a lot of emphasis on finding candidates with the right skills and competencies for their organizations. Every employer is looking for a specific set of skills from job-seekers that match the skills necessary to perform a particular job. But beyond these job-specific technical skills, certain skills are nearly universally sought by employers.

So what are those skills which are necessary for getting, keeping and being successful in a job? They are the skills and attitudes that enable employees to get along with their colleagues, to make critical decisions, solve problems, develop respect and ultimately become strong ambassadors for the organization. These skills are found lacking in school students, graduates and those already in employment.

The good news is that most job-seekers possess these skills to some extent. The better news is that job-seekers with weaknesses in these areas can improve their skills through training, professional development, or obtaining coaching/mentoring from someone who understands these skills. The best news is that once you understand the skills and characteristics that most employer seek, you can tailor your job-search communication, your resume, cover letter, and interview to showcase how well your background aligns with common employer requirements. In the first stage of your career, you're building a broad base of skills and the quicker you develop these, the faster you'll be able to climb the ladder.

Interpersonal Skills: Interpersonal skills are vital when seeking employment and may be the single most important factor for many recruiters. Good interpersonal skills allow you to participate effectively as a member of a team, satisfy customers and clients' expectations, negotiate, make decisions, manage your time efficiently, take responsibility, and work effectively with other employees.

Teamwork: You'll need to prove that you're a team player but also have the ability to manage and delegate to others and take on responsibility. It's about building positive working relationships that help everyone to achieve goals and business objectives. So many jobs involve working in one or more work-groups, you must have the ability to work with others in a professional manner while attempting to achieve a common goal.

Communication: Employers look for people who communicate well both verbally and in writing. It means you can get your messages across with less chance of misunderstanding. Listening skills involve not only hearing but gaining and understanding information. Listening is a basic requirement leading to fewer mistakes and a greater understanding of the needs of employer and client.

Commercial awareness: This is about knowing how a business or industry works and what makes a company go forward. Showing that you have an understanding of what the organization wants to achieve through its products and services, and how it competes in its marketplace will give you an edge.

Negotiation and persuasion: This is about being able to put forward your way, but also being able to understand where the other person is coming from so that you can both get what you want or need and feel positive about it.

Problem solving: You need to display an ability to take a logical and analytical approach to solving problems and resolving issues. It's also good to show that you can approach problems from different perspectives. The ability to solve problems and make decisions can be a huge asset to your employer and these are therefore desirable skills to develop. Decision making and problem solving require gathering reliable information, evaluating the information for a variety of solutions and selecting the most appropriate option based on the criteria and situation.

Numeracy (Number Skills): It involves an understanding of numerical data, statistics and graphs, and is also part of making decisions and reasoning. Numeracy skills are very important, irrespective of whether you consider a job to be "working with numbers". Having competence and being confident in working with numbers is a skill that can be used to your advantage in a wide range of employment settings

IT Skills: Acquiring basic IT skills and being familiar with using a computer may open up a wide range of employment opportunities and increase your marketability in the workplace. It is likely that a modern job will require you to be familiar with at least some computer applications. Computer literacy means understanding what computers can and cannot do.

Confidence: In the workplace you need to strike the balance of being confident in yourself but not arrogant. Confidence also means trusting your colleagues and the company you work for. If you don't believe in yourself, in your unique mix of skills, education, and abilities, why should a prospective employer? Be confident in yourself and what you can offer employers. You need to be a confident, hard-working employee who is committed to achieving excellence.

Perseverance and motivation: You need to have a drive and passion and demonstrate this enthusiasm through your words and actions. Employers want people to be go getters. Working life presents many challenges and you need to show employers that you're the kind of person who will find a way through, even when the going gets tough... and stay cheerful.

Leadership/Management Skills: These skills deal with your ability to take charge and manage your coworkers. You need to be someone who maintains a productive climate and confidently motivates, mobilizes, and coaches' employees to meet high performance standards. You may not be a manager

straight away, but you need to show potential to motivate teams and other colleagues that may work for you. It's about assigning and delegating tasks well, setting deadlines and leading by good example.

Critical Thinking Skills: Creative thinkers are innovative and inventive and are more likely to devise new ways of doing things that add value to the work environment, making systems and procedures more efficient. Creative thinkers can offer new perspectives about the job and the company.

Presentation Skills: Presenting information clearly and effectively is a key skill in the work place and presentation skills are required in almost every modern employment area. Presenting information does not just include making formal presentations - information could be presented in the form of notes, reports, research findings, business plans, scenario planning, risk assessments and strategic documents. You may well be asked to give a presentation as part of your initial interview.

These are the critical tools and traits you need to succeed in the workplace and they are all elements that you can learn, cultivate, develop, and maintain over your lifetime. Once you have identified the sought-after skills and values and assessed the degree to which you possess, then remember to document them and market them (in your resume, cover letter, and interview answers) for your career path success and feel more empowered. Once you get going, it gets easier to keep going. All that's left to ask yourself is, "What am I waiting for?"